

## Conference

# *Building Human Capacities for EU Accession in the SEE Countries*

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CROATIAN AND COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Within the framework of the *Network of EU Offices in the SEE Region* the conference *Building Human Capacities for EU Accession in the SEE Countries*, was held from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of October in Cavtat, Croatia. It was organized by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in cooperation with the Centre of Excellence of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The objective of the conference was to address different aspects of improving administrative capacities in SEE countries and developing professional and qualified state administrations capable of responding to the requirements of EU accession. It served as a platform for debate and exchange of experience among high-level policy-makers, civil servants, parliamentarians, representatives of training institutions and other key stakeholders in the process. The conference was attended by approximately 80 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. In addition to those from Croatia, the representatives of institutions of other EU Member states, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania, shared their experience and lessons learned regarding the EU accession process.

The conference was organized within three general panels and sessions of three working groups. It was officially opened by Alexandra Hilbig, representative of the GIZ Open Regional Fund for South East Europe, and Hrvoje Marušić, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs from Croatia, who represented the host country.

The first session *Integrating National Public Administrations into the European Administrative Space* set the frame of the conference and introduced

the debate. Professor Ivan Koprić, from the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, was the moderator and a contributor to the first panel session. The speakers were Hrvoje Marušić, Assistant Minister, Directorate for EU affairs, MFEA; Jan Pastwa, Director of the National School of Public Administration in Warsaw; Milena Lazarević, Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister/ Minister for Public Administration and Local Governance, Serbia; Fatos Mustafa, Head of Department for Public Administration, Ministry of Public Administration, Kosovo; Dejan Buha, Advisor, Public Administration Reform Office, Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the end of the panel, professor Koprić summarized the most important conclusions: meritocracy is of utmost importance for the creation of depoliticized administrations and there is a need for institutional modifications with less hierarchy and more partnerships as well as for change in administrative culture, which should be less formalistic. The panelists also agreed that there was a need to prepare civil servants for challenges when dealing with the EU decision-making processes and practices, through trainings, scholarship schemes, and various other measures in attracting and retaining staff. Necessary changes are required in the domestic legislation and EU administrative law. Better codification of EU standards is also necessary.

In Session II *Public Administration Reforms in the Context of European Integration* all the participants were divided into three working groups of approximately 25 participants each, where they could exchange experiences, discuss best practices and provide concrete recommendations on what is needed for public administrations in these countries to build a professional and qualified civil service that is reliable, transparent and efficient in meeting the EU accession requirements.

The objective of the first working group (*Capacity Development and Management in the EU Integration Process – Training, Performance Management, Motivation, and Retention Policies*) was to discuss the current challenges in human capacity management with regard to EU accession requirements and to see what can be done to attract, motivate, and retain qualified staff for a well-functioning and efficient public administration. Participants in this working group recommended a number of innovative policy measures for attracting, motivating, and retaining EU professionals, opting for regional cooperation measures and possible ways of putting them into practice. In the second group (*Defining Competencies for positions related to EU Accession*), the participants discussed the issues of job design, competences, and skills needed for 'EU professionals'. They also discussed the need to put an end to the old system of employment and introduce competences in the civil service structures. Gradually, the intro-

duction of competencies will make a positive impact on the management of individual performance and expose managerial incompetence. It will change the criteria for professional development and raise the question of career progression. In the third working group (*Human Capacity Development: The Multiple Challenges of Translation in the European Integration Process and Potential for Cooperation*) the participants discussed the issues regarding the translation challenges in the EU integration process. Exchange of experience between technical levels, like at this conference, is a rare opportunity and should be further promoted. The feedback and recommendations have been as follows: a regular working group on the technical level can be established to exchange experiences on translation lessons and good practices; it is necessary to establish regional translation networking; translation process requires awareness of political decision-makers and needs to be made visible as high priority in order to be effective; educate civil servants on how translation works (working with track changes, deadlines, etc.) and what is required of them; it is important to “build the brand” of lawyer linguists; to establish a relationship with the European Commission and a close internal cooperation system; to recruit and retain qualified staff, and to explore different public procurement options for external translators within legal framework.

The second day of the conference started with presentations of the rapporteurs from the respective working groups who presented their comments and recommendations to all the participants and high-level policy-makers present for Sessions III and IV, which triggered some further discussion on the topic.

Session III *Political Support in Building Human Capacities for the European Integration Process* was moderated by Zoltan Horvath, Head of Technical Assistance Team, Hungarian National Assembly and the speakers were: Sandra Pernar, Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, Croatia; Aleksandar Senić, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for EU integration, Serbia; Gentian Elezi, Deputy Minister of EU Integration, Albania; Shpresa Hadri, Member of the Parliamentary Committee for European Affairs, Macedonia.

In the concluding Session IV *Building of Public Administration Capacities for EU Integration – Looking Ahead* the participants were invited to come together in country-based groups. The objective was to discuss some of the comments, best practices and recommendations elaborated in order to agree on the issues that could be brought back to their home countries and on providing concrete next steps. After the rapporteurs from the

country-based groups had presented some interesting points, representatives from each delegation gave a broader perspective on how the regional initiatives could be used in assisting the development of better human capacities for the EU integration purposes in these countries. The speakers – Mirna Vlašić Feketija, Snežana Radović, Fatos Mustafa, Fatmir Demneri, Dejan Buha, Ivana Djurić and Nataša Cenevska Georgieva, moderated by Alexandra Hilbig – reflected on the feedback and recommendations coming from the discussions of thematic working groups, the discussions of policy makers, and country-level inputs on what important lessons each delegation could take back home.

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