

THE SYSTEM OF RECRUITMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA: BETWEEN PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

Dr Jahi Jahija¹

ABSTRACT

This article scrutinises the procedures in the system of recruitment of Civil Servants in the Republic of North Macedonia and the results achieved due to these procedures. The employment of civil servants in the Republic of North Macedonia is conducted on the basis of the Law on Administrative Servants, in which the conditions and criteria that must be fulfilled by the candidates are set. According to this Law, candidates in the application phase must submit a number of documents which are verified by the Selection Committee in the first phase of recruitment. Through the analysis and data collected by the Agency for Administration, on the number of candidates who applied and those who were eliminated in the first administrative phase by the Selection Committee for the period from 01.08.2017 to 01.08.2020, it will be observed how many candidates were eliminated in the first stage of the selection process, what the reasons were for their elimination, as well as the level of influence of this process on the competition among candidates for jobs in the Civil Service of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Keywords: Administrative reforms, Public Management, Effective Government, Result oriented, administrative simplification.

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, government accountability was largely a matter of financial accounting. When public funds were appropriated, the main questions of accountability centred on how much money was spent and on what specific items: personnel, supplies, travel, training programmes, etc. But today, the concepts of government accountability and responsibility have taken on a much broader meaning. Because it is one thing to account for how much money was spent or how many people were served while it is quite another to account for the results achieved.

It is relatively easy to count the total number of applicants for new jobs in public institutions. It is also very easy to count the number of applicants eliminated at different stages of the recruitment procedure (administrative selection, examinations for administrative assistants, interviews). However, it is another thing to be accountable for achieving results during the recruitment process. The questions that can be addressed in this case are: Is public administration more effective as a result of this process? What are the procedures that are created for the realisation of this process and do these rules help the achievement of the results or hinder it? What are our expectations for the performances of these employees? What is the quality of service in the public sector?

One of the problems associated with results management is defining what the desired government results look like and, more specifically, what the desired results of specific programmes and services should look like, since the broad and often unclear missions of many public sector agencies and organisations, determining desired outcomes can be difficult.

To observe more concretely what is said above, the work done by the Agency for Administration in the Republic of North Macedonia during the selection process for candidates who applied for a job position in Public Administration will be reviewed. The Agency for Administration has the following powers in the field of employment of Civil Servants, according to the Law on Administrative Servants: (i) it publishes announcements for the employment of Civil Servants; and (ii) it organises and implements procedures for the selection of Civil Servants.²

¹ Professor of Public Administration, University of Tetovo. Email: jahi.jahija@unite.edu.mk

² In 2000, the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia passed a package of reform laws, including the Law on Civil Servants, which for the first time regulated the official relationship and established a new state body, responsible for

Furthermore, according to the Law on Administrative Servants, the selection process for employment consists of three stages:

- I. Administrative selection: candidates submit the documents required by law and such documents are verified.
- II. Administrative examination: candidates who pass the first stage, proceed to taking the administrative examination.
- III. Interview: candidates who have passed the second stage undergo an interview.

According to the Law on Administrative Servants, the Agency for Administration forms a Selection Committee for the selection process. This Committee is responsible for the implementation of the selection procedures for the three phases mentioned above. The Selection Committee comprises

- (i) an administrative servant of the Employment Selection Commission of the Agency, who acts as the president of the Committee and his/her deputy;
- (ii) the head of the organisational unit for human resource management, that is, the administrative servant who performs the tasks related to human resource management if there is such an organizational unit at the institution and his/her deputy;
- (iii) the heads of the organisational units where the work posts are filled, i.e. the immediate supervisors, if there are no managers as well as their deputies; and/or
- (iv) an administrative servant from the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations and their deputy if the procedure is being conducted for state administration bodies.³

According to the Law on Administrative Servants, to fill an administrative job position, the candidate must meet the following general conditions: (i) to be a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia; (ii) to be conversant in the Macedonian language; (iii) to be of legal age; (iv) to be in good general health for the job position; and (v) not to be under prohibition to exercise a profession, business or office by an effective court decision.⁴ Besides the general conditions for filling an administrative job position, a candidate must meet the following special conditions: (i) possess the corresponding vocational qualifications necessary for the job position; (ii) possess corresponding work experience necessary for the job position; (iii) demonstrate the corresponding general working competences necessary for the job position prescribed in the Framework of General Competences; and (iv) demonstrate the corresponding special working competences necessary for the job position.

Candidates for administrative servants' job position fill in an application, which contains at least the following information:

- (i) name and surname, birth date and place, residence locality and street address, email address, community affiliation;

introducing and promoting a single and consistent system of civil service in the Republic of Macedonia. On 29 August 2000, with the appointment of the first director, the Agency for Civil Servants started working as an organ of the state administration. In a short time, more precisely in 2001, its status was transformed into an independent state body, as it is today. The mission of the Agency for Administration in the Republic of North Macedonia is: "To enable the development and professional stability of an administration oriented towards services, through the organisation of procedures for the selection of candidates for the Civil Service, the implementation of the examination for Administrative management and, the realisation of legal protection of administrative employees". The purpose of the Agency for Administration is: "While performing its functions, to provide professional services to citizens, administrative employees, public sector institutions, as well as to all interested parties, considering the social context of the country, but also in compliance with European standards and principles of public administration. The Agency's main priorities are: (i) Advancement and implementation of candidate selection procedures; (ii) Professional development of Civil Servants; and (iii) Promotion and development of the qualitative protection of the rights of Civil Servants at the second level.

³ Law on Administrative Servants.

⁴ Law on Administrative Servants.

- (ii) latest obtained education degree and acquired diplomas, previous education degrees and qualifications and acquired diplomas (for candidates possessing a master's or a PhD), the date of diplomas' acquisition, diplomas' numbers, and educational institutions issuing the diplomas;
- (iii) previous work experience;
- (iv) knowledge of foreign languages;
- (v) knowledge of computer applications for office work;
- (vi) reasons for applying for the job position, work expectations and a description of career goals.

In addition to the application, candidates are required to enclose the following documentation in scanned format: (i) evidence of citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia; (ii) certificate of good general health condition for the work post; (iii) certificates/diplomas for educational degrees obtained; (iv) certificates for using computer applications for office work; (v) certificates of professional examinations passed or licences or certificates from an appropriate vocational field(if special conditions apply for the job position and are stated in the public announcement).Candidates may also enclose: (i) certificates of their employment history, issued by their former employers; (ii) letters of recommendation from previous work posts including contact information of the signees of such letters; (iii) certificates for attended trainings; (iv) vocational certificates and other professional qualifications, specialisations, works and publications; (v) internationally recognised certificates for fluency in one of the six official languages of the United Nations; (vi) certificates for volunteer service, issued by the volunteer register of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, i.e. a volunteer card issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, signed by the manager of the institution; (vii) statements and/or other documents in the interest of the work post. After filling the application, candidates shall be obliged to confirm the accuracy of the data in the application and the authenticity of the submitted evidence to the originals under substantive and criminal liability.⁵

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study relied on primary level sources of data collection. The methodology adopted a quantitative research design which involves first-hand data collection.⁶

This article attempts to answer four research questions:

1. What is the number of published announcements for jobs in the Civil Service from 2017 to 2020 in the Republic of North Macedonia?
2. How many candidates have applied for these jobs?
3. How many candidates were eliminated in the first phase? and
4. What are the reasons for elimination in the first stage?

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the Law on Administrative Servants, candidates "*must attach scanned copies of the required documents to their application at the time of application*". Based on this, the Selection Committee requests that the candidates attach the required documents to the electronic application at the time of the application. Candidates who do not possess or do not place these documents at the time of application, are eliminated in the first stage by the Selection Committee and cannot continue to next two stages of the selection procedure.

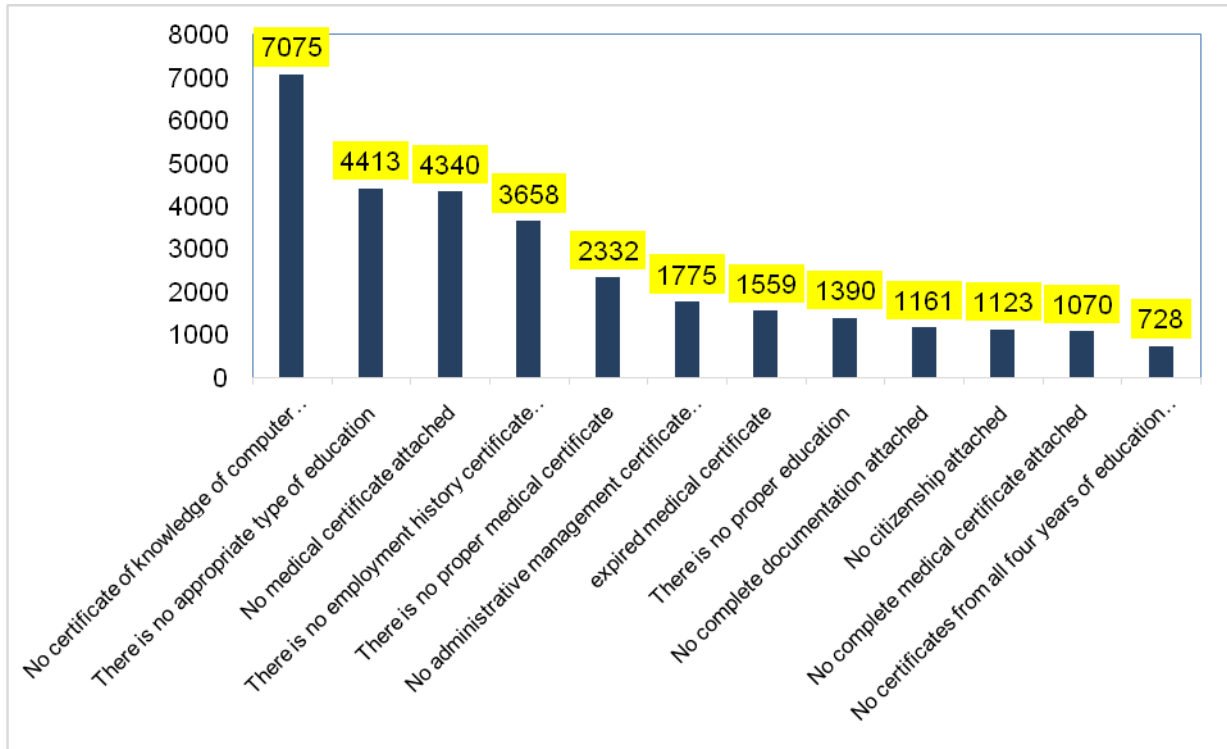
According to data from the Agency for Administration, from 2017 to 2020, a total of 1,293 advertisements were placed for 4,143 vacancies in the civil service. Also, according to same dataset, from 1.08.2017 to 31.07.2020, a total of 34,267 candidates applied for civil service positions, of which 20,221 were eliminated in the first stage of the administrative selection. The

⁵ Law on Administrative Servants

⁶ As the name implies, this is original, first-hand data collected by the data researchers. This process is the initial information gathering step, performed before anyone carries out any further or related research. Primary data results are highly accurate provided the researcher collects the information.

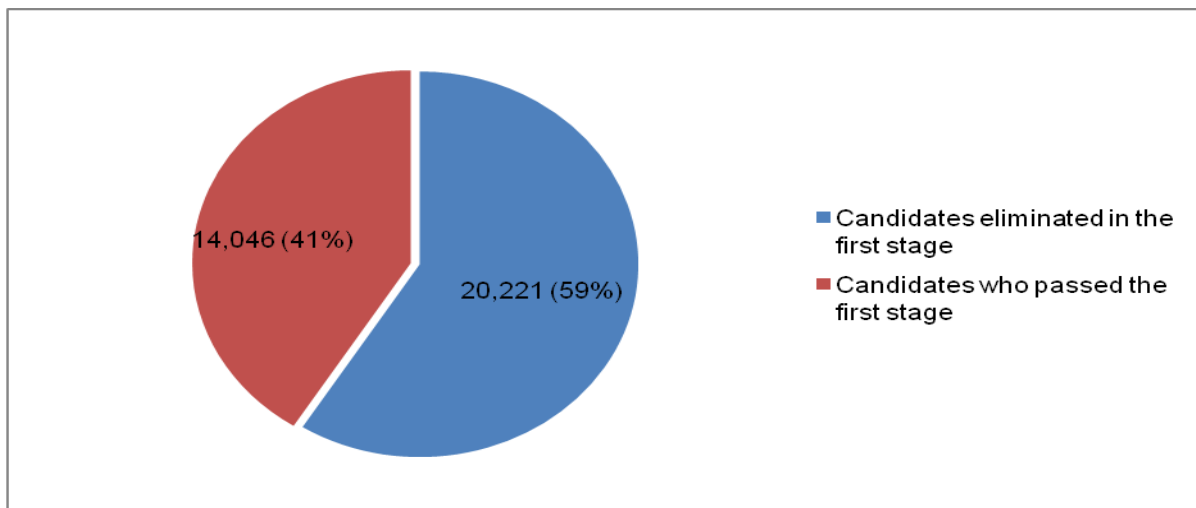
following figure shows some of the reasons for the elimination of candidates in the first stage of administrative selection.

Figure 1. Reasons for the elimination of candidates in the first stage of administrative selection



It appears that only 41 per cent of the candidates managed to pass the first stage of the administrative selection, while 59 per cent of the candidates were eliminated in the first stage for procedural reasons, without giving them the opportunity to verify their quality, skills, and competences through the next stages of the selection process.

Figure 2. Percentage of candidates who were eliminated from / passed the first stage

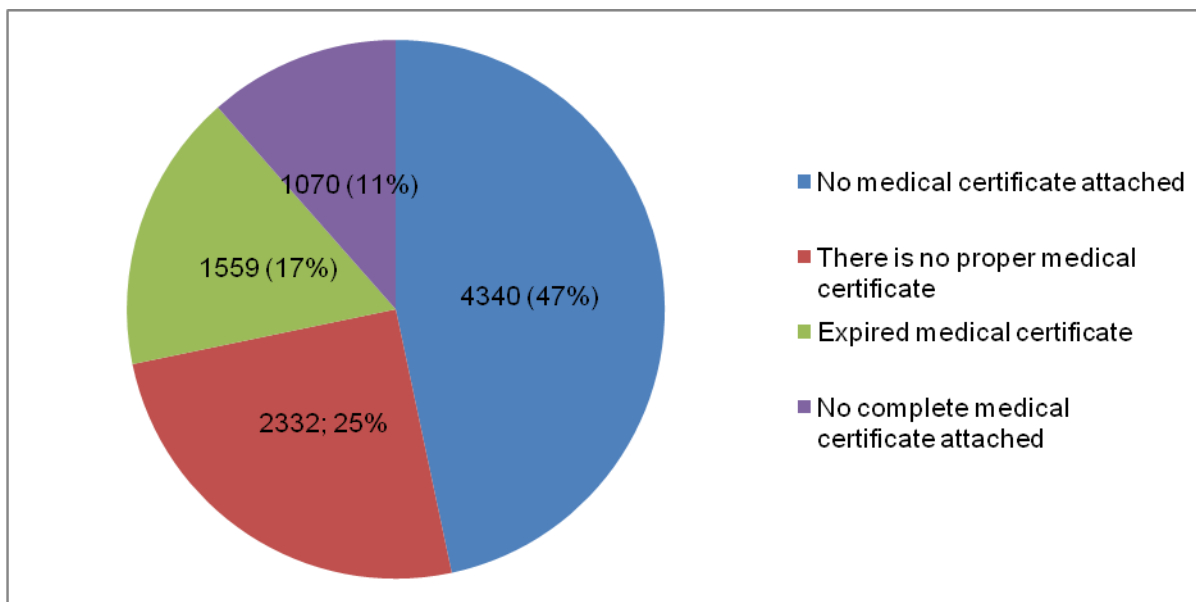


The data reveal that the largest number of candidates were eliminated because they failed to submit the medical certificate required or submitted either an expired or an inappropriate one.⁷

⁷ The total numbers of 9,341 candidates eliminated during the first stage of the process due to lack of medical certificate submission consists of the following cases: 4,340 did not submit a certificate; 2,332 submitted an

In total 20,221 candidates were rejected after the first stage of the process, out of a total of 34,267 applications. Furthermore, another 7,075 candidates were eliminated at the end of the first stage because they did not attach their certificates of knowledge of computer applications for office work.

Figure 3. The number of candidates eliminated due to not having a medical certificate



The Agency for Administration does not have and has not done any analysis to come up with information on why the number of candidates eliminated in the first phase is so large. In the absence of this analysis, the hypothesis about the elimination of a large number of candidates, such as the lack of a Medical Certificate, may be attributed to several factors. First, issuance of a medical certificate is expensive for someone who is unemployed (a medical certificate cost 20 euros). Obtaining a medical certificate also involves a series of medical procedures, from blood test to other medical tests such sight and hearing tests, etc.

Nowadays there are many people who know how to work with computers but may not have a computer certificate. Getting a computer certificate also has its cost and candidates are reluctant to get it. However, the most important factor that should be taken into consideration is how much faith the applicants have in the selection process for joining the Civil Service of the Republic of North Macedonia. Thus, candidates face a dilemma feeling that the employment process is not fair and transparent and therefore they think that obtaining all the required documents is an additional waste of money and time in a recruitment system that is not based on meritocracy.

Let us go back once again to the Mission of the Agency for Administration: "To enable professional development and stability of an administration oriented towards services, through the organisation of procedures for the selection of candidates for administrative Servants, the implementation of the examination for administrative management and, realisation of legal protection of administrative employees". Based on its stated Mission, it is clear that the Administration Agency primarily sees to the development and professional sustainability of a service-oriented administration through the organisation of procedures for the selection of candidates for Civil Servants. Hence, the emphasis of the Agency's mission is placed on the procedures.

However, can we have a stable and professional administration, oriented towards services, if out of 34,267 candidates, just because of some procedures, 20,221 of them are eliminated? And does this eliminative approach contribute positively to the professionalism and quality in

inappropriate certificate; 1,559 submitted certificates whose validity had expired; and 1,070 were rejected as they failed to submit their certificates electronically along with their application.

public administration, or is this really a rule that does the opposite, by eliminating more than 20,000 candidates, among whom there may be many candidates with high and professional quality, who will contribute to achieving results in public administration?

The 2017 SIGMA report on public administration reforms in the Republic of North Macedonia, stated that "One of the requirements for accessing any civil service position is to be "in good health". As the primary or secondary legislation does not explicitly describe the concept or proof of general good health, this requirement could result in unfair discrimination".⁸ This report also talks about the small number of applicants for jobs in the public sector and recommends: "In order to increase the number of candidates in public competitions, the government should carry out a promotional campaign highlighting the benefits of employment in the public sector and informing citizens that this process is fair and transparent".

Nevertheless, the 2020 SIGMA Monitoring Report confirms that this recommendation was not implemented: "The 2017 assessment's short-term recommendation to conduct communication campaigns promoting employment opportunities in the public sector and making citizens aware of its fairness guarantees in order to increase the number of candidates in public competitions was not followed, and the country still lacks a sufficient average number of (eligible) candidates per competition".

Furthermore, SIGMA in its 2017 report,⁹ highlighting the small number of candidates in public announcements, mentions that "During the recruitment process, the Agency for Administration eliminated the candidates because they did not provide proof (certificate) of knowledge of foreign languages or certificate of knowledge of working with computers. The new requirements regarding language and computer skills were a conscious choice by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration when drafting the Law on Administrative Servants: the aim was to recruit more qualified professionals into the civil service thanks to higher entry requirements. However, in most cases, these requirements are not related to work. For example, candidates for a Group G civil service position, i.e. doing clerical work in the Cadastre Agency or in a Kindergarten, must prove their knowledge of English, French or German by means of an international certificate. These costly certificates are a burden on candidates, can lead to unfair discrimination and have already resulted in a significant drop in candidates".

CONCLUSION

In an effort to demonstrate accountability for results, governments must tell their constituents whether the policies, programmes, and activities they deliver are producing the results they were intended to produce. Accountability for results requires an outcome focus that answers why a government programme or policy exists in the first place. Thus, to set expectations about what the government will achieve, and to hold it accountable for results, we need to ensure that the expected results are clearly articulated so that they can be measured.

In such a situation, the Agency for Administration must identify the problem caused by the procedures which do not give results, but do the opposite, prevent the achievement of the result. Now in many different countries, a very rigorous process has been adapted to review the functioning of public institutions. These are, for example, the public interest test, which analyses whether an agency's activity is still beneficial to the public. The efficiency test which reviews whether this activity can be carried out with less cost. The test of affordability, whether the society is able to pay for the programme, and the test of the result, which should review whether this activity continues to give the expected results.

A similar test should also be performed by the Agency for Administration through which may be seen if the selection process that is being implemented is giving the expected results in the

⁸ A joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, principally financed by the EU; <http://www.sigmaxweb.org>

⁹ SIGMA has carried out reviews against the Principles of Public Administration in EU candidate countries and potential candidates since 2015. Since 2017, these reviews have been carried out based on the Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration. This framework provides an accurate and balanced measure of each Principle, ensuring a systematic focus on implementation.

Civil Service of the Republic of North Macedonia. Taking into consideration the recommendations of SIGMA, the Agency for Administration in coordination with the Ministry for Information Society and Administration must find a way to reduce the documents that are not so necessary in the first phase and thereby significantly increase competition and the number of candidates for jobs in the public sector of the country, as this sector still continues to be more attractive for employment compared to the private sector. The removal of the condition for the possession of certificates from the first stage, especially the certificate for knowing how to work with a computer and the medical certificate, will significantly increase the number of candidates applying for a job in the Public Administration of North Macedonia. And a results-oriented approach will enable a large number of high-quality candidates to become part of the Civil Service of the Republic of North Macedonia, contributing to the professionalisation of Public Administration.

Furthermore, SIGMA short-term recommendation to conduct communication campaigns promoting employment opportunities in the public sector and making citizens aware of its fairness guarantees in order to increase the number of candidates in public competitions should be followed, and the country will have a sufficient average number of (eligible) candidates per competition".

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ANNEX

The data contained in the table below were obtained from the Agency for Administration and are used verbatim without any corrections. Thus, one may notice several duplications in the entries, which may be a result of the way the system is operated.

Table 1. Reasons for rejection of civil service job applications at the end of the first stage

	Reason for rejection	Number
1	No certificate of knowledge of computer applications for office work attached	7,075
2	No appropriate type of education for the position	4,413
3	No medical certificate attached	4,340
4	No employment history certificate issued by an employment agency	3,658
5	No proper medical certificate attached	2,332
6	No administrative management certificate attached	1,775
7	Expired medical certificate submitted	1,559
8	No proper education	1,390
9	No complete documentation attached	1,161
10	No citizenship certificate attached	1,123
11	No complete medical certificate attached	1,070
12	No certificates from all four years of education are attached	728
13	Not enough work experience after graduation	694
14	No proof of knowledge of one of the three most commonly used languages of the European Union (English, French, German)	642
15	No statement of no affiliation with a political party attached	640
16	No work experience	623
17	No appropriate level of education	576
18	No internationally recognised certificate of foreign language proficiency	528
19	No appropriate certificate for knowledge of computer applications for office work	490
20	Not enough work experience	476
21	No diploma with an average of the first cycle of studies is attached	441
22	No complete documentation submitted	420
23	No proper direction (course)	363
24	No certificates attached	359
25	No first cycle diploma is attached	338
26	No adequate work experience	327
27	No diploma attached for completed education	308
28	No certificate for archival and office work	295
29	No foreign diploma equivalence document attached	219
30	No evidence of work experience in a managerial position provided	216
31	No confirmation for passing the public procurement exam	205
32	No proper direction of education	197
33	No relevant proof of work experience attached	118
34	No inspector license attached in the area of the inspection service	116
35	No proof of work experience attached	114
36	No recognised international certificate for foreign language proficiency	113
37	No driver's license in the appropriate category	106
38	No certificate / transcript with grade point average attached	89
39	No certification of a diploma obtained abroad has been attached	76
40	No average appears in the diploma	62
41	A full driver's license from the relevant category is not attached	58
42	No work experience in the field of expropriation	48
43	Has not passed the administrative management exam	47
44	No document for equivalence of a diploma from abroad for the first cycle of studies attached	47
45	Not enough work experience in the profession	43
46	Not enough work experience with higher education	40
47	No appropriate certificate for knowledge of computer applications for office work	39

	Reason for rejection	Number
	attached	
48	does not conduct research and does not master the methodology of scientific research work in the field of education and upbringing	38
49	There is no 5 (five) years of work experience in the educational activity	38
50	Has not participated in scientific and professional gatherings on education with his/her works	37
51	Not enough work experience in a managerial position in the private sector	36
52	No certificate for passing the judicial exam is attached	35
53	No evidence of cooperation and special contribution in informing the public in the field of crisis management	31
54	No professional or scientific papers have been published for the promotion of education and upbringing	30
55	Has not published professionally, ie scientific papers of importance for the advancement of education and upbringing	28
56	Medical certificate without date	27
57	No public procurement certificate	26
58	No Judicial exam passed	25
59	No work experience in a managerial position in the private sector	25
60	One certificate is missing	24
61	No Pilot License (ATPL (A)) or Commercial Pilot License (ATP (A)) with ATPL Theory	24
62	No diploma attached	24
63	No possession of computer skills	23
64	No Certificate of Work with Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)	21
65	No date of issuance of the medical certificate	21
66	No certification for computer text editing skills attached	21
67	No appropriate citizenship proof attached	21
68	He has not attached a full diploma for completed education	21
69	No Certificate of Accountant / Certified Public Accountant	21
70	No official statement of employment history issued by the Employment Agency	20
71	No Airport Traffic Pilot License (ATPL (A)) or Commercial Pilot License (CPLA (A)) with ATPL Theory and written Instrument Flight for Multiple Aircraft (CPL (A) / IR / ME)	19
72	There is no certificate for a certified accountant	18
73	There is no certificate of managerial skills for human resource management	17
74	notary statement	17
75	to have passed training and passed the exam for certified internal auditor in the public sector according to the Program for taking the exam for certified internal auditor or to have an internationally recognized audit certificate	16
76	There is no diploma in Macedonian language	16
77	Has not received a positive opinion on job suitability through taking a psychological test and an integrity test	15
78	No direction of education specified	15
79	There is no authorization in the area of supervision	15
80	Not enough work experience for a managerial position	14
81	There is no evidence of work experience on projects for 2 years	14
82	There is no work experience in the area of competence of the inspection service	14
83	No internationally recognized computer skills certificate attached	13
84	No certified auditor certificate attached	13
85	illegible citizenship	13
86	No average of completed education is stated	12
87	No work experience in the workplace in a level B2	12
88	There is no appropriate level of international foreign language	12
89	to have at least two years of work experience in internal or external audit	11
90	does not meet the special requirement of the Law on Public Internal Financial Control (Article 36 paragraph 4)	11
91	Has no two years of experience in matters related to personal data protection	11

	Reason for rejection	Number
92	There is no evidence of at least 1 year of work experience in EU integration processes or projects	11
93	illegible statement of employment history, issued by an employment agency	11
94	There is no adequate proof of work experience for a managerial position	10
95	No status of a person with special needs (user of orthopaedic device)	10
96	does not have certificates for Adobe Photoshop, MS Access, Macromedia Flash MX, Macromedia Dreamweaver MX, Advanced Web Design, Corel Draw	9
97	There is no license, permission to perform inspections	8
98	No disability status	8
99	There is no complete certificate for completed education	8
100	There is no quality management certificate in the public sector	7
101	There is no evidence of work experience in the field of finance	7
102	No proof of work experience with EU funds (IPA)	7
103	There is no appropriate internationally recognized computer skills certificate	7
104	There is no proper medical certificate for the job	7
105	Incomplete employment history, issued by the Employment Agency	7
106	incorrectly announced job position in the advertisement	7
107	expired international certificate for knowledge of a foreign language	6
108	There is no valid foreign language certificate	6
109	No certified accountant license attached	6
110	Has no 5 years of work experience in the field of aviation	5
111	There is no evidence of work experience in the public sector	5
112	There is no inspection authority for airworthiness and maintenance	5
113	No work experience in the public sector	5
114	There is no appropriate certificate / certification for archival and office work	5
115	illegible medical certificate	5
116	No real estate appraiser certificate attached	4
117	There is no valid certificate for the public procurement exam	4
118	There is not enough work experience in the public sector	4
119	No work experience in education	4
120	There is no suitable direction (course)	4
121	There is not enough work experience in a managerial position in the public sector	3
122	There is not enough work experience after gaining 240 credits in a managerial position	3
123	There is no medical certificate stamped by a doctor	3
124	No certificates attached	3
125	incomplete employment history, issued by PDIF	3
126	Illegible diploma for completed education	3
127	incorrectly published announcement in the part of planned employments in accordance with the annual plan and the balance sheet	3
128	does not meet the special requirements	2
129	does not have a decision for a translator from Macedonian into Albanian and vice versa issued by the Ministry of Justice	2
130	No appropriate diploma / certificate attached	2
131	There is not enough work experience in the civil service	2
132	There is not enough work experience after additional training	2
133	There is no evidence of at least 3 (three) years of work experience in the field of competence of the inspection service, of which at least 2 (two) years in the job from level B2	2
134	There is no license for expertise in the relevant field	2
135	The date and number of the document for nuffication of a diploma obtained abroad are not stated	2
136	Has not been in the B1 level job for at least 1 (one) year	2
137	No knowledge of Albanian language	2
138	There is no professional exam for an occupational safety expert	2
139	No full certificate attached	2

	Reason for rejection	Number
140	There is no adequate medical certificate proving that he is able to work	2
141	No level of education according to the diploma	2
142	two certificates are missing	1
143	Not enough work experience in the field of finance	1
144	Not enough work experience after gaining 240 credits	1
145	Not enough work experience with EU funds (IPA)	1
146	There is no evidence of at least three years of work experience in the field of finance	1
147	No date and number of passed the Judicial Exam is stated	1
148	There is no highest level of knowledge of the Albanian language	1
149	No waste management exam passed	1
150	There is no diploma attached, with an average of the second cycle of studies	1
151	No court decision has been attached that he / she has not been banned from performing an activity or profession during the ban	1
152	No work experience in the field of preventive health care	1
153	There is no certificate in the field of labour relations	1
154	There is no appropriate Pilot License (ATPL (A)) or Commercial Pilot Permit CPL (A) with ATPL theory and written authorization to fly the instruments of multiple aircraft (CPL(A) / IR / ME)	1
155	illegible employment history, issued by PDIF	1
156	Illegible Diploma notification decision	1