
EUROFEDOP SEMINAR

Public reform – a constant reality and challenge for candidate countries

18-19.11.2020
Podgorica (Montenegro)

Short Report



Seminar with local participants and speakers in Podgorica and international participants and speakers joining via videoconference

Public administration reform is a pillar of the EU enlargement process and for this reason, it is particularly important for Western Balkan (WB) countries that are candidates for full EU membership. There are great challenges for WB countries in terms of creating an open, transparent, efficient, accountable, and professional administration. Key problems that were mentioned in this regard from the perspective of Montenegro are nepotism in employment, a resulting accumulation of administrative workforce in certain sectors, lack of accountability and transparency, as well as numerous violations of employment law.

The seminar was held at a time of crucial importance in the history of Montenegro, as a new government is expected to be established in the beginning of December 2020, following elections held on August 30, 2020, which resulted in the first change of the governing party since 30 years. Social partners and civil society have high expectations of the new government, especially in terms of rule of law and building a professional, non-corrupt, transparent, and efficient public administration. Representatives of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (UFTUM) hope for a faster democratisation of society and new opportunities for trade unions to be more actively involved in the reform processes.



From the perspective of trade unions, a participatory approach to public administration reforms is particularly important, i.e. consultations and involvement of trade unions, employees, and the entire civil sector in these processes. In several WB countries, for example also Serbia, public administration struggles with a lack of professionalism, responsibility and transparency, reflected in the inadequate quality of policy-making and provision of services to end users and the inefficient functioning of the budget system. At the same time, one must be aware that public administration reform is a slow process, and the visibility of achievements requires significant time. It is also a very demanding process in which civil servants and employees are confronted with having to learn and adapt to new requirements and methodologies on a daily basis.



One major challenge that was discussed by several speakers and participants is the importance of transparency. Free access to information definitely has to be improved in order to enhance the participation of civil society and trade unions in the reform process. Both experts and participants further agreed on the conclusion that involvement of all stakeholders is one of the preconditions for successful public administration reform.

Furthermore, it is evident that public administration reform needs to be efficient. The Austrian experience proves that e-government contributes to efficiency in public administration and the representatives from WB countries agreed that if the current epidemiological situation has taught us anything, it is that we need to work harder on strengthening and introducing new electronic services, but also empowering citizens to use them more.



Concluding from the presentations of the panellists and the participants' comments during the discussions, the following points can be summarised:

- there is a need for a more proactive role of trade unions in public administration reform and the EU accession process;
- there is a need for more transparency of reform processes and the rule of law
- digitalization is an important factor in the fight against corruption on the one hand but also in achieving efficiency of public administration on the other hand;
- there needs to be a proactive approach to monitoring reform processes and gathering information and informing trade union membership and the public about them

Next year, EUROFEDOP will organise a seminar that specifically discusses the process of accession to the European Union from the perspective of fulfilling the conditions provided for in the negotiation chapters.

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