

Abstract

Performance evaluation in the system of public administration is aimed not only at measuring the values of certain indicators, but also at building a common policy of human resources management, designed to ensure the coordination of the activities of each civil servant at different levels with the overall management strategy. The main goal is to encourage civil servants to constantly improve their professional knowledge and skills in order to be able to move up the career ladder and achieve higher levels in their professional development. Evaluation and certification procedures are complex and involve the use of various levels of assessment and performing a series of interrelated stages. According to the results of law enforcement practice, it is planned to intensify work on the implementation of specific software tools (testing facilities) for evaluation of activities and assessment of civil servants using modern means of automation of these processes.

Key words: *assessment, certification, civil servant.*

Introduction

In the Republic of Belarus, civil servants have a special legal status since they exercise their power on behalf of the State in the interests of the people while they perform socially-oriented functions. This situation calls for the quality of provision of public services, the efficiency of the work at all levels of public administration and the existence of effective mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of civil servants' activities.

Performance evaluation system for public servants

One of the key tools for the formation of a modern, professional state apparatus is a system of performance evaluation of public servants. Moreover, the evaluation vector should be shifted from measuring departmental reporting performance indicators to comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and coherence of public servants' actions and their congruence with the general strategy of the state body and the priorities of the country's for achieving socio-economic development as a whole. Properly organised assessment activities will create the conditions for attracting and retaining the most talented, motivated, proactive and qualified specialists in the public service, as well as stimulate civil servants to improve their knowledge and skills and make it possible to reveal and put into use their full potential.

Evaluation of civil servants' performance in the Republic of Belarus is carried out at various stages of their professional activity, including when entering the civil service, when their contracts are extended, when they move to another position, when they are assigned a class or when they pass certification (attestation). Evaluation results determine the incentives provided, e.g. allowances and bonuses and other incentive-related payments.

The approaches utilised for assessment and certification (attestation) of civil servants are based on two key components:

1. Assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the professional activities of civil servants for a certain period, measuring the extent to which their assigned tasks have been performed and have contributed to meeting the goals and objectives of the

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government organisation they work for.

2. Determining the degree of congruence of civil servants professional competencies, professional and personal qualities with the requirements of their position.

The performance evaluation system mechanism is based on the following elements: principles, subjects, objects, tools and methods. The principles on which the performance evaluation system should be built upon are the same as the principles for civil service enshrined in Article 6 of the Law “On Civil Service in the Republic of Belarus” (hereinafter, the Law on Civil Service).² As such, we would like to propose the following for consideration:

Legality	Consider current legislation and comply with the priority of the state socio-economic policy;
Credibility	Verify initial information and accuracy of data of the results obtained during civil servants’ evaluation process;
Consistency	Strictly define periodicity of evaluation and regularity of the assessment process;
Formalisation	Standard and common evaluation criteria are available, as well as uniform reports for presenting results of evaluations;
Publicity	Ensure openness and transparency of information to all stakeholders involved in the process;
Performance	Simply achieve the goal.

Individuals involved in performance evaluations are the managers, HRM department specialists, certification (accreditation) commissions, subordinates, colleagues, independent experts, etc. What they evaluate are professional and personal qualities, as well as the effectiveness of the work. Objects of the assessment are individuals first entering the civil service, civil servants or government bodies. An interview, a report recording the work performed, analysis of several characteristics, testing, etc can be used as assessment tools. The choice of the tool used should be guided by taking into account the personal characteristics of the individuals to be evaluated.

Upon admission to the civil service, candidates are checked for compliance with the qualification requirements contained in Article 26 of the Law on Civil Service, as well as in other legislative acts. Requirements include: appropriate education – with the exception of cases when no education qualifications are required; adequacy of length of service and experience in the field – unless they are required for filling a civil service position; sufficient knowledge of the official languages of the Republic of Belarus; sufficient knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus; knowledge of laws relevant to the exercise of their duties. Individuals first entering the civil service have to pass a qualification examination that assesses their knowledge of the Constitution, the fundamentals of the civil service, state personnel policy, Belarussian ideology, state regulation in economy and office work (Ivanouski, 2018).

The methods for evaluating civil servants in the Republic of Belarus may include certification (attestation), the procedure of which is determined by regulatory legal acts approved by decrees of the President of the Republic of Belarus, as well as by local government acts. The purpose of certification (attestation) is to provide an objective assessment of the actual performance of civil servants’ work, the level of their professional knowledge, legal culture and their career prospects. Certification aims at establishing the congruence of civil servants’

² Law No 204-3 (14.06.2003); <http://www.pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=H10300204>

professional and personal qualities with the requirements of a position, identifying potential abilities and opportunities for career advancement, as well as determining the needs for further training and re-training.

Certification (attestation) of civil servants is carried out by the certification (attestation) commission of the government body in which civil servants work. Attestation is carried out every three years for each civil servant. The process provides for the consideration of the official characteristics of the appraisees and their discussion with the head of the structural unit they work for, the appraiser. If necessary, testing may be arranged. For example, testing for individuals first entering the civil service is developed by the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Belarus and it is used by all government organisations of the country.

The role of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Belarus

The Academy of Public Administration is a leading institution of higher education, which provides training, re-training and advanced training to civil servants, ensuring the continuous advancement of their education. The Academy is also tasked with participation in the implementation of the state personnel policy, scientific and methodological support for the functioning of the civil service institution in the Republic of Belarus, including certification and performance evaluation of civil servants. The Research Institute of Theory and Practice of Public Administration, an integral part of the Academy of Public Administration has developed and implemented various methods – based on the study of domestic and foreign experience, and utilising modern technologies - for selecting candidates for public service and assessing the professional development of personnel working in state bodies.

Through surveys conducted among civil servants, it was possible to discern the main problematic issues arising from the exercise of their rights and the performance of their functional duties. It was revealed that clear criteria for assessing the effectiveness of civil servants were absent or insufficient, thus there was a need to improve the system of civil servants' motivation, providing them with additional legal and social guarantees (Ivanouski, 2018). It was further revealed through requests of the Belarusian society that there is a need to strengthen the responsibility of civil servants for compliance with labour and executive directives.

Improving the performance evaluation system

Consequently, the need is obvious for improving the system for performance evaluation of civil servants based on an integrated approach, using various levels of assessment – individual, group, institutional and systemic – and the implementation of a number of interrelated stages. At the individual level, evaluation should focus on the achievement of the goals and objectives that are assigned to individual civil servants, which may be reflected in an individual development plan or a similar document. At the group level, evaluation should concentrate on the performance of a professional group, department of a government body or organisation. At the institutional level, evaluation should assess whether results of civil servants' activities are consistent with the goals and objectives of an entire state organisation or sector of the economy. At the systemic level, the compliance of the results of civil servants' activities with programme documents regulating public administration should be assessed.

Moreover, in view of rapid digitalisation, priority should be given to ways of conducting assessments through the use of specialise software (testing facilities), which may help to determine the level of knowledge of legislative acts and of organisational and administrative

documents that guide civil servants' work activities. Furthermore, such digitalised assessment should also be able to measure the level of the needed skills for effective performance of civil servants' official duties, the degree to which they possess certain character traits and the type of thinking that would allow them to maintain adequate capacity in their work under conditions of prolonged periods of hard work and stressful situations, as well as the level of their emotional intelligence.

There is a need for a balanced adaptation of foreign experience on the use of key performance indicators (KPIs). Among other issues that need to be resolved is to determine the optimum frequency of assessing civil servants' performance, as well as to strengthen the ethical component of their activities through the introduction of mechanisms for assessing civil servants' compliance with ethical standards and rules of official behaviour, to determine the impact of evaluation results on career prospects and in the formation of individual plans for professional development and identification of training needs.

In sum, it is proposed that these and other methodological approaches are taken into account for improving the certification (attestation) and the implementation of the performance evaluation system for civil servants in the new draft Law on Civil Service, which is currently in preparation with the active participation of the Academy of Public Administration. This topic was also the subject of discussion at the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Public Service: Current Status and Development Prospects", which was organised by the Academy of Public Administration jointly with the Astana Civil Service Hub and the Council of Europe on 22-23 October 2019 in Minsk.

References

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