

PAR Monitor Report Montenegro PUBLIC SERVICE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

2024/2025



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ABOUT WEBER 3.0

Building upon the achievements of its predecessors, the WeBER (2015 – 2018) and WeBER 2.0 (2019 – 2023) projects, the **Western Balkan Enablers for Reforming Public Administrations – WeBER 3.0** project is the third consecutive EU-funded grant of the largest civil society-led initiative for monitoring public administration reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans. Its implementation period is February 2023 – July 2026. Guided by the SIGMA/OECD Principles, the first two phases of the initiative laid the foundation for WeBER 3.0's ambition **to further empower civil society organisations (CSOs) to contribute to more transparent, open, accountable, citizen-centric and thus more EU-compliant administrations in the WB region.**

WeBER 3.0 continues to promote the crucial role of CSOs in PAR, while also advocating for broader citizen engagement in this process and inclusive reform measures which are user-tailored and thus lead to tangible improvements. By grounding actions in robust monitoring data and insights, WeBER 3.0 will empower civil society to more effectively influence the design and implementation of PAR. To foster collaborative policymaking and bridge the gap between aspirations and actionable solutions, the project will facilitate sustainable policy dialogue between governments and CSOs through the WeBER Platform and its National PAR Working Groups. Finally, through small grants for local CSOs, WeBER 3.0 bolsters local-level PAR engagement, amplifying the voices of citizens – the final beneficiaries of the public administrations' work.

WeBER 3.0 products and further information about them are available on the project's website at www.par-monitor.org.

WeBER 3.0 is implemented by the Think for Europe Network (TEN), composed of six EU policy-oriented think tanks in the Western Balkans:



By partnering with the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Vienna, WeBER 3.0 has ensured EU-level expert support, especially for developing citizen-centred methodology for solving PAR issues at local level.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Public Service and Human Resource Management for PAR Montenegro 2024/2025 is a product of a month and a half long monitoring process, which relied on different data collection techniques and thus resulted in an abundance of findings.

As in the case of the previous editions of the National PAR Monitor reports, published for 2017/2018, 2019/2020 and 2021/2022, special acknowledgements go to members of the WeBER Platform and the National Working Group in Montenegro, and other stakeholders in Montenegro that shared their experiences through interviews, who immensely contributed to the content of this report and its quality, and who will not be identified due to the respect of the principle of anonymity.

Lastly, the WeBER3.0 team would also like to thank its main partners and associates, who have supported the project in research and other activities. Most notably, these are the SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management)¹, the ReSPA (Regional School of Public Administration), and the Ministry of Public Administration in Montenegro, as a project associate.

¹ A joint initiative of the European Union and the OECD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides assessment of the transparency, openness and meritocracy of public service and human resource management focuses on five critical aspects - 1) transparency of statistics and reports on civil service, 2) transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service, 3) transparency and merit principle of recruitment process, 4) merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence, and 5) transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration. Findings of this report reflect the period since the publication of the PAR Monitor 2021/2022, starting from the second half of 2022, and until the end of 2024.²

The first aspect examines the availability of statistics or reports that cover civil service structure and key elements of civil service policy and HRM. The aspect of temporary hiring focuses on conditions and limitations for temporary hiring, while also examining the application of merit-principle and the openness and transparency of the hiring procedure. The aspect devoted to the recruitment process focuses on accessibility of vacancy announcements, existence of administrative burden, equal opportunities for external candidates in the application process, institutional support to applicants, transparency of outcomes, and citizens' perception on the meritocracy of recruitment. When it comes to the top managers in the civil service, the emphasis is placed on merit-based nature of recruitment and appointment practices and the use of objective dismissal criteria, as well as on limitations on acting appointments, the extent to which appointments are protected from political influence in practice, and the competitiveness of procedures. Finally, the last aspect is devoted to transparency and clarity of the civil service remuneration system and the existence of citizen-friendly presentations on its main aspects. Findings of this report reflect the period since the publication of the PAR Monitor 2021/2022, starting from the second half of 2022, and until the end of 2024.³

There were no significant improvements in the availability of statistics or reports that cover civil service structure and key elements of civil service policy and HRM. Although the 2022-2026 PAR strategy contains measures which might improve the data management regarding civil service policies, there are no pledges to increase public availability of those data.

Transparency of temporary hiring did not advance much either. In January

² For 2022, only developments not captured by the PAR Monitor 2021/2022 are included.

³ For 2022, only developments not captured by the PAR Monitor 2021/2022 are included.

2025, the Government formed **a special commission to monitoring temporary hiring (service contracts and contracts for temporary and occasional work)**, with the aim of reducing misuse and budgetary spend in this area. Nonetheless, the work of the commission did not result in better transparency, nor tangible limits in the use of contracted staff. Their share in five sample institutions exceeded ten per cent. In general, the fixed term recruitment of civil servants is much better regulated than other types of temporary hiring. Although some conditions for contracting people outside of civil service are established, there are no clear time limitations for all the contract types, nor there are clear limits of the number of contractors and the renewal of contracts.

The reporting period did not see breakthroughs when it comes to transparency and implementation of merit principle either. In late July 2025, the parliament adopted amendments to the civil service law, which should introduce the obligation to select the best ranked candidates for all positions apart from top management. Also, accompanying decree brought some improvements when it comes to the definition of competencies, and the composition of testing panels, which should be depoliticised. Nonetheless, these amendments were not applied during the reporting period. Consequently, no visible improvements were observed on the ground, as reflected in the very negative perceptions of key informants and of citizens, with more than 80 per cent of them disagreeing with the statement that public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit.

Top managers are still not effectively protected from undue influences, as not all the dismissal criteria are objectively verifiable. Namely, heads of state administration authorities can be dismissed if their annual reports indicate irregularities in the work of that authority, without due procedure or connection with the disciplinary responsibility. Also, acting appointments are widely used, while the provisions which would introduce necessary safeguards, such as to choose acting officials among the already employed staff, were not introduced despite the clear EU conditionality.

Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration remained low. There were no changes of the relatively complex structure of salary. Proactive publication of information on salaries has not advanced either.

Most of the earlier recommendations, provided within previous cycles of the WeBER project, are thus still relevant. We especially reiterate recommendations to widen the scope of reporting and proactive publication of data, to clearly outline the needs for temporary hiring, especially service contracts, and include them in proactive reporting and staff planning. Also, the new Law on salaries of public sector employees should clearly limit and ensure mutual exclusiveness among different types of salary supplements.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AP - Action Plan

CSO - civil society organization

CSL - Civil Service Law

EU - European Union

FOI – Freedom of Information

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

HRA - Human Resource Administration

MPA - Ministry of Public Administration

PAR - Public administration reform

PFM – Public Financial Management

ReSPA - Regional School of Public Administration

SIGMA - Support for Improvement in Governance and Management

WB - Western Balkan

WeBER3.0 - Western Balkan Enablers for Reforming Public Administrations

I. WEBER PAR MONITOR

What we monitor and how?

I.1 WeBER's approach to monitoring PAR

The Public Administration Reform (PAR) Monitor methodology was developed in 2015-2016, as part of the first Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform (WeBER) project. Since the onset, WeBER has adopted a markedly evidence-based approach in its endeavour to increase the relevance, participation and capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans to advocate for and influence the design and implementation of PAR. The PAR Monitor methodology is a cornerstone WeBER product, enabling civil society monitoring of PAR based on evidence and analysis.

In line with WeBER's focus on the region's EU accession process, once the SIGMA *Principles of Public Administration*⁴ were revised in 2023, the WeBER PAR Monitor methodology was also redesigned in 2024. This was done in order to keep the focus of WeBER's recommendations on EU-compliant reforms, thus guiding the governments in the region towards successful EU accession and future membership. The main changes in the revised PAR Monitor methodology are briefly listed below.⁵

⁴ Available at: <https://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/principlesofpublicadministration.htm>.

⁵ For detailed information on the scope and process of methodology revision please visit <https://www.par-monitor.org/par-monitor-methodology/>.

Table 1: Main changes in the PAR Monitor methodology

STRUCTURE

- Introduction of single indicator per PAR area, divided into sub-indicators, further consisting of several sub-indicator elements (specific criteria assessed)
- Introduction of types of indicator elements, meaning that each element has a specific focus on one of the following aspects of reform:
 - 1) Strategy and Policy
 - 2) Legislation
 - 3) Institutional Set-up
 - 4) Practice in Implementation, and
 - 5) Outcomes and Impact
- Introduction of a 100-point scale, allowing for a more nuanced assessment of progress in each PAR area

DATA SOURCES

- Introduction of interviews with “key informants”, i.e. key non-state actors engaged and familiar with the processes. These interviews serve as a data source for the “Outcomes and impact” elements instead of the formerly implemented survey of civil society organisations.
- Use of public perception survey results as a data source for “Outcomes and Impact” elements, and expanding its scope to complement the assessment in five PAR areas, except for “Strategy for PAR”
- Removal of survey of civil servants as a data source due to persistent issues with ensuring adequate response rates across the region’s administrations.





PAR MONITOR REPORTING

- Six national PAR Monitor reports, one per PAR area (36 in total for the entire PAR Monitor), in order to facilitate timely publication and advocacy for the monitoring results rather than publishing the results of 18 months of research at the end of the process.
- Six regional Western Balkan overview reports, one per PAR area (6 in total)

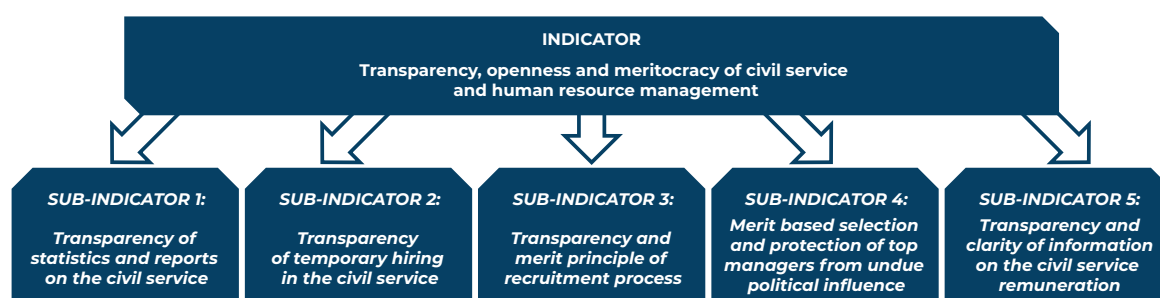
I.2 Why and how WeBER monitors the “Public Service and Human Resource Management” area

A professional, transparent, and merit-based civil service is a cornerstone of public administration that works in the public interest. These principles are essential for safeguarding professionalism, integrity, and public trust in institutions. WeBER’s monitoring focuses on how these principles are applied in practice, beyond what is formally guaranteed in laws and strategies: from the accessibility and inclusiveness of vacancy announcements to the transparency of recruitment outcomes and the public availability of data on key aspects of the civil service. These issues directly affect the quality, responsiveness, and trustworthiness of public institutions. When recruitment is politicised, rules are unclear, or data is withheld, citizens are left with an administration that serves political interests rather than public needs. The monitoring of this area supports evidence-based advocacy for a more competent, accountable, and depoliticised civil service - one that citizens can trust to serve the public interest.

Monitoring in the **the Public Service and Human Resource Management area** is based on the four SIGMA Principle in this area:

-  **Principle 8:** The employment framework balances stability and flexibility ensure accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal
-  **Principle 9:** Public administration attracts and recruits competent people based on merit and equal opportunities
-  **Principle 10:** Effective leadership is fostered through competence, stability, professional autonomy and responsiveness of accountable top managers
-  **Principle 11:** Public servants are motivated, fairly and competitively paid and have good working conditions

These Principles are assessed from the perspective of availability of all relevant information on different key areas of the civil service, while also examining the extent to which merit-based recruitment is present within the system, including the procedure for temporary hiring, and merit-based appointment of top managers. A focus on transparency and openness seeks to determine the extent to which relevant authorities publish information which helps interested public gain insight into crucial aspects of the system and the extent to which civil service is open to external candidates when recruiting new employees.



The monitoring period for the Public Service and Human Resource Management covers developments since the last PAR Monitor cycle, which lasted from January until November 2022. Thus, this report focuses primarily on 2023 and 2024, as well as the end-of-2022 developments not covered in the previous cycle. Although this report provides a comparison of findings with previous PAR Monitor editions, country scores are incomparable to the previous monitoring due to methodological changes.

The **first sub-indicator** focuses on the existence of statistics and reports that cover important data and key policy areas of the civil service system (such as recruitment, career development, and such). Monitoring of strategy and policy, legislation and practice aspects is performed by combining qualitative analysis of strategic documents, regulations and publicly available official data. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct three key informants' interviews with non-state actors who possess significant expertise in the area and/or experience participating in the analysed processes.

Table 2: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 1

Indicator element - number and title	Type
E 1.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements in transparency of basic information on civil service	Strategy and policy
E 1.2 Regulations stipulate that data on civil service and employees in the central state administration are publicly available	Legislation
E 1.3 The Government regularly publishes reports pertaining to the civil service	Practice in implementation
E 1.4 Published reports include data on employees other than civil servants in the central state administration	Practice in implementation
E 1.5 Published reports segregate data based on gender, age, and education	Practice in implementation
E 1.6 Civil service data is available in open format(s)	Practice in implementation
E 1.7 The government comprehensively reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM	Practice in implementation
E 1.8 Key non-state actors consider reports on civil service policy as transparent and comprehensive	Outcomes and impact

The **second sub-indicator** assesses openness and transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service, while also looking into the application of the merit principle and the limitations to the use of temporary hiring.

Monitoring of this sub-indicator is based on the review of regulations and websites of relevant institutions, as well as official documents and data obtained through FOI requests. The assessment of the practice-type elements is conducted on a sample of most recently completed competitions for hiring temporary staff in five different central state administration bodies, i.e. 5 competition procedures for hiring fixed-term civil servants (one per body) and 5 competition procedures for hiring contracted staff (one per body), resulting in 10 procedures observed in total. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, as in the first sub-indicator, researchers conduct interviews with key informants.

Table 3: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 2

Indicator element - number and title	Type
E 2.1 Regulations stipulate conditions and limitations for hiring temporary staff	Legislation
E 2.2 Regulations stipulate openness and application of merit-principle when hiring temporary staff	Legislation
E 2.3 Procedure for hiring temporary staff is open and transparent	Practice in implementation
E 2.4 Temporary hirings are limited in practice	Practice in implementation
E 2.5 Key non-state actors consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful	Outcomes and impact

The **third sub-indicator** examines the transparency of the recruitment process and the application of the merit-principle. Specifically, the assessment focuses on the accessibility of vacancy announcements, the inclusiveness and fairness of procedures for external candidates, the level of institutional support to applicants and of any administrative burden, as well as the availability of information on selection outcomes, including the annulment of procedures.

Monitoring of strategy and policy, legislation and practice aspects is performed by combining various data sources to maximise reliability of results. It includes qualitative analysis of strategic documents, legal acts and official data that is publicly available or obtained from responsible institutions using FOI requests. The analysis of Practice type elements under this sub-indicator is conducted on the same five ministries/central state administration bodies sampled under sub-indicator 2. For the outcomes and impact assessment, researchers conduct three key informants' interviews. Unlike the first two sub-indicators, researchers also use public perception survey results to assess outcomes and impact within this sub-indicator. The public perception survey was conducted specifically for the purposes of the 2024/2025 PAR Monitor cycle.

Table 4: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 3

Indicator element - number and title	Type
E 3.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements of openness, transparency and merit principle of the recruitment process	Strategy and policy
E 3.2 Regulations stipulate openness, transparency, and merit principle of the recruitment process	Legislation
E 3.3 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are made broadly publicly available	Practice in implementation
E 3.4 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are presented in a way to motivate and attract external candidates	Practice in implementation
E 3.5 Responsible institution provides support and guidance to applicants	Practice in implementation
E 3.6 There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates	Practice in implementation
E 3.7 The application procedure imposes minimum administrative/paperwork burden on candidates	Practice in implementation
E 3.8 Candidates can supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe	Practice in implementation
E 3.9 Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are made publicly available, with due respect to the protection of personal information	Practice in implementation
E 3.10 Information about annulled public competitions, including reasoning for the annulment, is made publicly available	Practice in implementation
E 3.11 Key informants consider recruitment into civil service as transparent and merit-based	Outcomes and impact
E 3.12 Citizens' perception of merit-based civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact
E 3.13 Citizens' perception of the influence of personal connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact
E 3.14 Citizens' perception of the influence of political connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact

The **fourth sub-indicator** focuses on the merit-based selection of top managers and the existence of mechanisms for their protection from undue political influence. Specifically, WeBER examines if the recruitment and appointment practices for civil service top management are based on merit, by looking into the limitations on acting appointments, use of objective dismissal criteria, and the extent to which appointments are protected from political influence in practice.

Monitoring relies on the review of strategy and policy, legislation, institutional websites and official documents, supplemented by data obtained through FOI requests sent to the responsible institutions. The analysis of Practice type elements under this sub-indicator is conducted on the same five ministries/central state administration bodies sampled under sub-indicator 2. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct key informants' interviews, while public perception survey data is not used.

Table 5: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 4

Indicator element - number and title	Type
E 4.1 Strategic framework envisages strengthening of professionalism of the civil service top management	Strategy and policy
E 4.2 Regulations stipulate competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of civil service top management	Legislation
E 4.3 Regulations stipulate that acting appointments to top management positions are only made from within the civil service, for a limited period	Legislation
E 4.4 Regulations stipulate objective criteria for the termination of hiring of top management positions	Legislation
E 4.5 Existence of procedures on appointments to top management positions outside of the scope of the civil service legislation	Legislation
E 4.6 The merit-based recruitment for top management positions is applied in practice	Practice in implementation
E 4.7 Acting appointments are, in practice, only made from within the civil service	Practice in implementation
E 4.8 Ratio of eligible candidates per top managerial-level vacancy	Practice in implementation
E4.9 Share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions	Practice in implementation
E4.10 Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is merit-based and that they are protected from undue political influence	Outcomes and impact

Finally, the **fifth sub-indicator** examines the transparency and clarity of the civil service remuneration system, primarily focusing on the availability of information on salaries and its citizen-friendliness.

Monitoring of this sub-indicator is based on the review of regulations and websites of relevant institutions. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct key informants' interviews.

Table 6: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 5

Indicator element - number and title	Type
E 5.1 Regulations define a simply structured remuneration system	Legislation
E 5.2 Information on civil service remuneration system is available online	Practice in implementation
E 5.3 Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information exist	Practice in implementation
E 5.4 Key informants consider information on the civil service remuneration system as transparent and clear	Outcomes and impact

II. TRANSPARENCY, OPENNESS AND MERITOCRACY OF CIVIL SERVICE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This section presents the assessment results for Montenegro. Each sub-section presents the results for one sub-indicator (five in total), beginning with a brief overview of developments since the PAR Monitor 2021/2022. This is followed by a detailed assessment of the sub-indicator elements, starting with the policy, legislation and institutional framework, then moving to the practice in implementation, and ending with outcomes and impact. Each sub-indicator assessment concludes with the graph showing the awarded points.

The graph below displays the overall results for the Public Service and Human Resource Management area in Montenegro, measured on a scale from 0 to 100 points.

TRANSPARENCY AND INCLUSIVENESS OF THE
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PAR AGENDA
(score 0-100)



II.1 Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service

Principle 8: The employment framework balances stability and flexibility ensure accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal

**Awarded points per elements in sub-indicator 1:
Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service⁶**

Indicator elements	Element type	Score
E 1.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements in transparency of basic information on civil service	Strategy and policy	0/0.5
E 1.2 Regulations stipulate that data on civil service and employees in the central state administration are publicly available	Legislation	1/1
E 1.3 The Government regularly publishes reports pertaining to the civil service	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 1.4 Published reports include data on employees other than civil servants in the central state administration	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 1.5 Published reports segregate data based on gender, age, and education	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 1.6 Civil service data is available in open format(s)	Practice in implementation	3/3
E 1.7 The government comprehensively reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM	Practice in implementation	2.5/3.5
E 1.8 Key non-state actors consider reports on civil service policy as transparent and comprehensive	Outcomes and impact	0/2.5
Total score for sub-indicator 1		6.5/19.5

⁶ Through the first sub-indicator, the following SIGMA sub-principles are monitored: The government has a clear policy on public service, and the political-level responsibility for the area is established; Public servants can only be dismissed or demoted based on objective criteria regulated by law, following a due process and subject to judicial review; The public administration uses temporary employment in justified situations and within reasonable time limits; A central body, sufficiently empowered, effectively leads and co-ordinates the human resource management (HRM) system for the public service, provides support to public administration bodies, and monitors implementation; Public administration bodies have sufficient capacities for professional HRM; An effective information system supports HRM processes and provides data allowing for evidence based public service policy.

There were no significant improvements in the availability of statistics or reports that cover civil service structure and key elements of civil service policy and HRM. Overall, Montenegro lags behind when it comes to the transparency of statistics and reports on civil service. Although the 2022-2026 PAR strategy contains measures which might improve the data management regarding civil service policies, there are no pledges to increase public availability of those data. Key informants interviewed as non-state actors in the field of civil service policy and monitoring, largely disagreed that the reports on civil service policy are transparent and comprehensive. As explained by one interviewee, despite slight improvements over recent years, certain key insights are still missing.

There were no important developments aimed at furthering transparency of statistics and reports on civil service. The newly proposed Law on free access to information, which entered parliamentary procedure in February 2025, contains some improvements regarding the overall transparency, including the civil service data.⁷ The provision regulating proactive publishing of information, should specify that all changes to the internal acts on organization of public administration bodies are proactively published and that the list of all employees are regularly published and updated after reorganisations. Such more precise provisions are currently missing, which results in uneven practice and availability of information regarding the civil service and internal organisation of public administration bodies.

Overall, Montenegro lags behind when it comes to the transparency of statistics and reports on civil service. Although it has adopted a methodology to report on civil service policy, it is not effectively applied. The 2022-2026 PAR Strategy contains activities aimed at improving transparency of basic information on civil servants. For example, the activities from the 2025 annual action plan include upgrade of the register of state authorities and institutions at the central and local levels, establishment of an efficient mechanism for monitoring the engagement of people via service and other temporary contracts, as well as conducting functional analyses in public administration on the number of employees.⁸ Even though these measures, if implemented, would positively affect transparency and statistics on civil service, there is no commitment to make them publicly accessible. Therefore, the Strategic framework does not explicitly envisage improvements in transparency of basic information on civil service. On the other hand, the Law on Free Access

⁷ Government of Montenegro, Proposal of the law on free access to information (Available in Montenegrin: Predlog zakona o slobodnom pristupu informacijama), 10. 02. 2025, available at: <https://www.skupstina.me/me/sjednice/zakoni-i-druga-akta>

⁸ Government of Montenegro, Action Plan 2025-2026 for the Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022-2026, 11. 04. 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/971c6a5b-0724-4161-88db-81a51ea7331b>

to Information prescribes an obligation for a public authority to publish on its website, among other things, public registers and public records, work programs and plans, a list of civil servants and employees with their official titles, a list of public officials, and payroll lists showing their salaries and other income stemming from their position. A public authority is obliged to publish information for re-use in an open format, on the Open Data Portal of the Government.⁹ Therefore, regulations do stipulate obligations in regards to the public availability of information on civil servants, and the exemptions prescribed are clearly defined as they mostly concern personal data protection and other potential damage, although the amendments which should streamline and enhance proactive publication of information, including those on civil service and internal organization of public authorities, still wait to be adopted by the Parliament.

As already stressed, even though the government adopted the methodology for reporting on civil service policies, it is not applied, and there were no specific reports on these issues published since 2021.¹⁰ The Human Resources Administration regularly publishes its annual reports, but they do not contain all the basic statistics, which should include means 1) total number of civil servants, 2) per state administration body, or types/categories of bodies, 3) per ranks of civil servants, and 4) and total number divided by managerial and non-managerial positions. The Government started practice of proactive publishing of number of employees in public administration at central and local levels on quarterly basis.¹¹ Yet, this information is not broken down into the different categories, which would encompass civil service levels, nor it is segregated by other criteria. It just displays the total numbers and their comparison with previous reporting periods. These data, with the more detailed structure of the civil servants, their numbers per different state administration bodies and Government's services, should be presented within the comprehensive staffing plan, whose adoption is prescribed by the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees. Nonetheless, for five years in a row, the Government failed to adopt the staffing plan which would encompass all the institutions falling under its scope, and its most recent version is partial as it covers 34 institutions out of 49 (ministries, state administration authorities). However, the Open Data Portal contain some information which could be classified as basic statistics on civil service: the number of filled and systematised job positions, broken

⁹ The Law on Free Access to Information (Available in Montenegrin – Zakon o slobodnom pristupu informacijama), Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 44/2012 i 30/2017

¹⁰ Government of Montenegro, The Analysis in the Field of Human Resource Management for the Year 2020 (Available in Montenegrin: Analiza stanja u oblasti upravljanja ljudskim resursima za 2020. Godinu), 08.07.2021. available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e5543017-6a43-4e7e-a437-e2eaae61013f>

¹¹ Visualisation of data on number of public administration employees, available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/vizuelizacija-broja-zaposlenih-u-javnoj-upravi>

down per civil service level for a total of 111 public bodies, as of December 2024.¹² These data do not encompass all state administration bodies, which fall under the civil service scope, as for example, they cover 17 out of 25 ministries.¹³ None of the reports which are regularly published, including the ones of the Ministry of Public Administration, whose portfolio covers civil service policy, do not contain all the basic statistics. They also do not segregate data on civil service based on gender, age and educational structure. Such efforts, to present age and gender structure, are only made within the annual reports of Human Resources Administration, but only for prospective civil servants and state employees – those who apply for vacancies in state administration bodies and those who are subsequently selected.¹⁴

Expectedly, as the Government does not publish comprehensive reports on civil servants, it neither does so for employees other than civil servants. In January 2025, the Government formed a **Commission for Analysis and Monitoring of Service Contracts and Contracts for Temporary and Occasional Work**, with the aim of reducing misuse and budgetary spend in this area in state administration.¹⁵ The Commission published its first report in June 2025, providing some figures on the service contracts in the ministries and state administration bodies, arguing that it did not give a green light for more than 450 service contracts to be concluded.¹⁶

¹² Open Data Portal, The data set on the number of envisaged and filled job positions, December 2024, available at: <https://data.gov.me/dataset/broj-sistemizovanih-popunjenih-radnih-mjes-ta-po-kategoriji-zvanja/resource/bfd70086-a44f-4409-a669-f4c2601674ef>

¹³ Following the reshuffle in July 2024, Montenegro has enlarged the number of ministries to 25 with one additional minister without portfolio. The total number of independent administration authorities is 24. Decree on the Manner of Work and Organization of State Administration (Uredba o načinu rada i organizaciji državne uprave), Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 98/2023, 102/2023, 113/2023, 71/2024, 72/2024, 90/2024, 93/2024, 93/2024 - correction, 104/2024, 117/2024, 39/2025 i 97/2025.

¹⁴ Government of Montenegro, Report On The Work And Status In The Administrative Areas Of The Ministry Of Public Administration For 2024, available (in Montenegrin) at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/136df69f-4749-4882-9b81-b4cf89fb26fa>

¹⁵ Government of Montenegro, Decision on the Establishment of the Commission for Analysis and Monitoring of Service Contracts and Contracts on Temporary and Occasional Work in Budget-Financed Units, January 2025. Available (in Montenegrin) at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/9494483e-ac4e-4cee-89ae-d2a38be0e88c?version=1.0>

¹⁶ Government of Montenegro, Report on the work of the Commission for the analysis and monitoring of work contracts and contracts for the performance of temporary and occasional jobs in consumer units financed from the state budget in the period from February 26 to May 30, 2025, June 19, 2025, Available (in Montenegrin) at: <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/f83356e0-f6db-4496-9615-1f584c4cfa72>

Yet, simultaneously, the spending on service contracts did not decrease nor the systematic register and transparency on their use ensured. On the other hand, the available civil service data are not segregated based on gender, age and educational structure.¹⁷ Government stepped up efforts to increase the openness of the available data on civil service. The total numbers of public administration employees are available on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Finance.¹⁸ The most recent list, for March 2025, is provided in a machine-readable format (xlsx). It includes data on the number of employees at the central level for each institution, categorized by sector (judiciary, Government of Montenegro, Parliament of Montenegro, independent spending units, state funds, etc.). Data is also available for the local level, including the number of employees in local government bodies, as well as in public institutions and organizations. However, these data do not include the number of employees in public enterprises at the central and local levels. The Ministry's website also features visualisation of the number of employees. They provide data on the number of employees at both central and local levels, by sector, as well as an indicator showing the share of central and local government employees in the total number of employees.¹⁹ Also, the Open Data Portal features several data sets on civil service; individual lists of civil servants in two institutions, as well as the number of filled and systematised job positions, broken down per civil service level for a total of 111 public bodies, as of December 2024. There is also a list of state authorities, with their rulebooks on internal organisation. We have thus assessed that the Element 1.6 has been met.

When it comes to the issue how comprehensively the government reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM, the achievement of Montenegro in that respect is partial. There is no specific civil service annual report. However, the annual report on the work of the HRMA covers some of the key recommended components of the civil service report, including planning, recruitment, performance appraisal, professional development and trainings. However, it does not cover relevant issues of demotion, career development and salaries.²⁰ Disciplinary responsibility is covered by the annual reports of

¹⁷ Such efforts, to present age and gender structure, are only made within the annual reports of Human Resources Administration, but only for prospective civil servants and state employees – those who apply for vacancies in state administration bodies and those who are subsequently selected. The most recent available report of Human Resources Administration is available within the 2024 report of the Ministry of Public Administration, at the link: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/136df69f-4749-4882-9b81-b4cf89fb26fa>

¹⁸ Visualisation of data on number of public administration employees, available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/vizuelizacija-broja-zaposlenih-u-javnoj-upravi>

¹⁹ This data covers the period from November 2021 to March 2025 and is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/vizuelizacija-broja-zaposlenih-u-javnoj-upravi>.

²⁰ The most recent available report of Human Resources Administration is available within the 2024 report of the Ministry of Public Administration, at the link:

the Appeals Commission²¹ and Disciplinary Commission²². According to the Law on Civil Servants and Employees, a civil servant or employee is obliged to adhere to the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants and Employees. The only report dealing with this topic is the annual report of the Anti-corruption Agency, that entails data on inspections of asset declarations by the civil servants and on the adoption and implementation of integrity plans.²³

Finally, key informants interviewed as non-state actors in the field of civil service policy and monitoring, largely disagreed that the reports on civil service policy are transparent and comprehensive. As explained by one interviewee, despite slight improvements over recent years, certain key insights are still missing. “For example, when we wanted to assess the performance appraisal of senior civil servants, we could not determine from official reports whether this procedure is conducted twice a year, as prescribed by the civil service law for this top layer of state administration employees. Also, gender segregated statistics is often omitted, while, for example, another weak spot of civil service management – acting appointments, are not treated at all in regular reports of the Human Resource Management Administration. Staff turnover is never fully covered in the civil service reports, and it is very difficult to measure the fluctuation of staff, the re-appointments, prolongation of the so-called acting tenures, while temporary engagements outside of the direct scope of civil service law (such as service or consulting contracts) are completely excluded from the reports, which would benefit from such information. Also, promotion and internal mobility through re-assignments of staff within one state administration authorities are under-covered.” The interviewees also assessed that the reports are not always easy to find, that their clarity could be improved.

<https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/136df69f-4749-4882-9b81-b4cf89fb26fa>

²¹ The 2024 Report on the work of the Appeals Commission, Podgorica, March 2025, available (in Montenegrin) at:

<https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/206723e9-b39c-4740-8b59-b82f9b627c4c?version=1.0>

²² The 2024 Report on the work of the Disciplinary Commission, Podgorica, March 2025, available (in Montenegrin) at:

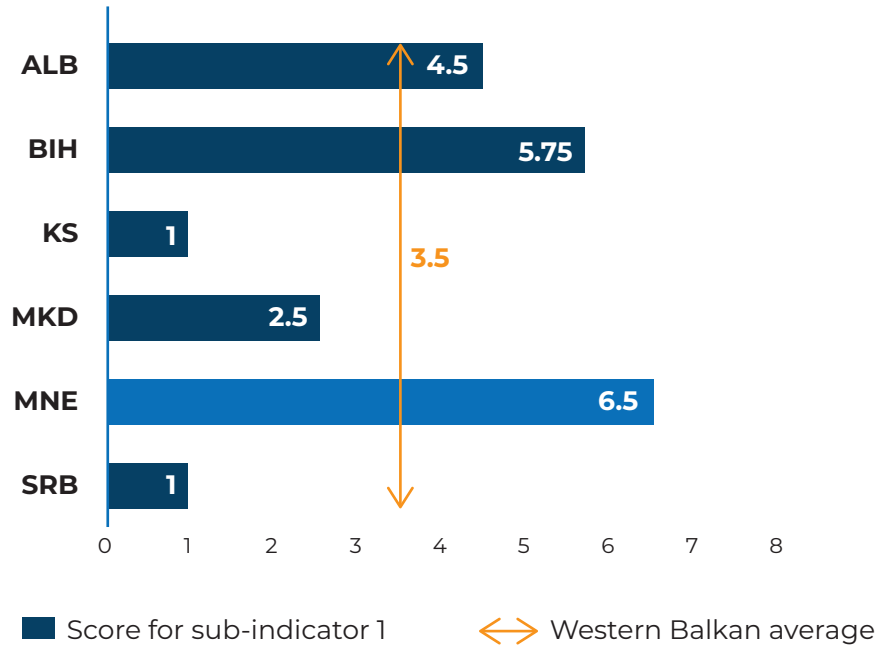
<https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/dal691be-cfa1-4c43-a172-94b47ef40cca?version=1.0>

²³ The 2024 Report on the Work of Agency for Prevention of Corruption, available (in Montenegrin) at:

https://www.antikorupcija.me/media/documents/Izveštaj_o_radu_ASK_u_2024_godini.pdf

How does Montenegro do in regional terms?

Sub-indicator 1: Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service
(maximum score 19.5)



II.2 Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service

Principle 8: The employment framework balances stability and flexibility ensure accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal.

Awarded points per elements in sub-indicator 2: Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service ²⁴

Indicator elements	Element type	Score
E 2.1 Regulations stipulate conditions and limitations for hiring temporary staff	Legislation	0.75/2
E 2.2 Regulations stipulate openness and application of merit-principle when hiring temporary staff	Legislation	0.5/1
E 2.3 Procedure for hiring temporary staff is open and transparent	Practice in implementation	0.75/3.5
E 2.4 Temporary hirings are limited in practice	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 2.5 Key non-state actors consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful	Outcomes and impact	0/3
Total score for sub-indicator 2		2/12.5

²⁴ Through the second sub-indicator, the following SIGMA sub-principles are monitored: The government has a clear policy on public service, and the political-level responsibility for the area is established; Public servants can only be dismissed or demoted based on objective criteria regulated by law, following a due process and subject to judicial review; The public administration uses temporary employment in justified situations and within reasonable time limits; A central body, sufficiently empowered, effectively leads and co-ordinates the human resource management (HRM) system for the public service, provides support to public administration bodies, and monitors implementation; Public administration bodies have sufficient capacities for professional HRM; An effective information system supports HRM processes and provides data allowing for evidence based public service policy.

Since the previous monitoring cycle, transparency of temporary hiring did not advance much either. In January 2025, the Government formed a special commission to monitoring temporary hiring (service contracts and contracts for temporary and occasional work), with the aim of reducing misuse and budgetary spend in this area. Nonetheless, the work of the commission did not result in better transparency, nor tangible limits in the use of contracted staff. Key non-state actors, interviewed for the purpose of the research, also do not consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful. The latest EC report also warned that administrative capacities remain weak also due to delayed recruitments of open vacancies, high number of acting positions and temporary positions.

Temporary hiring, understood in dual meaning, as recruiting civil servants for a fixed term and as contracting staff through service, temporary, consultancy or other contracts, is partially regulated. The limitations and conditions are more advanced for civil servants recruited for fixed term. Civil service law stipulated the indefinite employment as a rule for all civil servants and state employee. Nonetheless, there are certain conditions, when the fixed term employments is allowed:

- replacing a temporarily absent civil servant or state employee, for the duration of the absence, but no longer than two years;
- carrying out project tasks with a defined duration, for the period of the project, but no longer than two years;
- performing temporarily increased workload that cannot be completed with the existing number of civil servants and state employees, for the duration of the temporarily increased workload, but no longer than six months, unless otherwise provided by a special law.

Also, there is an exemption when, due to the urgent needs, individuals can be recruited for period up to six months, without implementing the recruitment procedure in full (applications, testing etc). Still, persons can be recruited in this manner only once, solely from the pool of the candidates who passed the tests of competencies, but were not recruited.²⁵

Therefore, there are relatively clear limitations when it comes to conditions, time and renewal limitations for fixed-term civil servants. Yet, there are no limitations of the potential share of fixed-term civil servants into the total number of civil servants. On the other hand, the service, consultancy and other temporary contracts are regulated by the laws which do not recognise any specifics of public administration as such, namely by the Labour Law and the

²⁵ Law on Civil Servants and State Employees, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 2/2018, 34/2019, 8/2021, 37/2022 - Decision of the CC of Montenegro and 82/2025.

Law on Obligations. The Labour Law regulates work based on a supplemental work contract (Article 202), which lasts up to half of the full working hours, and a contract for occasional and temporary jobs (Article 200), which cannot exceed 120 days.²⁶ The Law on Obligations regulates work based on a contract for specific tasks (Articles 669-672), which is concluded for the execution of a specific task, such as the creation or repair of an item or the performance of physical or intellectual work, etc.²⁷ The percentage of the contracted staff and potential prolongation of contracts are also not limited.

Openness and application of merit principle is also more advanced for procedures of recruiting civil servants for a fixed period of time. This recruitment is conducted via a public vacancy announcement, which encompasses assessment of competencies, knowledge, and skills (written testing and structured interview), compilation of the candidate selection list, interviews with short-listed candidates and selecting individual. These legal provisions are consistently implemented. The exemption to recruit people up to six months without publicly announcement in urgent cases exists, but a degree of openness and merit principle is ensured as such since persons are still recruited the pool of the candidates who passed the tests of competencies and applied to the previous public announcements.²⁸ Contrary to these relatively elaborated procedures, Labour Law and Law on Obligations do not include any provisions requiring an open and transparent hiring procedure on the basis established in these two regulations.

The practice of civil service recruitment is confirmed by the review of the five sample institutions, through FoI requests²⁹. The share of fixed term civil servants is negligible, with the caveat that one institution (Ministry of Health) did not provide response. In four remaining sample institutions (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Tax Administration, Ministry of Sports and Youth) there were no fixed-term employees, apart from the ones who are appointed for a legally prescribed tenure (senior managerial staff, head of administration authority). On the other hand, all four institutions have considerable size of the contracted staff, it ranges between 11 and almost 30 percent), especially

²⁶ Labour Law, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 74/2019, 8/2021, 59/2021, 68/2021, 145/2021, 77/2024, 84/2024 – second law and 86/2024.

²⁷ Law on Obligations, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 47/2008, 4/2011 – second law, 22/2017, and 123/2024

²⁸ Law on Civil Servants and State Employees, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 2/2018, 34/2019, 8/2021, 37/2022 - Decision of the CC of Montenegro and 82/2025.

²⁹ Decision of the Ministry of Justice on the request for free access to information, No. UPI 04-037/25-661/2 of 15 May 2025; Response of the Ministry of Sports and Youth to the letter of Institute Alternative, received on 29 May 2025; Decision of the Tax Administration on the request for free access to information, No. 05-UP-134/3-25 of 23 May 2025; Decision of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs on the request for free access to information, No. UPI 08-037/25-29/2 of 13 May 2025; The Ministry of Health did not respond to the request for free access to information submitted by Institute Alternative on 9 May 2025.

when compared to the total number of civil servants and employees:

- Ministry of Justice: 90 civil servants and state employees and 14 persons hired through the service contract (15.5% of the total number of civil servants and state employees);
- Ministry of Sports and Youth: 44 employed civil servants and state employees and 13 persons hired based on the service contract (29.5% of the total number of civil servants and state employees);
- Tax Administration: there is a total of 513 civil servants and state employees and 60 persons hired based on service contract (11.6% of the total number of civil servants and state employees);
- Ministry of Maritime Affairs: Total number of civil servants and employees is 52, while 11 persons are hired through service contract (21% of the total number of civil servants and state employees).

Key non-state actors, also do not consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful. One key informant explained that temporary hires are often selected based on political considerations rather than merit, with no clear employment criteria in place. Politically suitable individuals are frequently unskilled and inexperienced, sometimes holding questionable educational qualifications, and are employed even when there may already be a surplus of staff. This practice creates an unnecessary financial burden on both the budget and the state. According to the informant, the greatest concern with temporary hiring is the complete lack of clear criteria and transparency.

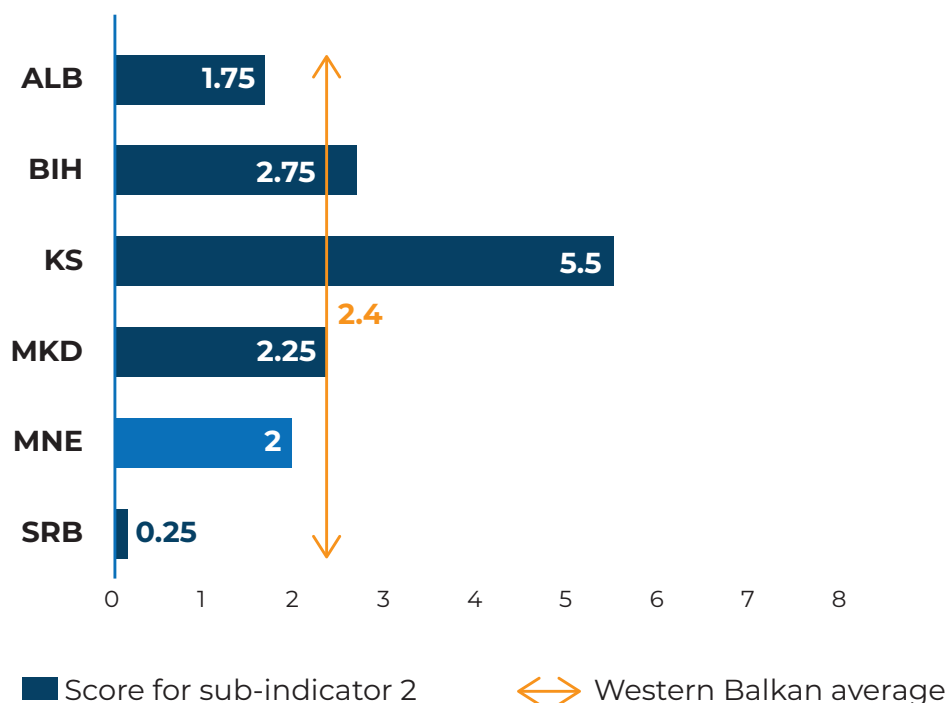
The most common problem with temporary hiring is that there is no proper planning as their integration in the regular workforce planning is missing. Weak job description (terms of reference), weak scrutiny and lack of transparency are listed among the problems as well. Also, there is a high corruption risk, when such contracts are used to circumvent more stringent rules for long term employment, which in effect leads to the human rights violations.

Research conducted by Institute Alternative (IA) also confirmed the poor practice of temporary engagements in state administration. A particularly illustrative example is that of an individual engaged by the Real Estate Administration over a period of 13 years on this basis.³⁰

³⁰ Bojana Pravilović, Nikolina Radonjić, A System Without Oversight: Temporary Engagements in the State Administration of Montenegro, Podgorica, May 2025, available at: <https://institut-alternativa.org/en/43885-2/>

How does Montenegro do in regional terms?

Sub-indicator 2: Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service (maximum score 12.5)



II.3 Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process

Principle 9: Public administration attracts and recruits competent people based on merit and equal opportunities.

Awarded points per elements in sub-indicator 3: Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process³¹

³¹ Through the third sub-indicator, the following SIGMA sub-principles are monitored: The public administration analyses human resources (HR) and prepares and implements HR plans aligned with the budget to ensure the appropriate workforce size, mix of competencies, skills and expertise to fulfil its mission, considering both current and future needs; Public servants are recruited through transparent and open competitions, based on merit; Inclusive recruitment policies and practices support diversity and equal opportunities in the public administration; Recruitment is based on accurate job descriptions providing the required candidate profile (experience, knowledge, skills, competencies) for effective performance, reflected in vacancy announcements, along with work and salary conditions; Selection committees are composed of members qualified to perform the assessment of candidates against the job requirements, without any conflict of interest, and free from political influence; Selection methods provide fair and valid assessment of the experience, knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform the job and enable the selection of the most suitable candidates; Recruitment and selection processes are efficient, timely, user-friendly and supported by digital tools; Applicants are informed of recruitment decisions in a timely manner and have the right to ask for justification and appeal through administrative and judicial channels.

Indicator elements	Element type	Score
E 3.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements of openness, transparency and merit principle of the recruitment process	Strategy and policy	0.75/0.75
E 3.2 Regulations stipulate openness, transparency, and merit principle of the recruitment process	Legislation	0.25/1.25
E 3.3 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are made broadly publicly available	Practice in implementation	1.5/3
E 3.4 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are presented in a way to motivate and attract external candidates	Practice in implementation	0/2
E 3.5 Responsible institution provides support and guidance to applicants	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 3.6 There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates	Practice in implementation	3/3
E 3.7 The application procedure imposes minimum administrative/paperwork burden on candidates	Practice in implementation	0/4
E 3.8 Candidates can supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 3.9 Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are made publicly available, with due respect to the protection of personal information	Practice in implementation	0/4
E 3.10 Information about annulled public competitions, including reasoning for the annulment, is made publicly available	Practice in implementation	2/4
E 3.11 Key informants consider recruitment into civil service as transparent and merit-based	Outcomes and impact	0/2.5
E 3.12 Citizens' perception of merit-based civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact	0/2
E 3.13 Citizens' perception of the influence of personal connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact	0/2
E 3.14 Citizens' perception of the influence of political connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact	0/2
Total score for sub-indicator 2		7.5/36.5

The reporting period did not see breakthroughs when it comes to transparency and implementation of merit principle either. In late July 2025, the parliament adopted amendments to the civil service law, which should introduce the obligation to select the best ranked candidates for all positions apart from top management. Also, accompanying decree brought some improvements when it comes to the definition of competencies, and the composition of testing panels, which should be depoliticised. Nonetheless, these amendments were not applied during the reporting period. Consequently, no visible improvements were observed on the ground, as reflected in the very negative perceptions of key informants and of citizens, with more than 80 per cent of them disagreeing with the statement that public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit.

Strategic framework, in particular 2022-2026 Public Administration Reform Strategy³², envisages improvements of openness, transparency and merit principle of the recruitment process. Within Strategic Goal 3 “*Professional Public Administration*”, two operational objectives address transparency, openness, and the merit principle.

Operational Objective 3.1 aims to create an efficient human resource planning system through depoliticization, improved recruitment, and further digitalization. The focus is on making hiring more transparent and competitive, ensuring it is based on competence, skills, and abilities, and standardizing HR management across the civil service. Key measures include amending the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees and adopting a Competency Framework, led by the Ministry of Public Administration and the Human Resources Management Authority. Additional activities under this objective target greater openness and transparency, such as improving candidate selection procedures and introducing an electronic application system for job postings and competitions.

Operational Objective 3.2 – Public Administration as an Attractive Employer focuses on strengthening the merit principle through an efficient promotion and reward system, performance appraisal, and continuous professional development. Adoption of a Competency Framework for all categories of civil servants will improve alignment between employees’ skills and job requirements, thereby increasing efficiency and supporting strategic goals. The system of performance appraisal should be linked to training, professional development, and the Competency Framework. It should also provide both material rewards for outstanding performance and non-material recognition, such as priority for training, additional leave, or similar incentives. Civil servants

³² Ministry of Public Administration, Public Administration Reform Strategy 2022-2026 and AP 2022-2024 ENG, February 2022, available at: <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/0aaa040b-0413-46b6-a8c7-5b2c10cdc9dc>

who consistently excel should have opportunities for career advancement. Under this objective, **Activity 3.2.5** seeks to improve performance appraisal, with responsibility shared between the Human Resources Management Authority, civil society organizations, and local self-government units.

Regulations only minimally stipulate openness of the recruitment process. According to the Law on Civil Servants and Employees³³, internal job announcement, public job announcement, and public competition are published by the administrative authority responsible for human resource management, within five days from the date of receiving the decision to initiate the recruitment procedure. Public job announcements and competitions are published on the website of the Human Resources Administration and in a daily newspaper with national coverage, two different nation-wide means of advertising vacancies. For example, the social networks, despite their attractiveness and appeal among population of different ages, are not used to increase the openness of calls and procedures.

There is no mandatory obligation to publish a list of successful candidates, nor the information on the selected candidate. The procedure of annulling the competition procedure is regulated.³⁴ Still, there is no obligation to publish the decision on the annulment. In practice, however, on the relevant section of the HRA website, information about annulled recruitment procedures is published, but the explanation only refers to the decision on annulment issued by the hiring institution—without the actual decision being made publicly available.

In order to assess **how the provisions on publication of vacancy announcements are implemented**, we have reviewed five announcements of five sample institutions³⁵. They were all advertised through a single portal for all recruitments in central state administration and through additional means (the daily newspaper “Pobjeda”). Yet, the social media and websites of hiring institutions were not used as additional advertising means. Consequently, vacancy announcements for public competitions are not presented in a way to motivate and attract external candidates. None of the five public vacancy announcements from the sample institutions contain information presented in a way that would make them more attractive to candidates, such as infographics, images, or visual elements. Each announcement is

³³ Article 42 of Law on Civil Servants and Employees “Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 2/2018, 34/2019, 8/2021, 37/2022 - Decision of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro, and 82/2025, available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/b2fdf723-dcc6-47fc-b913-8cd7a5e28f2e?version=1.0>

³⁴ If the ad cannot be implemented due to changes in regulations, changes in the act on internal organization and systematization or other circumstances that occurred after the announcement was published, the head of the state body will withdraw the advertisement and suspend the procedure for filling the vacancy

³⁵ Ministry of Sport and Youth, Ministry of Health, Tax Administration, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Ministry of Justice

available as a PDF document with the necessary information for application (such as the required documentation, how the candidate selection process is conducted, and to which address the documentation should be sent), but no further efforts to attract candidates are made.

The HRA provides only minimal support and guidance to applicants.

There is no simplified guide or roadmap through the public competition process available, which would outline key rights and duties stipulated by the key by-laws for the implementation of the recruitment procedure. This institution announced in its 2024 work reports that its website would soon feature the special section for the candidates, with plans to provide answers to frequently asked questions and roadmap through the recruitment procedures. Nonetheless, the section was not developed, despite the clearly visible placeholders on the institution's website.³⁶ Only for senior managerial staff and heads of administration authorities, there is a Manual with positive and negative indicators for the assessment of the five core competencies regulated by the civil service law.³⁷ On the other hand, the observed announcements contain information on the materials required for the preparation for theoretical and practical examination of their knowledge and skills. The materials themselves are not available, although they refer to the legal acts and strategies which are usually available online. There is no section on frequently asked questions with answers provided. The clear guidance on how to ask for clarification is also lacking, although each announcement contains phone number and email address with the name and surname of the contact person assigned for particular announcement.

The efforts have been made to reduce administrative burden for external candidates.³⁸ During the reporting period, the legal provision which stipulates the need to pass the examination for work in state authorities has been still valid, with the exemption that a person can be recruited without this exam with the obligation to pass it within the first year of employment. However, as this exemption has caused confusion in practice and judicial reviews of the recruitment procedures,³⁹ the amendments to the civil service law which were adopted in July 2025. Consequently, the unreasonable barriers for external candidates can be expected in the future, especially since the bylaw which regulates the application and scheduling of state exams does not contain

³⁶ Candidates' Corner (Kutak za candidate), section of the website of the Human Resource Administration being developed (as of early October 2025), available at: <https://uzk.gov.me/vodic/>

³⁷ Human Resource Administration, Manual on competencies for senior management bodies and persons from the category of senior management staff, Podgorica, 2019, available (in Montenegrin) at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/86fb759b-fa4d-4f60-ad53-d1c33fa42cb0?version=1.0>

³⁸ For example, since 2018, candidates are not obliged to submit health certificates.

³⁹ Insights obtained via participation of the IA's researcher in the working group for amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees.

safeguards which would eliminate undue influences.⁴⁰ As a result, external candidates might be deprived of opportunity to pass this exam in a required time period. For certain civil service positions, there are additional exams required (e.g. internal audit, public procurement), but they are reasonable given the specific tasks performed. Five vacancy announcements that we have reviewed transpose these legal requirements into the content of each individual announcement (state exam, public procurement exam). Since the exemption to pass the state exam in the first year of the employment has been valid in the reporting period, we have assessed that Montenegro has met this element.

The application procedure is not structured in a manner which would relieve candidates as much as possible from additional administrative burden and paperwork. Although the Law on Administrative Procedure prescribes the principle of exchange of data *ex officio* among public authorities⁴¹, this principle is not fully enshrined in civil service legislation, since only the information criminal records of the Ministry of Justice are collected *ex officio*. All other documents are collected and submitted by candidates themselves, even those kept in state registries (such as proof of the passed state examination). Also, there is more than three types of documents required to apply for the job based on the five cases we reviewed (an application form for the open position, a CV, a copy of a biometric ID card, a certificate or proof of required work experience, a certificate of passed professional exam for work in state administration, and a diploma or certificate confirming the required level and type of education).

Candidates are not allowed to supplement the missing documentation within the clearly defined time period of at least five working days. Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are also not made publicly available. Understandably, they should pay respect to the personal data protection, but their proactive publication would increase openness and transparency of recruitment procedures. Even though in previous years the results of the testing process were regularly published, the HRMA stopped this practice as of mid-February 2024.⁴² It should be noted that the recruitment decisions are available on demand, based on the FoI request, but they are not proactively published, which is the reason for failed achievement of this element. Information about annulled public competitions is made publicly available, but it does not contain the reasoning and the full decision detailing its rationale.

⁴⁰ Regulation on the Program and method of passing the professional exam for work in state bodies, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 79/2018, 17/2022 and 73/2022

⁴¹ Law on Administrative Procedure, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. br. 56/2014, 20/2015, 40/2016 and 37/2017

⁴² The most recent information published in that section of the website are dated as of 14.02.2024. https://www.gov.me/vijesti?page=1&sort=published_at&tags=5284

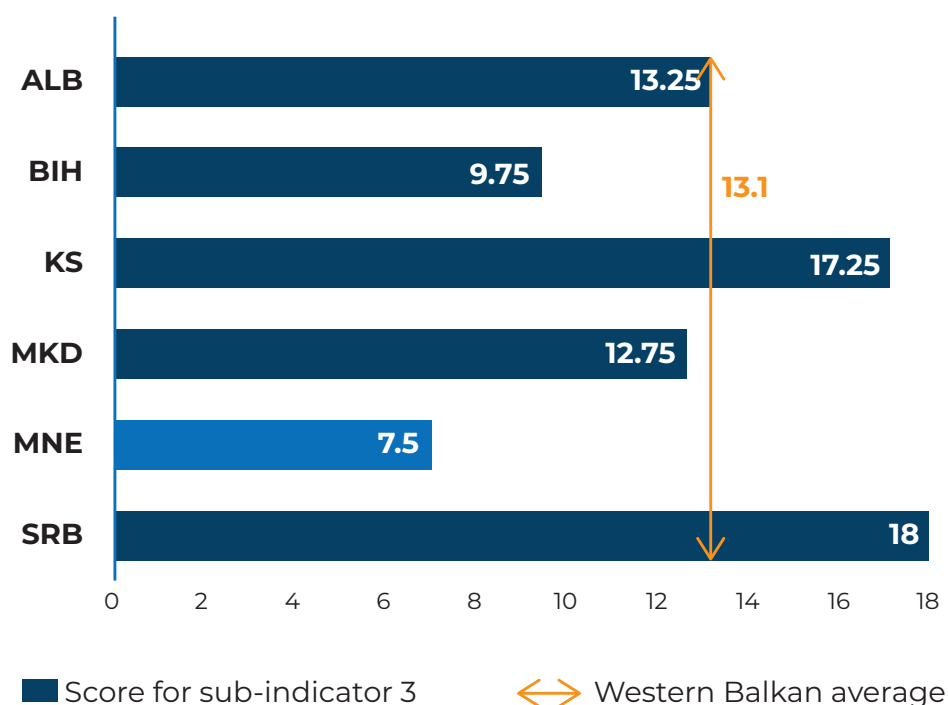
Key informants also do not consider civil service recruitment as transparent and merit-based process. All three key informants interviewed fully disagree that the process of recruitment into civil service is based on merit, while regarding transparency their views are more nuanced. Two informants tend to disagree that the process is transparent, while one of them fully disagrees. Their views pointed out the following aspects as key impediments to the establishment of merit principle:

- lack of tight guidelines on internal organization;
- lack of standardized eligibility conditions and job descriptions for similar positions;
- no guarantees that the politically exposed persons will take no part in the testing procedure;
- still no guarantee that the best ranked candidate will be recruited;
- not enough information on the testing procedure, including no comprehensive and recorded data on the questions and answers given during the interviewing procedure;
- party patronage instead of depoliticization;
- lack of promotion and rewards policies aimed at retaining experts.

When it comes to the transparency of the process, informants highlighted that, despite general criteria enshrined in the law and the by-law, clear guidelines for their implementation are lacking. In addition, one informant emphasised that the documents and the reports on the testing procedure contain no justification for points allocated during the interviewing procedure. Citizens' perceptions are not more favourable either, as the vast majority of them (81%) disagree or strongly disagree that public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit. Moreover, 90,2% of them agree or strongly agree that one needs personal connections to get a job in the public administration (55,7% strongly agree and 34,4% agree). Similarly, 85,6% of respondents agree that one needs political connections to get a job in the public administration (i.e., membership in political party/organisation, personal ties with political parties).

How does Montenegro do in regional terms?

Sub-indicator 3: Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process (maximum score 36.5)



II.4 Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence

Principle 10: Effective leadership is fostered through competence, stability, professional autonomy and responsiveness of accountable top managers

Awarded points per element in sub-indicator 4: Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence⁴³

⁴³ Through the fourth sub-indicator, the following SIGMA sub-principles are monitored: The law establishes top managers as a specific category. The scope of top management is adequately defined, ensuring that senior managerial positions in ministries and agencies are not treated as political offices; Top management positions are made attractive through fair recruitment, competitive remuneration, professional challenges, autonomy and mitigation of career risks; Recruitment procedures are merit-based, professionally led, impartial and transparent, allowing selection and appointment of top managers with sufficient high-level experience, knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform their job well against predefined standards; Recruitment policies and practices support equal opportunities, gender balance and non-discrimination in top managerial positions; Top managers in public administration have clearly defined objectives, aligned with the mission of the organisation and objectives of the government, and their performance is regularly assessed; Top managers in public administration have sufficient professional and managerial autonomy, enabling them to assume responsibility for the management of staff, resources, and work.

Indicator elements	Element type	Score
E 4.1 Strategic framework envisages strengthening of professionalism of the civil service top management	Strategy and policy	0.5/0.5
E 4.2 Regulations stipulate competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of civil service top management	Legislation	1.5/1.5
E 4.3 Regulations stipulate that acting appointments to top management positions are only made from within the civil service, for a limited period	Legislation	0.5/1
E 4.4 Regulations stipulate objective criteria for the termination of hiring of top management positions	Legislation	1/2
E 4.5 Existence of procedures on appointments to top management positions outside of the scope of the civil service legislation	Legislation	0/3
E 4.6 The merit-based recruitment for top management positions is applied in practice	Practice in implementation	4/4
E 4.7 Acting appointments are, in practice, only made from within the civil service	Practice in implementation	0/3
E 4.8 Ratio of eligible candidates per top managerial-level vacancy	Practice in implementation	0/2.5
E4.9 Share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions	Practice in implementation	0/2.5
E4.10 Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is merit-based and that they are protected from undue political influence	Outcomes and impact	0/2.5
Total score for sub-indicator 4		7.5/22.5

Top managers are still not effectively protected from undue influences, as not all the dismissal criteria are objectively verifiable. Namely, heads of state administration authorities can be dismissed if their annual reports indicate irregularities in the work of that authority, without due procedure or connection with the disciplinary responsibility. Also, acting appointments are widely used, while the provisions which would introduce necessary safeguards, such as to choose acting officials among the already employed staff, were not introduced despite the clear EU conditionality. Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is neither merit-based nor that they are protected from undue political influence.

The 2022-2026 PAR strategy and accompanying action plans contain measures and activities aimed at strengthening of professionalism of the civil service top management, with clear timeline and roles. The key activities include raising awareness among Senior Civil Servants about managerial responsibility,

analysing the civil service system, and adopting reforms to improve merit-based management. These efforts involve amending the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees to enhance mobility, testing of competencies, as well as introducing a Competency Framework for all civil servant categories to guide recruitment, performance appraisal and professional development. Also, the development and delivery of specific mentoring and training programmes for leadership competencies is planned. The PAR Strategy identifies one or more responsible institutions for their execution.

Regulations stipulate competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of civil service top management, in a sense that it is mandatory to publish announcement for recruitment of the top management, that there is a regulated procedure for testing of competencies/skills of prospective senior managers and heads of administration bodies and that one of the three top ranked candidates need to be selected. Nonetheless, the acting appointments of top management are poorly regulated. Under the provision of civil service law, prior to adoption of its amendments in July 2025 (after the reporting period), there were no restrictions regarding the pool of candidates from which the acting top managers could be recruited (e.g. among civil servants of a particular ministry or administration authority). Although the civil service law stipulates that the acting appointments could last up to six months, the practice says otherwise as well as official interpretation of the Administrative Inspectorate which said that law only limits acting tenure to six months, but it does not limit the potential renewal of the tenure for the same person. Such interpretation is widely used in practice. The research conducted by the IA demonstrated that during the period from November 2023 to February 2025, acting tenures were frequently renewed without initiating open competition. Of the total 184 individuals appointed as acting officials, 95 (51.6%) were appointed more than once—some twice, some three times, and in one case, even four times.⁴⁴ The amendments to the civil service law limited the potential number of the consecutive acting tenures to the maximum of two for the same person, but these amendments were not effectively applied during the reporting period.

Regulations to a large extent stipulate objective criteria for the termination of hiring of top management positions. These criteria namely include: termination of mandate due to recurrent negative performance appraisals, internal reorganization or abolishment of the state authority,⁴⁵ objectively

⁴⁴ Valentina Kalezić, Officials with Indefinite acting Tenures: A Shortcut for Bypassing Open Competitions, Institute Alternative, May 2025, available at: <https://institut-alternativa.org/en/officials-with-indefinite-acting-tenures-a-shortcut-for-bypassing-open-competitions/>

⁴⁵ A person performing duties as senior managerial staff shall have their mandate terminated if the state authority is abolished, if the part of the duties that does not fall under the competence of another state authority is abolished, or if their position is abolished by the adoption of a new act or an amendment to the existing act on internal organization and job classification.

verifiable circumstances such as a final court ruling for a criminal offense, loss of citizenship, permanent incapacity for work, etc. Also, their mandate can end due to the serious breach of the official duty, as confirmed in the due disciplinary procedure. Nonetheless, the 2021 amendments to the civil service law introduced additional ground for termination of mandate for heads of state administration authorities – a top layer of senior civil servants. They can be dismissed at the proposal of their respective portfolio ministers if they fail to provide the annual work report or if the annual reports indicate irregularities in the work of that authority. Since the procedure to determine irregularities is not elaborated, and it does not fall under the scope of the disciplinary responsibility, we think that it might be too arbitrary and subjective.

Civil service law leaves room for the final decision on the top management to the discretionary power of the Government, and its Commission for Personnel and Administrative Issues. Although the Government is guided by the ranking list, which contains the top three candidates, it has the power to overturn the proposal of the portfolio minister and it is not necessarily guided by the assessment of the candidates' competencies. Therefore, it cannot be stated that there are no procedures on appointments to top management positions outside of the scope of the civil service legislation.

The merit-based recruitment for top management positions is applied in practice, based on the review of the procedure implemented in five sample institutions. In all the analysed procedures, only one candidate underwent testing procedure, which included the written essay and structured interview (after satisfactory assessment of the essay). The practice of the appointment of individuals to acting tenures is, however, much worse. In its most recent report on Montenegro, SIGMA warned of the frequent practice of appointing officials without open competitions, often beyond the timeframes prescribed by law, and highlighted that acting positions are increasingly being assigned to individuals from outside the public administration.⁴⁶ In an attempt to determine whether acting officials were appointed from within the existing workforce or from outside the state administration, we analysed the relevant decisions, supporting rationales, and available staff lists within ministries. However, the data is inconsistent. While some appointment rationales clearly indicate the prior position of the acting official, others merely list their job title, without providing further detail. The data of official institutions, the HRA and Secretariat General of the Government, are also inconsistent. While the HRA stated that out of 97 persons appointed as acting officials at the senior managerial positions in the period from August, 2024 to August, 2025, 85 of

⁴⁶ SIGMA, Public Administration in Montenegro 2024: Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration; Monitoring report, 27 January 2025. Available at: https://www.sigmaweb.org/en/publications/public-administration-in-montenegro-2024_6b3dec38-en.html

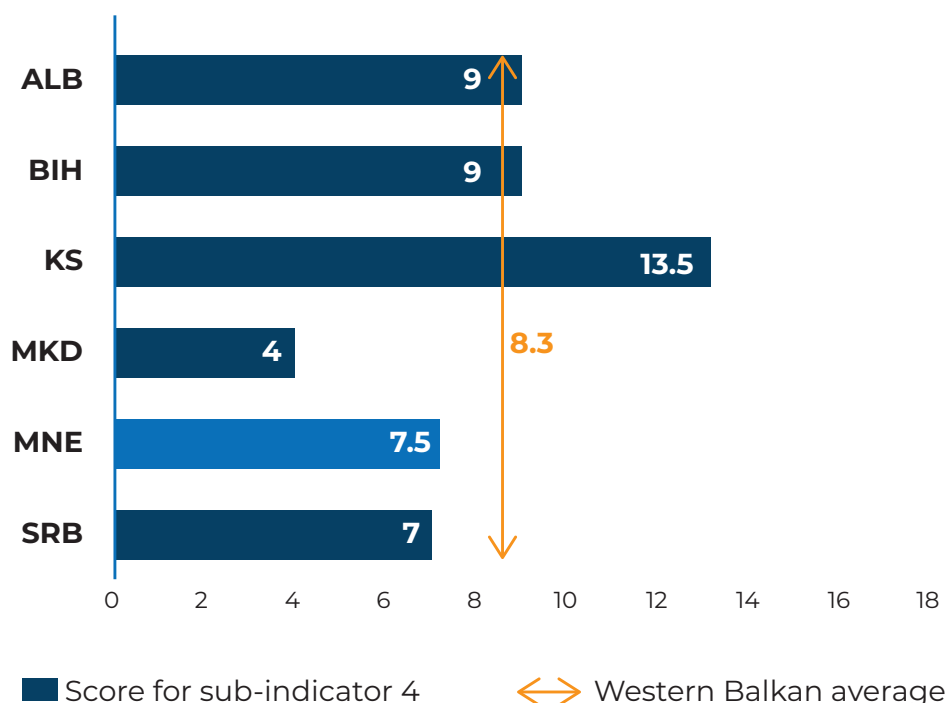
them did not come from the existing workforce (or more than 85%). On the other hand, the Secretariat General of the Government stated that out of 110 acting officials appointed at the senior managerial positions in the same period, 58 of them did not come from the existing workforce (52%).

Competitiveness of procedures for recruitment of top managers is still low, as it is well below the average of at least three or five candidates per vacancy. As already highlighted, in five procedures thoroughly analysed for the purpose of this report, only one candidate underwent the testing procedure. The general competitiveness is higher: 2.1 candidates for top management positions according to the 2024 HRA report. Still, it is well below the legally prescribed threshold for shortlisting the candidates (of top three). Additionally, despite the relatively elaborated procedures to appoint top managers to full tenure, in practice, their use is disproportionate to the use of the possibility to appoint acting officials. In 2024, 41 top managers were appointed to a full term, following the legally prescribed procedure. On the other hand, there were a total of 244 acting appointments in the same period. Therefore, share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions is considerably high.

Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is neither merit-based nor that they are protected from undue political influence. One key informant even described the situation as devastating for the state and civil service, claiming that appointments are driven by political interests and patronage rather than merit or competence, serving to secure party loyalty and personal gain instead of advancing the public good. Other key informant stated that procedures are poorly implemented, as questions asked in the interviewing procedure, which plays a decisive role in the appointment decision, tend to be basic, while transparent justifications of the assessment are not provided. Acting appointments further undermine merit principle.

How does Montenegro do in regional terms?

Sub-indicator 4: Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence (maximum score 22.5)



II.5 Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration

Principle 10: Public servants are motivated, fairly and competitively paid and have good working conditions

Awarded points per elements in sub-indicator 5: Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Through the fifth sub-indicator, the following SIGMA sub-principles are monitored: The public administration offers a competitive package of financial and non-financial compensation: remuneration and benefits, development and career opportunities, job security, and a respectful and inclusive work environment, to attract, motivate and retain employees and teams with the required skills and competencies; The salary system is transparent to employees and the public, while ensuring a sufficient degree of protection of sensitive personal data.

Indicator elements	Element type	Score
E 5.1 Regulations define a simply structured remuneration system	Legislation	0.5/1.5
E 5.2 Information on civil service remuneration system is available online	Practice in implementation	0/2
E 5.3 Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information exist	Practice in implementation	0/2
E 5.4 Key informants consider information on the civil service remuneration system as transparent and clear	Outcomes and impact	0/3.5
Total score for sub-indicator 2		0.5/9

Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration remained low. There were no changes of the relatively complex structure of salary. Proactive publication of information on salaries has not advanced either. Apart from the general coefficients, and decision on the calculated value of the coefficient for salaries, there is no other information on salaries at the level of entire civil service. Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information are also not provided.

Remuneration system in Montenegrin state administration is rather complex, with no significant improvements in the recent period. Although the law contains table with coefficients assigned to each type of job position, as well as predefined supplements, Montenegrin framework lacks direct link between this variable part and performance appraisal. Nonetheless, the supplements are subject to social dialogue, and are finally determined by the collective bargaining agreements, which, for the most supplements, are not bounded by the pre-defined limits. The Law also does not specify the mutual exclusiveness of some of these types of supplement pay, which combined can alter the base salary in a significant way, making the remuneration system less transparent. The law also introduced the variable part of the salary, which should be performance based, as it is allocated based on the exceptional results of work or increased workload. Yet, none of the regulations further outlined the procedure to determine those results or workload.⁴⁸ They are also not grounded in results of performance appraisal nor they are linked to those procedures. Since this is a significant addition to the base salary and it is left to be decided to by the bylaw of the Ministry, and because of the similarity between the 2nd and 3rd supplement type (which makes the same employees eligible for both automatically), this component is assessed as deficient. There is no direct link between this variable part and performance appraisal.

⁴⁸ Law on salaries of public sector employees, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 16/2016, 83/2016, 21/2017, 42/2017, 12/2018, 39/2018 – Decision of the CC, 42/2018 and 34/2019.

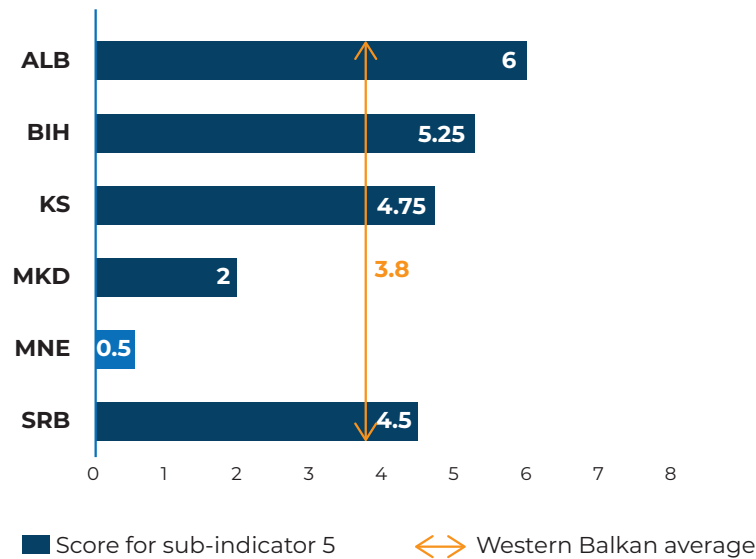
Apart from the general coefficients, and decision on the calculated value of the coefficient for salaries, there is no other information on salaries at the level of entire civil service. The websites of the individual ministries usually contain the list of public officials (top management) with their salaries, but this obligation is not prescribed or taken up and presented for other civil servants or civil service levels. Job announcements also do not provide information on salaries, while the gender sensitive information on remuneration system is also missing.

Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information are also not provided. SIGMA in its most recent monitoring report also stressed that analysis on remuneration beyond legislation is not provided. It further noted that not even the salary scales and average salaries by civil service category are publicly presented.

Views of key informants diverge when it comes to the transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration system; yet, the two of the three key informants tend to disagree or fully disagree that the remuneration system is transparent, and fully disagree that it is sufficiently clear. Unlike for some other issues regarding civil service management, one of the three key informants tend to agree that remuneration system is transparent and clear. Yet, informants who think the opposite, argued that numerous supplements are difficult to track, while bonuses (variable pay) are not sufficiently connected and entrenched in a comprehensive performance management system. "There are some basic general principles in place to ensure that the salary system remains equitable across different levels of civil service, but they are not comprehensively tracked while complex salary structure may undermine the principle of equal pay for equal work", informant argued.

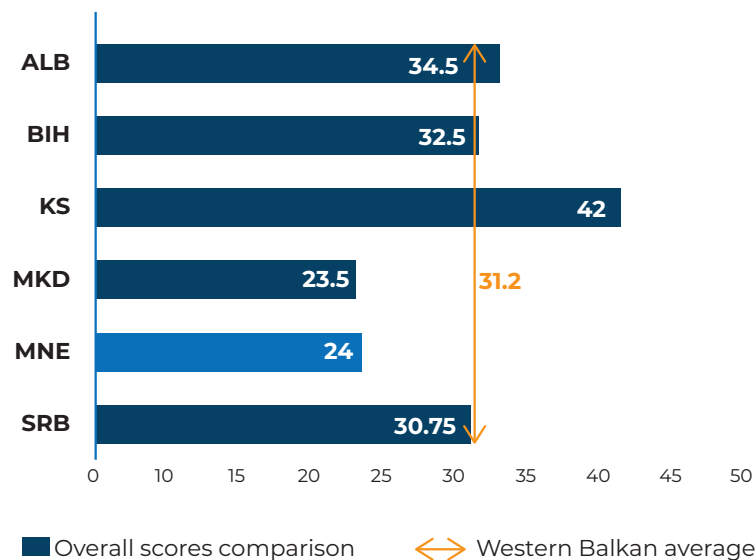
How does Montenegro do in regional terms?

Sub-indicator 5: Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration (maximum score 9)



Overall scores comparison in the Public Service and Human Resource Management area

Indicator: Transparency, openness and meritocracy of civil service and human resource management



Regional overview report for Public Service and Human Resource Management area, with results for all WB administrations is available at: www.par-monitor.org

II.6 Recommendations for the Strategy for PAR

II.6.1 TRACKING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAR MONITOR 2021/2022

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Type</i> ^{*49}	<i>Status</i> ^{**}	<i>Explanation</i>
Human Resource Management Information System should include data on all forms of temporary engagements in the civil service.	Short term	No action taken.	The Government formed the commission track service contracts, but no effort was made to include data on all forms of temporary engagements in the HRMIS.
Personnel Plans should include data on planned and actual staff engaged outside of the scope of the Law on Civil Servants and Employees, such as temporary engagements as well as experts engaged through technical assistance projects.	Short term	No action taken.	Not only that the scope of personnel plan has not improved, but the Government failed to adopt a comprehensive plan which would encompass all ministries, state administration bodies and services of the Government for five consecutive years.
Personnel Plan should include data on gender structure of civil servants and employees in each category and classification.	Short term	No action taken.	Not only that the scope of personnel plan has not improved, but the Government failed to adopt a comprehensive plan which would encompass all ministries, state administration bodies and services of the Government for five consecutive years.

**short term/mid-term/long term*

***implemented/partially implemented/not implemented*

⁴⁹ Recommendations for which the time needed for implementation is deemed to be up to one year are labeled as short term. Medium-term recommendations are those which can be implemented in a period from one year up to three years. Long-term require more than three years to be implemented.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Type</i> ^{*50}	<i>Status</i> ^{**}	<i>Explanation</i>
Civil service data contained in the Personnel Plan should be made available in one of the open data formats and published on the open data portal.	Short term	Partially implemented	Although the comprehensive personnel plan has not been prepared, the available data for relatively large number of ministries and state administration authorities have been published on the Open Data Portal: https://data.gov.me/dataset/broj-sistemizovanih-popunjenih-radnih-mjesta-po-kategorijizvanja
Annual report of the HRMA should be expanded to include information and data on areas such as: career development, salaries/wages, corruption/integrity issues and measures, disciplinary procedures and decisions, as well as assessments of state of play in civil service, professionalisation, de-politicisation and outcomes of the implementation of the Law on Civil Servants and Employees.	Short term	No action taken.	No efforts were made to improve the reporting of HRA. Its annual reports contain no data on remuneration system, turnover of staff or career development. Integrity is covered solely within the reports of Agency for Prevention of Corruption, while disciplinary liability is covered by the reports of Disciplinary Commission. Nonetheless, the HRA, which should monitor civil service policy, does not put additional efforts to systematically analyse available data and assess them to track impact and implementation challenges.

**short term/mid-term/long term*

***implemented/partially implemented/not implemented*

⁵⁰ Recommendations for which the time needed for implementation is deemed to be up to one year are labeled as short term. Medium-term recommendations are those which can be implemented in a period from one year up to three years. Long-term require more than three years to be implemented.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Type</i> ^{*51}	<i>Status</i> ^{**}	<i>Explanation</i>
Transparent procedures and criteria should be adopted for recruitment of short-term staff outside of the scope of systematisations (ugovori o djelu) and temporary engagements of experts in the state administration	Short term	No action taken.	Although the Government pledged to better monitor temporary engagements, its commission established for this purpose did not come up with the new procedures or criteria. Monitoring of service contracts, conducted by the IA, demonstrated that, although some institutions adopted plans for contracted staff, they were not systematically implemented nor their quality ensures necessary degree of transparency and merit.
Duration of all forms of temporary engagement contracts should be unambiguously limited with clear and transparent criteria for possible renewal of such contacts after their expiry.	Short term	Partially implemented	This recommendation is assessed as partially implemented, because of the tasks of the Government's commission for tracking service contracts, which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of the existing contracts to determine the need for concluding new contracts for services and temporary or occasional work in budget-funded spending units; • compliance of concluded contracts with the law, • compliance of compensations provided under such contracts with the financial resources allocated for this form of temporary engagement. Nonetheless, the results of the work of the commission have not been effective during the reporting period.

**short-term/ medium-term/long-term*

***implemented/ partially implemented/not implemented*

⁵¹ Recommendations for which the time needed for implementation is deemed to be up to one year are labeled as short term. Medium-term recommendations are those which can be implemented in a period from one year up to three years. Long-term require more than three years to be implemented.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Type*</i> ⁵²	<i>Status**</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
The Law on Civil Servants and State Employees should clearly specify which criminal acts disqualify a candidate for recruitment, as the current formulation leaves space for discretionary decisions.	Short term	No action taken.	The Law on Civil Servants and State Employees has been amended in mid-2025, but the amendments did not specify criminal acts which disqualify a candidate for recruitment
Transparency of the outcomes of the recruitment procedures should be ensured, so that decisions and reasoning of the ranking and selection of all participating candidates in all recruitment phases, as well as on the annulment of public competitions, should be made publicly available, with due respect for the protection of personal information.	Short term	No action taken.	There were no efforts made to increase transparency of recruitment decisions.
The work of the Governmental Commission for Personnel and Administrative Issues must be made transparent and documentation about its work and sessions made available to public, particularly in the area of appointments and dismissals.	Short term	No action taken.	There were no efforts to increase transparency of the work of the Government's commission. Within the process of development of the special Law on Government, the IA recommended to introduce obligation of proactive publishing of the minutes from the commissions' session. The recommendation was not taken up, while the Law on Government is still to be officially proposed by the Government.

**short term/mid-term/long term*

***implemented/partially implemented/not implemented*

⁵² Recommendations for which the time needed for implementation is deemed to be up to one year are labeled as short term. Medium-term recommendations are those which can be implemented in a period from one year up to three years. Long-term require more than three years to be implemented.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Type*</i> ⁵³	<i>Status**</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
The Law on Civil Servants and State Employees should be amended so as to prevent the current practice of prolonging the formal limits of acting managers' mandate by simple reappointment after the first contract expires. Additionally, appointment procedure for acting positions should be covered by the Law's sanction provisions.	Short-term	Partially implemented	The amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees, adopted in July 2025, limited number of acting terms to maximum two, in duration of six months. However, there were no sanctions specifically introduced for appointment procedure for acting positions.
The Law on Wages should be amended in order to specify mutual exclusiveness of all types of supplement pay, as well as impose precise limitations on their amounts, as opposed to leaving the matter to be decided by the collective bargaining agreements.	Short-term	No action taken.	Although the draft of the amendments to the law regulating public sector wages has been published in December 2024, the Government announced that it needed more work on this act, and no new versions have been published or adopted. The previously prepared draft has made some minor changes regarding salary supplements, such as merging two different supplements into one, but it did not introduce any thresholds regarding the potential threshold for mutual exclusiveness.

**short term/mid-term/long term*

***implemented/partially implemented/not implemented*

⁵³ Recommendations for which the time needed for implementation is deemed to be up to one year are labeled as short term. Medium-term recommendations are those which can be implemented in a period from one year up to three years. Long-term require more than three years to be implemented.

II.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2024/2025 MONITOR REPORT

Recommendations from the monitoring cycle 2024/2025 for the Public Service and Human Resource Management area are listed below. The recommendations are grouped into three types, according to the estimated time needed for their implementation. Recommendations for which the assessed time for implementation is up to one year are labelled as short-term. Medium-term recommendations should be implementable within a period of one to three years. Long-term recommendations require more than three years to be implemented.

All the recommendations that have not been fulfilled from the previous monitoring round, remain relevant, and should be regularly tracked. The recommendations below are listed to encompass the more recent developments and anticipated reforms in the field.

Short-term recommendations:

- The Human Resource Administration, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Government should prepare and publish the reports on civil service management, according to the methodology adopted in 2021, which has not been regularly utilized for improving the policy oversight and transparency in this area;
- In addition, the methodology for reporting on civil service management should be updated to reflect the recent legislative improvements, namely the limitation of number of renewals of acting tenures and the selection of the top-ranked candidate;
- The Parliament should expedite the procedure of adoption of the new Law on Free Access to Information, which has been in parliamentary procedure for more than ten months as of late 2025, with an aim of increasing transparency of civil service data;
- The public administration authorities should adjust their practices of proactive publication of civil service data to the new procedures envisaged by the proposed Law on Free Access to Information;
- The Government should ensure timely preparation and publication in an Open Data format of the 2026 staffing plan, and ensure that it encompasses all the institutions which fall under its scope.

Medium-term recommendations:

- The Government should establish the centralised register of service contracts and other temporary engagements, which should be systematised and categorised according to encompass the following criteria: public administration body, type of services provided, the duration of the contract, the number of renewals of the contract, remuneration

etc.; Such register should be regularly updated and published in user-friendly formats at the Government's website and Open Data Portal;

- Based on the centralised register of temporary engagements, the Government should establish a risk register, which would automatically flag the temporary engagements which had been repeatedly and excessively renewed, which do not contain the description of type of service provided, remuneration data and other predefined safeguards;
- The Government, the Human Resource Administration and the Ministry of Public Administration should further develop competency frameworks for civil service to encompass specific job descriptions across the public administration institutions and ensure that civil servants are effectively included in the process;
- The Government and the Parliament should prepare and pass legislation which would clearly limit and outline procedural steps for the use of service contracts and temporary engagement in the context of public administration.

METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

For producing this report for Montenegro, the following research methods and tools were used for data collection and calculation of elements:

- Analysis of official documentation, data, and official websites
- Requests for free access to information
- Interviews with stakeholders and key informants.

Monitoring heavily relied on the analysis of official documents publicly available on the websites of administration bodies and on the data and information contained therein. However, in cases where the data was not available, researchers sent requests for free access to information to relevant institutions in order to obtain information necessary for awarding points for the elements.

Table 4. FOI requests sent in Montenegro

Institution	Date of request	Date of reply to the request
Ministry of Maritime Affairs	9.5.2025	13.5.2025
Ministry of Justice	9.5.2025	15.5.2025
Ministry of Health	9.5.2025	/
Ministry of Sport and Youth	9.5.2025	29.5.2025
Tax Administration	9.5.2025	23.5.2025
Human Resource Management Authority	8.5.2025	29.5.2025
Human Resource Management Authority	8.5.2025	29.5.2025
Secretariat-General of the Government	17.9.2025	8.10.2025
Human Resource Management Authority	17.9.2025	30.09.2025

Interviews with key informants were conducted and used as a base for point allocation for elements 1.8, 2.5, 3.11, 4.10 and 5.4. Additionally, they were used to collect qualitative, focused, and in-depth inputs on monitored phenomena. Interviews with other stakeholders (such as representatives of public administration bodies) were additionally used in the research to complement and verify otherwise collected data and findings. Selection of interviewees was based on purposive, non-probability sampling, targeting interlocutors based on their expertise on the topic.

Key informant interviews were comprised of a set of up to four questions where the participants expressed their agreement on a four-point scale: fully disagree, tend to disagree, tend to agree and fully agree. Points under elements 1.8, 2.5, 3.11, 4.10 and 5.4 were allocated if all key informants stated that they tend to agree/fully agree with the statement. Additionally, a set of open-ended questions was used, allowing for a discussion with interviewees and on-the-spot sub-questions rather than strictly following a predetermined format. Interviewees were given full anonymity in terms of personal information and institutional/organisational affiliation.

Table 5. Interviews conducted in Montenegro

Date	Interviewees
03.06.2025.	Key informant 1 - a representative of Union of administration and justice
03.06.2025.	Key informant 2 - labour disputes attorney
12.06.2025.	Key informant 3 - CSO representative

List of interview questions

• Element 1.8

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are transparent.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are comprehensive enough.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How would you assess the quality and reliability of data published in official civil service reports?
2. Can citizens, the media, and civil society easily find and understand these reports?
3. Do the reports and statistics cover all relevant aspects of the civil service (such as recruitment, promotion, and staff turnover)?
4. Are there any critical data points missing from publicly available civil service reports? If so, which ones?
5. To what extent are the published data used to improve human resource management policies in the public administration?
6. How would you assess the usability and structure of the reports – are the data clearly presented and tailored to different audiences?
7. Is there room for improvement in the comprehensiveness and level of detail in these reports? If so, how?

• Element 2.5

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 2.5. Point allocation is determined based fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service, such as fixed-term employment of civil servants, and hiring of contracted staff, is transparent.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service is, in practice, limited.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service is purposeful.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. In your opinion, is there sufficient publicly available information about temporary hiring in civil service?
2. Are there clear criteria and procedures for hiring temporary civil servants and contracted staff?
3. Do you think the selection process for temporary positions is adequately documented and communicated to the public?
4. In your opinion, what are the most common problems with using temporary hiring in civil service?
5. In your opinion, how frequently are fixed-term and contracted positions

- used compared to permanent employment? Are temporary positions primarily used to address short-term needs, or are temporary engagements sometimes becoming permanent roles instead?
6. Are there cases where temporary hiring is used beyond its intended scope?
 7. What measures, if any, are in place to prevent excessive reliance on temporary staff in public administration?

• **Element 3.11**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 2.5. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Process of recruitment into civil service is based on merit.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Process of recruitment into civil service is transparent.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. Do you think the merit-based recruitment process in civil service is consistently applied in practice?
2. Do you consider the mechanisms in place to ensure that recruitment decisions are based on merit to be adequate and of sufficient quality?
3. Are there any factors that undermine merit-based recruitment in civil service?
4. How transparent are the selection criteria and procedures for civil service recruitment?
5. Do you consider that candidates have access to clear and detailed in-

- formation about job openings and selection processes?
6. What challenges exist in making civil service recruitment fully transparent and merit-based?
 7. How effective are appeal mechanisms for candidates who believe the recruitment process was unfair?
 8. What improvements could be made to enhance both transparency and meritocracy in civil service recruitment?

• **Element 4.10**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 2.5. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Top managers (senior civil servants) are selected and appointed based on merit.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Top managers (senior civil servants) are sufficiently protected from undue political influences.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How do you assess the process of selecting and appointing top managers in civil service?
2. Do you believe that the selection of senior civil servants is consistently based on merit rather than political considerations? How could the selection and appointment process for top managers be improved to ensure greater merit-based decision-making?
3. What safeguards are in place to ensure that top managers in civil service are selected based on their qualifications and experience?

4. In your opinion, is the current system for appointing senior civil servants transparent and fair?
5. In your opinion, how would you assess mechanisms for protection of top managers from undesirable political interference, if any?

• **Element 5.4**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 2.5. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Civil service remuneration (salary) system is transparent.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Civil service remuneration system (salary) is sufficiently clear.**
 - a. fully disagree
 - b. tend to disagree
 - c. tend to agree
 - d. fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How would you assess the transparency of the civil service remuneration system?
2. Do you consider the current salary system in civil service to be clear? Are the criteria for determining salaries and bonuses in civil service publicly available and easily accessible?
3. How do you evaluate the fairness of the civil service salary structure in relation to the duties and responsibilities of different positions?
4. In your opinion, is the civil service remuneration system regularly updated to reflect changes in the cost of living or other economic factors?
5. Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that the salary system remains equitable across different levels of civil service?
6. How is the transparency of the civil service remuneration system communicated to both current employees and potential candidates?

7. Do you think that the public is adequately informed about how civil service remuneration is structured and allocated?

8. What improvements, if any, would you suggest to make the civil service remuneration system more transparent and clearer for all stakeholders?

The public perception survey is based on a questionnaire targeting the general public (18+ permanent residents) of Montenegro. The survey was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in combination with computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI).

The survey was conducted between the 1st and 12th of February 2025. The margin of error for the sample of 1010 citizens is $\pm 3,51\%$, at the 95% confidence level.

Table 6: public perception survey questions in the area of Public Service and Human Resource Management

Statement 2	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
Public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit (i.e. best candidates are enabled to get the jobs).	1	2	3	4	99
Statement 2	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
One needs personal connections to get a job in the public administration in my country (i.e., family ties, kinship, friendship and similar)	1	2	3	4	99
Statement 2	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
One needs political connections to get a job in the public administration (i.e., membership in political party/organisation, personal ties with political parties)	1	2	3	4	99

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