

## EMPLOYMENT TO STATE SERVICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

In Belarus, the system of professional state (civil) service began taking shape, as a political institution, after the October Revolution of 1917, in the conditions of cultural and political authoritarianism, and later – under the "Stalinist" totalitarianism, with its inherent specificities of bureaucracy. The traditions of the Soviet bureaucratic system have largely affected the system of hiring state servants in modern Belarus: state officials are expected to demonstrate a high level of loyalty to the current leadership of the country; while the legislation is a sort of a "facade" intended to conceal the real operating system.

The secrecy and non-transparency of the recruitment system to state service in Belarus is mainly the result of the two main factors: firstly, the imperfection of the current legislation that leaves plenty of freedom for interpretation; and, secondly, the tradition of the Soviet authoritarian bureaucracy.

The aim of the proposed reforms is to make a transition from the approach to recruitment to state service based on clannish, personal and familial relations to the modern system of rational bureaucracy.

### 1. Improved legislation on recruitment to state service

*Negative aspects of this policy:*

- For the President's Administration: a more detailed and strict legislation may limit the power of the President's Administration;
- For the Management Academy under the President: this actor may fear budget cuts;
- For bosses of state bodies (organizations): they may lose the ability to act on their own discretion and hire their friends, relatives and state servants loyal to the authorities.

*Positive aspects of this policy:*

- For the President's Administration: a stricter and more detailed legislation may simplify the control and monitoring of the recruitment system to state service;
- For the Management Academy under the President: new opportunities may open for the staff and students of the Academy in the sphere of international cooperation and education;
- For bosses of state bodies (organizations): the influence of the "telephone rule" of the President's Administration will be restricted;
- For the Parliament: improved legislation may increase the role of the Parliament and improve its image in the eyes of citizens.

### 2. The pressure on key stakeholders through international agreements and by international organizations

*Negative aspects of this policy:* all the existing official actors fear any broad openness of all the aspects of the political and social life; in particular, of the recruitment system to state service. Thus, for them, it means major inconveniences.

*Positive aspects of this policy:* a more understandable and transparent system for international organizations may increase the trust on their part, which will open new opportunities for international cooperation and participation in major investment projects.

### **3. Setting up a commission for recruitment to state service;** and participation therein of independent experts and civil society activists

#### *Negative aspects of this policy:*

- For the President's Administration: they will have to share its monopoly in defining the cadre policy of state service;
- For the Management Academy under the President: it may lose the position of the "unique expert" who knows the real state of things;
- For bosses of bodies (organizations): they may lose the ability to act on their own discretion and hire their friends, relatives and state servants loyal to the authorities.
- For all the actors: the newly hired state servants will feel more independent. This may increase the leakage risk of unwanted information during elections, political campaigns, etc.

#### *Positive aspects of this policy:*

- For the Management Academy under the President: a possibility to be engaged in monitoring the activities of the Commission will increase the budget, including by means of grants donated by international funds;
- For bosses of bodies (organizations): they will get a chance to appeal to the public opinion and civil society. Their future careers will depend not only on the assessment made by the President's Administration, but also on the public opinion and evaluation by the civil society;
- For the civil society: activist of the civil society will get a chance to influence and control this sphere of political life.

The broadening of the influence and involvement of the civil society in the work of the state service system is a more general problem. However, the participation of civil society activists in the work of the independent commission for recruitment to state service and involvement of independent experts in assessing the work of the commission and state servants will be the first step on the road of reforms.

### **Recommendations**

- 1) Setting up a commission for recruitment to state service; and participation of independent experts and civil society activists in its work;
- 2) The President's Administration should supervise, in collaboration with the members of the recruitment commission, which includes independent experts and civil society activists, a strict enforcement of legislation and administrative procedures;
- 3) The Management Academy under the President should submit, in collaboration with the President's Administration and independent experts, amendments to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus that covers the recruitment procedures to state service. These improvements should follow a permanent monitoring of the actual administrative practices and not allow the bosses of bodies (organizations) to act on their own discretion, by matching their made decisions to the requirements of the legislation and hire state servants on the principles of personal loyalty, friendship and clannish relations.