

Assessment survey among the State Administration employees on the application of the transparency and integrity principles

Technical parameters of the survey

The assessment survey was conducted by **Transparency International-Bulgaria** in the period 15 – 30 August 2006, among employees in the central, regional and municipal administrations, using the quota sample method. The survey covered 436 people from 14 ministries, 8 agencies, and 10 regional and 48 municipal administrations.

This is the **first stage of a larger survey** on transparency and integrity in the state administration. The next steps will ensure more quality and quantity of information, as well as a better understanding of both the opinion of the state administration employees and the attitude of the users of administrative services. A questionnaire survey will be conducted among the users of services at the entrance and exit of administrative structures, as well as a test for the representatives of the central administration, and a content-analysis of the reports on the administration since 2001.

Objectives of the assessment survey

The survey provides information on the opinion of the state administration employees on the ongoing reforms and the effectiveness of the implementation of the Programme for Transparency in the Activity of the State Administration.

The objectives of the survey are:

- To assess the **degree of knowledge** of the policies and measures applied by the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform (MSAAR);
- To present the **State Administration employees' assessment of the measures and programmes applied by the MSAAR** in the implementation of the administrative reform;
- To measure **the support of the employees for the Programme for Transparency and for the activity of the MSAAR.**

Main conclusions:

- The results reveal a **change in the values and mentality of administration employees** in respect of their work. For the first time **they are fully aware that the public opinion perceptions on their work is of primordial importance.**

- Civil servants realise the need of a **new type of attitude towards citizens and business** and express readiness to participate in trainings in improving the communication with the users of administrative services.
- **There is a strong support for the qualification courses** organised by the MSAAR. The results reveal that employees value the benefit of trainings and **seek personal development and professional environment in the civil service.**
- Civil servants are aware of the fact that higher salaries are related to higher qualification and skills. **They attach greater importance to higher qualification than to higher salaries**, although low pay remains a major problem as well.
- **The State Administration shows readiness for a dialogue with the media.** Civil servants believe that they should aim at more transparency and openness, as well as that they should work in partnership with the media. Nevertheless, the principle of partnership in everyday activity is still underestimated.

Analysis of the results

1. Development of professional skills is considered to be more important than higher salaries

On top of the list of measures, which according to civil servants can guarantee the effective implementation of the administrative reform, is the strict implementation of the current legislation (71%). The problem of lack of sufficient motivation is offset by the employees' **readiness to enhance their qualification**, which according to 65 % of the respondents is an essential measure for modernising the functioning of the administration. It is worth pointing out that **this measure is considered to be more important than the higher salaries** (indicated by 54%), **which is a sign of a change in the mentality of the employees, since increasing attention is being paid to career and personal development.**

In the majority of cases, the low salaries (84%) and the lack of motivation (76%) are pointed out as major problems in front of the administrative reform, and these two answers are largely considered to be interdependent. Other significant problems are the insufficient number of qualified experts (61%) and the lack of clear criteria for staff assessment (57%). Less than half of all respondents (40%) identify the attempts at political influence as a considerable problem before the administrative reform. The survey also shows that a very small number of the administration employees (only 16%) perceive corruption pressure as an enduring problem.

2. Great interest in the qualification enhancement courses

There is a strong support for the trainings which are offered to administration employees: 74% of the respondents are of the opinion that in the majority of cases such courses guarantee the professional competency of civil servants, while further 8% firmly declare their support for the training courses, with the **municipal administrations expressing the strongest approval.** These results reflect the recognised need to strengthen the administrative capacity. Apart from the central administration, which has so far been the largest beneficiary of

qualification enhancement courses, the smaller municipalities are now increasingly aware of the necessity of trainings as a means of improving their functioning.

The financial capacity of the administration comes first among the factors which determine the access to training courses (70%), this dependence being most clearly expressed in the regional administrations where 95% of the respondents pointed out the financial resource criterion. The results clearly show that age does not influence participation in trainings, **all civil servants, regardless of their age and work experience, express readiness to enhance their knowledge and skills.** Only 3 % of the respondents have not participated in qualification enhancement courses yet.

The courses in foreign languages (36%) and information technologies (24%) are considered to be the most necessary and useful ones, followed by the courses in communication skills improvement (22%), which receive strongest support by the central administration employees (38%). The declared **interest in widening the preparedness of the employees towards a better communication with the public** signals the “opening” of the administration to the general public, as well as the **awareness of the need to improve the dialogue with the citizens and the representatives of the business.** Anti-corruption training receives less support (only 7%), which on the one hand corresponds to the low level of anxiety as far as corruption pressure in the administration is concerned, and on the other hand is related to the fact that the majority of employees are already involved in the self-training in ethics organised by the MSAAR, or have already completed it.

The main recommendation concerning the organised courses is that they should be more specific and more targeted. The efforts of the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform to provide basic skills through the trainings which form part of the Programme for Transparency have been highly estimated, and the employees already express their readiness to further develop their knowledge on more specific topics.

When asked about the need of amendments to the legislative framework regulating the status of the civil servant, 51% of the respondents found it difficult to answer, which signifies that legal culture should be increased among the administration employees.

3. Public opinion as an increasingly important factor for the State Administration

The great majority of state administration employees firmly believe that **the most essential indicator for assessing transparency in their activity is the positive shift in the public opinion (75%).** This result demonstrates a considerable development in the way employees perceive their work: **they are becoming more and more aware of the fact that the administration functions in the service of the citizens and the business.** The number of inspections performed in the administration comes second in terms of a reliable indicator for assessment, with a considerably lower support (only 26%).

4. Compliance with the openness and transparency principles: an important factor for the effective functioning of the administration

The results of the survey point to a substantial change in the understanding of the principles which underpin the optimal functioning of the administration. The principle of lawfulness is identified by 84% of the respondents as the most important precondition for efficient work. **The principles of openness and transparency in the activity of the administration receive**

extremely high levels of support (80%). These are also the main messages of the Programme for Transparency of the MSAAR, which indicates wide spread knowledge of and positive attitude to the programme and its objectives. The principles of coherence (8%), independence (21%), and partnership (25%) are at the bottom of the list.

There is a **positive attitude towards transparency in competitions and appointments in the State Administration.** 69% of all respondents believe that the necessary conditions are in place in most of the cases for guaranteeing transparency in this field, while only 5 % firmly disagree. The central administration civil servants are most skeptical as far as transparency in competitions and appointments is concerned.

Asked whether the status of civil servants sufficiently guarantees their independence, only 8% of the respondents answered firmly in the affirmative, while 62% relate the issue to the civil servant's personal and professional integrity. These results demonstrate the need to elaborate codes of ethics and policies for enhancing professional integrity.

5. State Administration shows readiness for a dialogue with the media

The results of the survey reveal a **high level of potential readiness of civil servants for openness and active dialogue with the media.** The organization and implementation of awareness and information campaigns in partnership with the media receive largest support (84%), followed by the opportunity to use the media in order to inform the public about the decisions taken, as well as about the debates on them (83%). In this context, **the ideas set in the Program for Transparency enjoy the full support of state administration employees.**

6. Self-criticism in the delivery of administrative services

The majority of respondents (59%) **have assessed in a moderately positive way the quality of the service delivery** of their administrations. 15 % give a fully positive assessment of their work, while 20 % are moderately critical of it. Only 5% of all respondents share that the delivery of services does not correspond to the required level, as well as that considerable gaps frequently occur in the functioning of their administrations. **The registered level of constructive self-criticism can be highlighted as one of the major preconditions for the effective implementation of the Program for Transparency in the Activity of the State Administration.**

The gaps in the planning and management of the activity are identified as the main obstacle to the achievement of optimal coordination between the different levels of the State Administration (50%). This result demonstrates the administration employees' readiness to develop their management and planning skills. The lack of an overall development strategy comes second (23%), with the municipal administrations being the most critical ones in this respect.

The websites and hotlines (82%), the boxes for opinions, assessments and recommendations (78%), and the codes of ethics (78%) are the main mechanisms for transparency and control currently applied in the administrative structures. Ex post assessment surveys among users of administrative services are **the least used method;** therefore, future efforts should be targeted at developing this mechanism for tracking feedback from administrative services users.