

Modern Administration READY FOR EU INTEGRATION ESSENTIAL



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ministration, digitisation and the preparing of all levels of the administration to respond effectively to the challenges of Euro-Atlantic integration.

■ To what extent has fiscal stabilisation sped up the process of reforming public administration?

- Stable public finances mean the stability of budget contributions, such as to pensions, salaries, capital projects, social services, allocations for, e.g., priority areas that we will implement in cooperation with NGOs and others. It would be difficult in a society where these preconditions have not been met to talk about innovation, digitisation, electronic services, reform of the civil service system, reforms coordinated by the ministry I head, if we don't have a stable system that improves the lives of our citizens.

■ How much should savings reduce the number civil servants and their professionalisation?

- It's still early to talk about tangible numbers and savings. Our primary goal is the optimisation of the capacity of the personnel we have available in the public administration. This implies us defining in all areas the optimal number of employees who will provide an efficient and high-quality service. This doesn't mean we have surplus staff in all areas, so the adequate analysis that we are now working on, and which forms the basis for the development of the methodology and the Plan for optimising the number of employees, will provide us with a summary of the situation that we can use as the basis upon which we will be able to plan in the future.

■ What are the key objectives of the process of optimising the work of the

EFFICIENCY

We want to optimise the capacities of the personnel we have in public administration and offer citizens an efficient and high-quality service

public administration, independently of these measures carried out within the framework of fiscal stabilisation?

- The basic aim of reforms is to create an administration that will provide services to citizens effectively and professionally, and that means everyone knowing their place in the system. The aim is also to streamline those systems where there is a surplus of personnel, and to strengthen areas that are of importance to us in the European integration process. Expectations from this process are high. It is important to note that the Ministry of Public Administration is the coordinator, and that each ministry is responsible for supporting the process in a way that clearly identifies and demonstrates its staffing needs.

■ How important is the achieving of these goals for the country's overall European integration process?

The goal of optimising the work of the public administration is to unburden those systems where there are excess employees, and to strengthen those places that are important to us for the European integration process

- It is very important that we have an administrative apparatus that can respond to the needs of EU integration, but also obligations linked to NATO membership. All of these activities related to public administration reform are also linked to obligations we accepted and are fulfilling as a NATO member, but also a future EU member state.

■ Where is digitisation on your list of priorities?

- Digitisation is always at the top of our priorities, both from the aspect of

TRANSPARENCY

The Government web portal, on which we publish all information about works undertaken and future strategic plans, is visited by millions of people every year, both from Montenegro and abroad

developing the information society as a whole and from the aspect of information security. Modern trends in business, as well as the everyday life of the individual, are increasingly turn towards ICT, and it is our obligation to apply modern technological solutions and innovations within the institutions of the system and make them accessible to citizens and businesses. Evidence for this is also provided by the adoption of strategic documents, such as the strategy for the development of the information society,



the public administration reform strategy and, finally, the cyber security strategy.

■ What can citizens and businesses expect specifically from the digitising of public services?

- Citizens and the economy, first and foremost, can expect a more efficient and service-orientated administration. This means that the way citizens communicate with the state and local institutions will change in both directions. Citizens can already, from home or work, complete the procedure of submitting a request

SAVINGS

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via a computer, instead of needing to go to a counter, and receive information via email on the status of the procedure. The electronic exchange of data between state bodies will enable them, ex officio, to exchange data required in administrative procedures, instead of citizens needing to submit documents as evidence for data that already exists in the registers of the competent authorities.

■ Are you considering the development of m-government alongside e-government?

- m-Government has already come to life to a certain extent. Specifically, the e-Government portal has its own mobile version, which will further improve in the coming period. With the adoption of the Law on Electronic Identification and Electronic Signatures, the implementation of mobile digital certificates has been enabled, which already exists in EU countries. Plans also included the development of mobile versions of some systems that are used in ministries, such as the information system for document management.

■ What are the effects of the work of e-Government to date?

- We can already talk about results with which we are satisfied. First of all, we have created a normative framework that forms the basis for creating the environment and rules under which the entire process must unfold. The web portal of the government has been functioning for several years now and has millions of visitors every year, both from Montenegro and abroad. Information on the work of state administrative bodies, the availability of all regulations, future plans and strategic goals are just one way of opening the government up more to citizens and the economy. The eGovernment portal allows citizens to replace waiting times at counters with the electronic submission of requests. Thousands of young people have

used the portal in the past two months to submit student loan applications or apply for the Vocational Training Programme for higher education students.

When it comes to the business sector, we know that companies in Montenegro have for several years been reporting their tax using the Tax Administration's e-services. Results are also evident in the administration itself. By developing the portal of e-sessions of the Government, we have achieved remarkable savings for years, but also achieved the efficiency of work at the sessions themselves. Moreover, the information system for document management contributes to increasing efficiency in the work of the ministries, because the recording and processing of cases occurs electronically. Apart from the further development of electronic services, we need to work on greater promotions of e-Government, but also improving tools for measuring citizen satisfaction, in order to have clear indicators regarding the effects of digitisation.

■ **With the new Law on the Capital City, Cetinje has had its cultural and historical significance restored. What will this mean tangibly for the local self-government and citizens of Cetinje and Montenegro?**

- I must say that I'm really proud that, by passing this law, we have resolved for the long-term the issue of the institutional, cultural and economic development of Cetinje. Social and political consensus has been achieved regarding this Law in Montenegro. The application of this law will ensure the respect of the capital city in the institutional sense, adequate representation and confirmation of the true value of Montenegro's cultural, historical, spiritual and academic heritage, the participation of a representative of the Capital in bodies of state public service management headquartered in Cetinje, as well as improving methods of planning and financing the development programmes of the Capital City. This law proposes the allocating of budget funds for the development of the Capital, in the amount of one per cent of the projected value of the current budget of Montenegro (presently at around €8 million) for each fiscal year. These funds will be

used to finance projects of importance to the development of the Capital City.

■ **The previous period saw your Ministry work actively on preparation of the Law on Local Self-Government. What is the significance of this law when it comes to further improving the work of local self-government?**

- With the proposed solutions we endeavoured, amongst other things, to provide a more advanced legal framework for the successful functioning of the local self-government system, in which normative assumptions are more precisely regulated for exercising the rights of citizens with the local



of clear reasons for their mandates to be terminated, or when they can be relieved, and so on.

■ **How prepared are employees in institutions and citizens to accept new ideas and innovations?**

- Time is required for all innovations and changes, both for the administration and for citizens. We have already progressed in this process, so I believe we have entered the stage when we have overcome the fear of such challenges. Certainly, through adequate communication we are working on increasing and raising awareness about the importance of new technologies for the development of public services.

■ **How satisfied are you with the quality of cooperation with the sector of civil society and where do you see its role in responding to developmental challenges in Montenegro?**

- I believe that in the previous period we showed that their experiences are important to us. Representatives of two NGOs are members of the Public Administration Reform Council, which is a unique practise in the region. We have completed the legislative and institutional framework for cooperation with this sector by passing the Law on Amendments to the Law on NGOs. The National Office for Cooperation with NGOs has been

The Law on the Capital City envisages the relocating of the headquarters of several state bodies and institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – thereby restoring Cetinje's status as a centre of diplomacy

self-government, as well as improving existing solutions that have not yielded positive effects. The emphasis was placed on the process of professionalisation, the role of the main administrator has been strengthened normatively, the normative strengthening of the managerial function towards moving from the current administrative to the managerial-development function has been proposed, solutions related to issues linked to the accountability of senior management personnel have been improved with the establishing

established within the Ministry of Public Administration, while the Strategy for Improving the Enabling Environment for the Activities of Non-Governmental Organisations 2018-2020 is under preparation. NGOs are very important partners in the development of a democratic society, regardless of sometimes differing views of certain challenges in the public administration, I believe that in the previous period they provided a significant contribution to increasing transparency and democratisation, and to the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Montenegro. ■