

IMPLEMENTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Gulnar Issenova¹

Received:
May 26, 2023

Revised:
June 19, 2023
July 05, 2023

Accepted:
July 14, 2023

DOI:
10.56289/ijcsrp.220

ABSTRACT

This article highlights the importance of implementing project management within the framework of modern public administration reform concepts, specifically New Public Management (NPM), Responsive Governance, and Good Governance.

The paper presents findings of a survey conducted among civil servants in Kazakhstan regarding the adoption of a project-based approach in public administration system. The study's results indicate that civil servants are increasingly recognizing the value of project management as an effective tool for enhancing public administration efficiency. Over 40% of respondents are aware of the need for a project-based approach and are open to learning, which suggests favourable conditions for scaling up such initiatives.

However, a significant proportion of neutral responses underscores the need for additional informational, educational, and training efforts, alongside strengthened institutional support, to foster a robust project culture in the public sector.

The author also utilized content analysis of regulatory acts, strategic and conceptual documents, various analytical reports, and a survey of civil servants to inform this study.

Keywords: *public administration, government agency, civil servant, project management, agile, service model of the state.*

INTRODUCTION

For decades, increasing the efficiency of public administration and aligning it with international standards have remained pressing tasks for the government and the scientific community. The objective of creating a compact and effective state apparatus was first articulated in Kazakhstan in 1997. This goal was subsequently elaborated in strategic documents such as the "Nation Plan – 100 Concrete Steps," "Strategy – 2050," and others.

Growing external and internal challenges necessitate constant attention to public administration issues. In September 2019, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev introduced the concept of the "Listening State". Six months later, in January 2020, he emphasized the need to construct a new model of public administration. Following extensive discussions with the expert community and drawing upon this study, the Concept for the Development of Public Administration in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 was adopted in 2021. This concept is fundamentally based on building a human-centered model under the slogan "People First". One of the key areas within this model involves revising management approaches and introducing proven effective methods, among which project management stands out.

Since 2010, Kazakhstan has been systematically working to create conditions for implementing project technologies in the public sector. In June 2017, the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan established a center for the development of

¹ Master of Economics, Head of Representative Office, Public Foundation "Adildiq zhane Orkendeu", <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8170-0249>, gulnaraconst@gmail.com.

project management in public administration (hereinafter, the Project Management Development Center). Training for civil servants in the fundamentals of project management commenced in 2018, with some achieving relevant certifications.

Considering the challenges that arose in 2020 during the implementation of project management, the Project Management Development Center was assigned the function of ensuring expert interaction with the Center for Analysis and Monitoring of Socio-Economic Reforms of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in addition to its tasks of coordinating the project approach in government agencies.

To scale these initiatives nationally, assessing civil servants' readiness to transition to a project-based work format became crucial. This article presents the results of a study conducted to address this need.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the mid-1980s, public administration reforms in most countries have proceeded under the banner of New Public Management, leading to a revision of management approaches, methods, and tools. In the subsequent stage of reforms, the emphasis shifted towards building a service model of the state. Concurrently, international organizations began promoting the principles of Good Governance and Responsive Governance, stressing the importance of transparency, accountability, and a citizen-focused approach.

Within these overarching concepts, individual countries have developed and implemented their own unique governance models. For instance, the United Arab Emirates implemented the "**Governance without Government**" (or network model of governance), where state and non-state structures collaborate to reach agreements or solve specific problems. This approach was also applied in Kazakhstan; specifically, the Urban Development Accelerator was created at the Akimat of Astana, where government agencies, NGOs, and activists collectively addressed pressing urban issues.

Singapore launched the "**Smart Nation**" project, aimed at maximizing citizen involvement in city management with the "passive participation" of the state. This implies a refusal of direct intervention in decision-making processes. Management decisions in this model are made based on big data analysis, the use of artificial intelligence, and personalized feedback. This enables quick assessment of satisfied citizen requests, prediction of decision consequences, and minimization of risks – all in real-time.

The US experience in implementing **open government policies** has gained international recognition and served as the foundation for the global **Open Government Partnership** initiative.

In Malaysia, the **PEMANDU** project was developed in response to public dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of public administration. This project involved concrete steps to accelerate modernization, including visiting sessions to identify priorities, expert laboratories, broad public discussions of results, and an independent annual audit of government performance.

A distinctive feature of the aforementioned initiatives is their reliance on a **project-based approach to management**, with a strong emphasis on **agile methodologies** such as Agile and Scrum. Under this approach, management is viewed not as a single centralized system, but as a collection of individual projects implemented by small teams.

It is important to note that the effectiveness of the project approach has been confirmed across various fields and industries. For example, the activities of the UN are entirely project-based: each priority objective or area of work is designed as a project with a clearly defined deadline, budget, team, and expected results. As the UAE's experience demonstrates, incorporating project management principles into the activities of government agencies enhances flexibility and responsiveness to citizen requests.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study employed the following methods. First, **secondary information analysis** was conducted, which included reviewing the results of earlier research on this topic in Kazakhstan. This also involved a comprehensive review of best public administration practices as presented in reports from organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, and other international organizations.

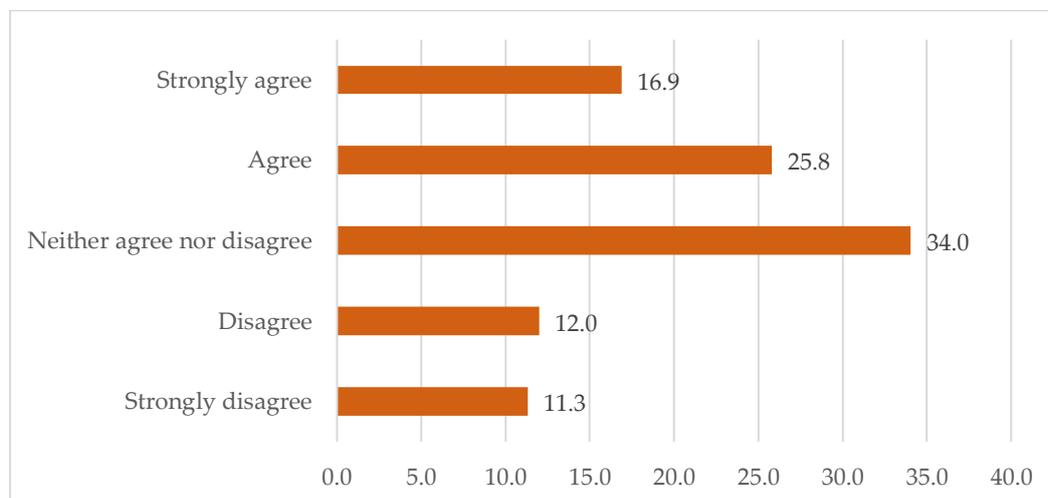
Second, a **study of the strategic planning system** was undertaken. This encompassed examining its connection with the budget process, the distribution of functions and responsibilities among the heads of government agencies, and an analysis of the degree to which these factors influence the performance of both individual civil servants and the public agencies as a whole (Appendix 1).

Third, a **survey of civil servants** was carried out. A total of 14,250 civil servants from all regions of Kazakhstan participated in the survey. The largest proportion of respondents came from the East Kazakhstan region (14.2% of the total), followed by Almaty and Pavlodar regions (10.9% each), and Almaty city (8.6%). Among the respondents, 59.8% were women. Nearly 93% of respondents held a higher education degree. The age distribution of respondents was balanced. All questionnaires were processed using STATA software.

RESULTS

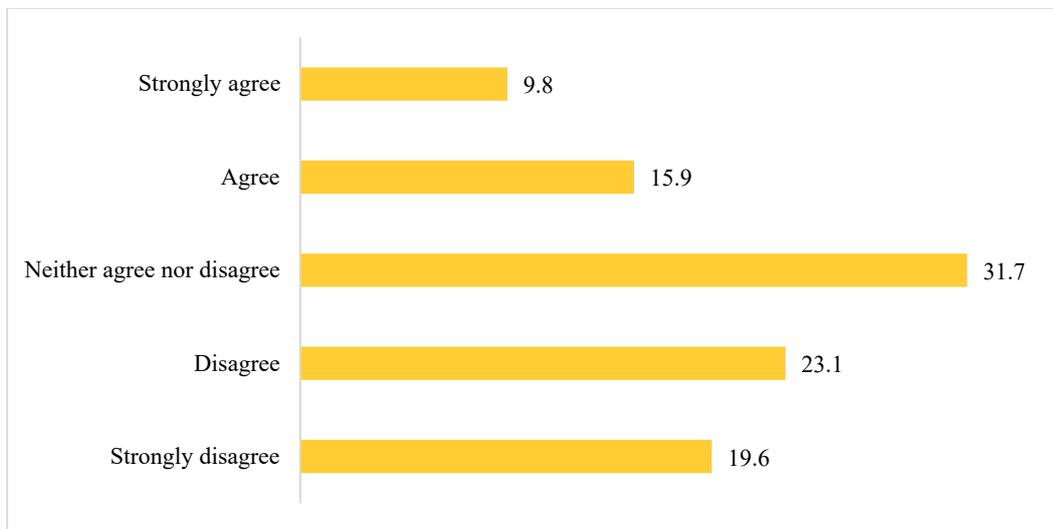
The majority of respondents (42.7%) believe that government agencies in Kazakhstan should incorporate project management approaches into their operations. Conversely, 23.3% disagreed with this statement, while 34% expressed a neutral stance (Figure 1). The majority of respondents (42.7%) believe that government agencies in Kazakhstan should incorporate project management approaches into their operations. Conversely, 23.3% disagreed with this statement, while 34% expressed a neutral stance (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Government agencies should adopt project management principles.



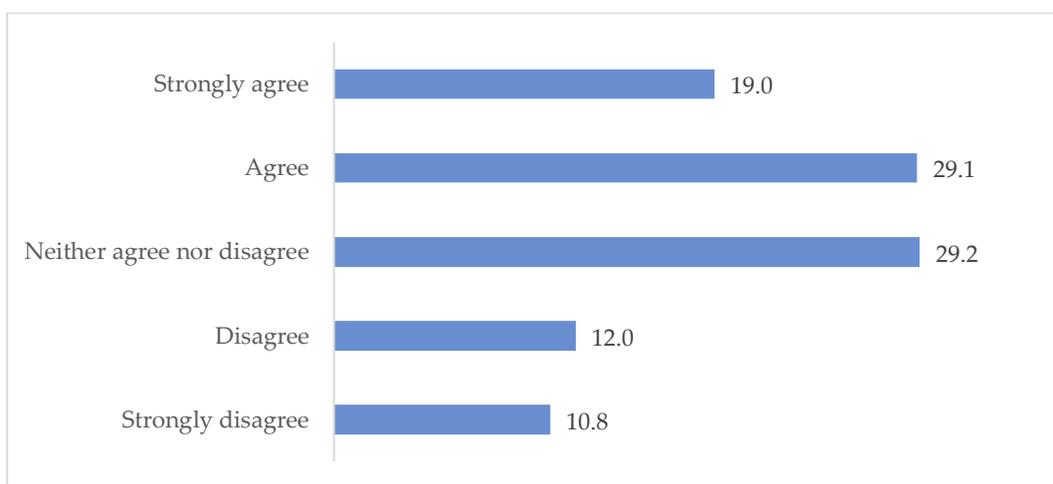
Regarding the interest of government agency heads in adopting project management, 42.7% of respondents indicated such interest, with 31.7% remaining neutral (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Government officials demonstrate limited interest in adopting project management.

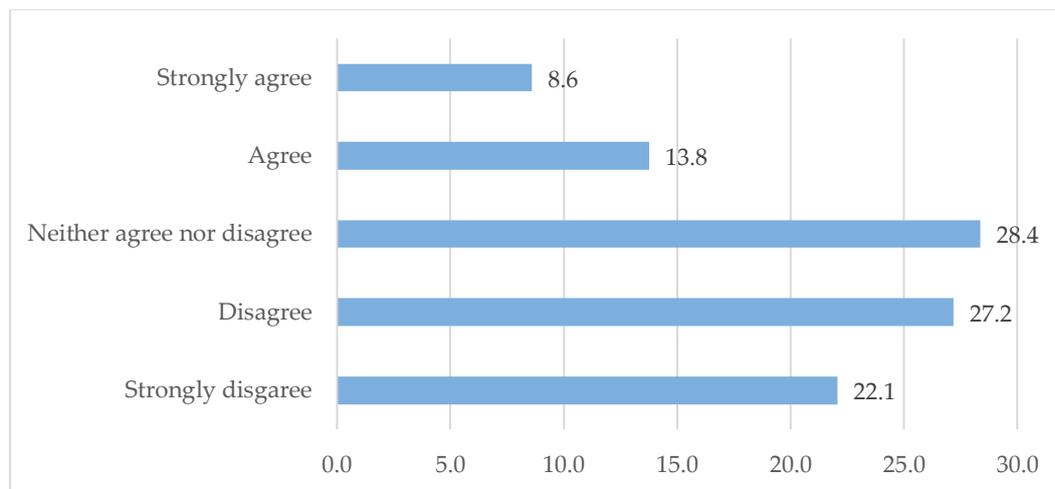


According to 48.1% of respondents, implementing project management contributes to improved performance and a higher degree of goal achievement. We believe this understanding of project management's effectiveness is particularly observed among civil servants involved in project offices at the central government agency level. At the same time, almost a third of respondents remained neutral on this matter (Figure 3), which may indicate their lack of awareness regarding project management and the work currently being carried out in this direction.

Figure 3. Implementation of project management will help to improve effectiveness of decisions taken, %.



49.3% of respondents believe civil servants in Kazakhstan are interested in project management training, while only 22.4% disagreed. Almost a third of respondents remained neutral on this matter (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Civil servants are not interested in project management training.

The adoption of strategic management and project management technologies aims not only to improve the efficiency of government agencies but also to lead to a reduction in their personnel. Despite this, the survey reveals a disagreement among participants, with 61.7% not supporting the optimization of government agency staffing levels. In contrast, a notable 21% of respondents still advocate for such measures.

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Global experience indicates that the **service model of public administration** represents a crucial transitional stage towards **participatory governance**. However, unlike many other countries, Kazakhstan has not yet fully made this shift. Instead, it continues to develop a service-oriented approach, which aligns closely with the core mission of government agencies: **servicing the people**.

In the service model, the state and its citizens interact as **service providers and clients**, respectively. Kazakhstan has achieved significant success in this area, largely due to its **e-government initiatives**. In contrast, the **participatory model** presumes a partnership between the government and society, involving their joint participation in decision-making. This inherently necessitates the development of **open government structures**. While the proclaimed concept of a "Listening State" underscores the need for such a transition, the service model currently remains dominant in practice.

Participatory governance prioritizes **public demand** when formulating strategies and programs. In Kazakhstan, however, government programs are frequently adjusted to fit pre-determined budgets rather than the other way around. This emphasis shifts from **creating public benefit** to simply **expending funds**.

A similar approach is evident in the evaluation system for government agencies. Instead of focusing on **results and public value**, the primary attention is given to the **volume of work performed**. Furthermore, while the Budget Code outlines principles of **efficiency (costs) and effectiveness (goal achievement)**, these concepts are not clearly differentiated in regulatory documents.

To foster a genuine partnership between the government and society, a transition to **flexible management methods**, particularly **project management**, is essential. Nevertheless,

Kazakhstan's public sector currently exhibits a **low, almost non-existent, level of project maturity**.

The unified framework for civil servant competencies also **lacks skills in project management**. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate "project thinking" as a basic competency and "portfolio and program management" as an advanced one.

It is equally important to introduce mechanisms for integrating **project technologies** into the operations of government agencies. This entails moving from rigid hierarchies to **network structures**, and shifting from directive management to **indicative management**, with a strong emphasis on **achieving results**.

Modern conditions demand the **active involvement of citizens, businesses, and initiative groups** at all stages of developing and implementing state decisions. To facilitate this, it is imperative to develop **agile approaches** in interdepartmental and intersectoral interactions, thereby making governance more flexible, open, and effective.

CONCLUSION

The shift to **modern, human-centric models of public administration** is a fundamental aspect of global management trends. While Kazakhstan has made strides in this direction over the past few decades, a comprehensive set of measures still needs implementation. The introduction of **project management**, widely recognized as effective by many countries and international institutions, offers a tangible tool for transforming the current management system.

Our research results reveal a clear interest in adopting a **project approach** among both civil servants and heads of government agencies. However, a significant portion of respondents expressed neutral or uninformed attitudes. This highlights the need for systematic educational and training initiatives, alongside creating institutional conditions for the widespread adoption of project practices.

To sustainably enhance the efficiency of the state apparatus, it is essential to:

- Move from a linear-functional to a network management model.
- Integrate project management into the daily operations of government agencies.
- Update the Unified Framework of Civil Servants' Competencies to include skills such as "project thinking" and "program management".
- Develop flexible (agile) forms of inter-agency interaction.
- Strengthen the participation of civil society and other stakeholders at all stages of public policy formulation and implementation.

Thus, implementing project management should be viewed not merely as a technical tool, but as a strategic direction for modernizing public administration. Its aim is to improve effectiveness, accountability, and trust between the state and society. Only by addressing these conditions can Kazakhstan achieve the goals outlined in the Concept of Development of Public Administration until 2030.

REFERENCES

Alibaeva G.A. Theoretical aspects of the relationship between the concepts of "function" and "powers" in the activities of executive agencies. Available at: <https://articlekz.com/article/6830>.

- Average monthly nominal wage per employee. 2020/II. Available at: <https://clck.ru/RU9Es>.
- Baltabaev S.A. The concepts of "competence", "function" and "powers": to the analysis of theoretical developments of scientists. Available at: <https://ipi1.ru/images/PDF/2016/45/ponyatiya-kompetentsiya-funktsiya.pdf>.
- Budget programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for 2021-2023. Available at: <https://clck.ru/Rxpdy>.
- Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. Report on the state of SMEs development in Kazakhstan and its regions. 2016. Available at: https://www.damu.kz/upload/iblock/6e7/Damu_BOOK_Rus_inet.pdf.
- Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 26, 2019 No. 875 "On Amendments in Certain Decisions of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900000875#z24>.
- Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 9, 2020 No. 189 On Amendments in the Decrees of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated August 23, 2018 No. 513 "On Approval of the Rules for the Provision of State Grants for the Implementation of New Business Ideas to Participants in the Yenbek State Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship for 2017-2021 and dated November 13, 2018 No. 746 "On Approval of the Yenbek State Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship for 2017-2021". Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2000000189#z10>.
- Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 29, 2017 No. 790 "On approval of the public planning system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1700000790>.
- Employment Roadmap for 2020-2021 (approved by the Order of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 27, 2020 No. 55-r). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/R2000000055>.
- Gabdualiev M., Shishimbayeva S. On the issue of defining the concepts of "functions", "competence", "powers" of a government agency. Available at: <https://www.zakon.kz/4583653-k-voprosu-ob-opredelenii-ponjatiji.html>.
- Center for Human Resources Development "Analysis of the income of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 2nd quarter of 2020." - Nur-Sultan, September 2020. Available at: <https://clck.ru/RLi5y>.
- Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Administrative Procedures" dated November 27, 2000 No. 107. Available at: http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z_000000107.
- Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Employment of the Population" dated April 6, 2016 No. 482- V Available at: <https://clck.ru/RTaGB>
- Methodology for the development of the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Prospective Territorial-Spatial Development of the Country, state programs, strategic plans of government agencies and territorial development programs (approved by the Order of the Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 19, 2018 No. 64). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1800016493>.
- Methodological recommendations for determining typical functions of government agencies (approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated August 31, 2016 No. 489). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1600000489>.
- Methodology for conducting sectoral (departmental) functional reviews of the activities of government agencies (approved by the Order of the Minister of National Economy of the

- Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 27, 2017 No. 84). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1700014941>.
- Minimum calculation indicators. Available at: https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/article_mci_2012.
- Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 12, 2019 No. 671 "On Amending the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 30, 2015 No. 44 "On Approval of the Rules for Conducting Health and Sanitary Assessment". Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1900019736>.
- Priority areas of activity of JSC "Human Resources Center" for 2020-2024. Available at: <https://iac.enbek.kz/ru/node/58>.
- Program for the development of Pavlodar region in 2016-2020 (approved by the decision of the session of the Pavlodar regional Maslikhat dated December 10, 2015 No. 398/46). Available at: <https://gigabaza.ru/doc/178790.html>.
- Ralf Hussmanns (ILO Bureau of Statistics). Measurement of employment, unemployment and underemployment – with urgent international and standards issues in their application. Available at: <https://clck.ru/RU9hp>.
- Regulations of the state institution "Committee on Labour, Social Protection and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection" (approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection dated March 3, 2017 No. 18). Available at: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/lspm/documents/details/8102?lang=ru>.
- Regulations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan (approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 18, 2017 No. 81). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1700000081>.
- Regulations of the state institution "Department of the Committee for Labour, Social Protection and Migration in Pavlodar Region" (approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 3, 2017 No. 18). Available at: <https://clck.ru/R7c43>.
- Rules for issuing or extending certificates to a foreigner or stateless person on the compliance of his/her qualifications for self-employment (approved by the Order of the Minister of Health and Social Development dated June 13, 2016 No. 503). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1600014149>.
- Rules for conducting health and social assessment (approved by the Order of the Minister of Health and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 30, 2015 No. 44). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1500010589>.
- Rules of development and approval (reapproval) of budget programs (subprograms) and requirements thereof (approved by the Order of the Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 30, 2014 No. 195). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1400010176>.
- State Programme for business support and development "Business Roadmap-2020" (approved by Government Decree No. 522 of August 25, 2018). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1800000522>.
- State Programme for business support and development "Business Roadmap-2025" (approved by Government Decree No. 968 of December 24, 2019). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900000968>.
- Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050: New Political Course of an Established State". Available at: https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/strategies_and_programs.

- Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 (approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 15, 2018 No. 636). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1800000636>.
- Strategic plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2024 (approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 30, 2019 No. 709).
- Strategic plan of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2024. Available at: <https://clck.ru/RU9vP>.
- Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2015 (approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 31, 2010 No. 1507). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1000001507>.
- Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021 (approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 6, 2017 No. 21). Available at: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=34472591#pos=0;7.
- Structure of the Committee of Labour, Social Protection and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/lspm/about/structure/99/1?lang=ru>.
- Structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/enbek/about/structure/10/1?lang=ru>.
- The Nation 's Plan " 100 Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms". Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1500000100> (accessed on 03.09.2020).
- Unemployment. Available at: <https://clck.ru/G8oUX>.
- United Nations Development Program "Human Development Index". Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>.
- 'Yenbek' State program for the development of productive employment and mass entrepreneurship for 2017-2021 (approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 13, 2018 No. 746). Available at: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1800000746>.