

## Western Balkan PAR Monitor

# PUBLIC SERVICE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

2024/2025



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## ABOUT WEBER 3.0

Building upon the achievements of its predecessors, the WeBER (2015 – 2018) and WeBER 2.0 (2019 – 2023) projects, the **Western Balkan Enablers for Reforming Public Administrations – WeBER 3.0** project is the third consecutive EU-funded grant of the largest civil society-led initiative for monitoring public administration reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans. Its implementation period is February 2023 – July 2026. Guided by the SIGMA/OECD Principles, the first two phases of the initiative laid the foundation for WeBER 3.0's ambition **to further empower civil society organisations (CSOs) to contribute to more transparent, open, accountable, citizen-centric and thus more EU-compliant administrations in the WB region.**

WeBER 3.0 continues to promote the crucial role of CSOs in PAR, while also advocating for broader citizen engagement in this process and inclusive reform measures which are user-tailored and thus lead to tangible improvements. By grounding actions in robust monitoring data and insights, WeBER 3.0 will empower civil society to more effectively influence the design and implementation of PAR. To foster collaborative policymaking and bridge the gap between aspirations and actionable solutions, the project will facilitate sustainable policy dialogue between governments and CSOs through the WeBER Platform and its National PAR Working Groups. Finally, through small grants for local CSOs, WeBER 3.0 bolsters local-level PAR engagement, amplifying the voices of citizens – the final beneficiaries of the public administrations' work.

WeBER 3.0 products and further information about them are available on the project's website at [www.par-monitor.org](http://www.par-monitor.org).

WeBER 3.0 is implemented by the Think for Europe Network (TEN), composed of six EU policy-oriented think tanks in the Western Balkans:



Think  
for  
Europe  
Network



Institute for Democracy and Mediation  
Institut za demokratiju i medijaciju



GROUP FOR LEGAL  
AND POLITICAL  
STUDIES



institut  
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VANJSKOPOLITIČKA INICIJATIVA BH  
FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE BH



European  
Policy  
Institute  
Skopje

By partnering with the Centre for Public Administration Research (KDZ) from Vienna, WeBER 3.0 has ensured EU-level visibility.





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- Professor Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling, Professor of Political Science at the University of Nottingham, School of Politics and International Relations;
- Professor Tiina Randma-Liiv, Professor and Chair of Public Management and Policy at Tallinn University of Technology;
- Ms Maja Handjiska Trendafilova, Director of ReSPA (Regional School of Public Administration);
- Mr Thomas Prorok, Deputy Managing Director of the Austrian-based KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research
- Professor Kalypso Nicolaidis, Chair in Global Affairs at the School of Transnational Governance (EUI).

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<sup>1</sup> A joint initiative of the European Union and the OECD.

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More information about the WeBER 3.0 project, the WeBER Advisory Council, members of the WeBER Platform and the project's partners can be found at [www.par-monitor.org](http://www.par-monitor.org).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The assessment of the transparency, openness and meritocracy of public service and human resource management focuses on five critical aspects - 1) transparency of statistics and reports on civil service, 2) transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service, 3) transparency and merit principle of recruitment process, 4) merit-based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence, and 5) transparency and clarity of information on civil service remuneration. The first aspect examines the availability of statistics or reports that cover civil service structure and key elements of civil service policy and HRM. The aspect of temporary hiring focuses on conditions and limitations for temporary hiring, while also examining the application of merit-principle and the openness and transparency of the hiring procedure. The aspect devoted to the recruitment process focuses on accessibility of vacancy announcements, existence of administrative burden, equal opportunities for external candidates in the application process, institutional support to applicants, transparency of outcomes, and citizens' perception on the meritocracy of recruitment. When it comes to the top managers in the civil service, the emphasis is placed on merit-based nature of recruitment and appointment practices and the use of objective dismissal criteria, as well as on limitations on acting appointments, the extent to which appointments are protected from political influence in practice, and the competitiveness of procedures. Finally, the last aspect is devoted to transparency and clarity of the civil service remuneration system and the existence of citizen-friendly presentations on its main aspects. Findings of this report reflect the period since the publication of the PAR Monitor 2021/2022, starting from the second half of 2022, and until the end of 2024.<sup>2</sup>*

Transparency of civil service data remains one of the weakest points in the Western Balkan PAR. While nearly all administrations formally recognise transparency as a principle within their legal or policy frameworks, actual progress in ensuring regular, comprehensive, and accessible information on the civil service has been limited and uneven. Specifically, Kosovo stands out as the only administration where the strategic framework includes concrete measures to enhance transparency. On the other hand, legal frameworks cover the transparency issue in half of the region: in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro. However, most administrations fail to publish comprehensive or timely reports on the civil service. Over the last two years, no such reports were

<sup>2</sup> For 2022, only developments not captured by the PAR Monitor 2021/2022 are included.

available in Kosovo, Montenegro, or Serbia, while those that were available in other WB countries are characterised by limited data quality and analytical value. Similarly, some administrations do publish reports on specific HR topics such as recruitment, performance appraisal, or training, but none provide full coverage of all key areas of the civil service. Apart from official reports, positive examples were recorded in BIH and Montenegro in terms of online availability of accessible, disaggregated, and open-format data on civil servants. Key informants across the region confirm that civil service reporting is generally formalistic, i.e., that even the scarce reports that are available are produced mainly to meet legal obligations rather than to inform decision-making.

In the area of temporary hiring, legislative frameworks across the region remain incomplete and lack key safeguards against misuse. Legal limits on the engagement of all temporary staff exist only in Serbia, where both fixed-term civil servants and individuals contracted outside the civil service framework may not exceed 10% of the total number of full-time employees. Open and merit-based procedures are generally prescribed for temporary civil service positions throughout the region, but not for other forms of temporary contracting. The only exception is Kosovo, where procurement-based “special service contracts” are used. Evidence collected indicates that the practical application of such legal provisions and limitations across the region remains weak. Open and transparent procedures are rare in practice and are consistently applied only in North Macedonia and Kosovo, whereas compliance with quantitative limits on temporary hiring, where regulated, is not fully ensured. Views of key informants on the transparency and restrictions of temporary hiring were mixed overall, reflecting gaps observed in practice.

A review of recruitment practices for full-time civil service positions in the region reveals uneven progress towards openness, transparency, and merit-based recruitment. While all six administrations formally recognise the merit principle in PAR strategic documents, Albania, BIH, and Montenegro have also adopted comprehensive strategic measures covering openness and transparency. Regulatory frameworks in the region generally ensure that public competitions are used to fill job positions, requiring the publication of vacancies and information on the selected candidates; however, despite these strong legal provisions, the practical implementation of transparency remains uneven across administrations. Vacancy advertisements are typically formal and text-laden, with limited efforts to make them visually appealing or accessible to external candidates. Announced job positions are generally accessible to external candidates, with standard documentation requirements that do not create unreasonable barriers. However, specific practices in BIH and North Macedonia still impose additional procedural barriers (such as mandatory certificates or health checks) that may favour internal applicants. Availability of guidance and support to candidates in the recruitment process

is unevenly present: while most administrations offer basic guidance (such as a roadmap through the process), Serbia provides the most comprehensive support through its specialised portal, the *Candidate's Corner*. Administrative burden varies significantly, as most administrations still require candidates to submit extensive documentation at the initial stage, which may discourage potential applicants. However, key informants across the region point out that political influence, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and weak accountability consistently undermine trust in merit-based recruitment practices. Public perception data further suggests gaps between law and implementation outcomes: on average, only 35% of citizens in the region believe that civil servants are hired based on merit. Overall, despite formal progress, existing challenges in civil service recruitment across the WB highlight the need for stronger enforcement of legal provisions and greater transparency.

Ensuring merit-based selection and protection of top managers from undue influence remains a great challenge across the region. Although PAR strategic frameworks aim to professionalise civil service top management, and despite the existence of legal provisions requiring competitive and merit-based procedures, numerous legal and practical gaps still allow a high degree of political discretion and interference. In half of the Western Balkan administrations there is a legal requirement that acting appointments to top management positions must be made exclusively from among serving civil servants. In Serbia, legislation does not explicitly regulate how many times an acting appointment can be renewed with the same individual, leaving space for legal ambiguity and misuse. The same situation applied in Montenegro until July 2025, when amendments to the civil service legal framework introduced a limit of two consecutive terms for acting appointments. In both Serbia and Montenegro, the existence of separate political-level vetting procedures for top management appointments, operating outside the civil service legal framework, has for years represented an additional discretionary barrier to professionalisation. Furthermore, the legal framework in Montenegro and Serbia allows the dismissal of top managers on vague and insufficiently defined grounds. At the same time, in North Macedonia, pending the adoption of a new legal framework, the top civil service layer remains highly vulnerable due to the absence of firm legal guarantees for the consistent application of merit and integrity principles. Altogether, these gaps have significant practical consequences. Analysis of sample recruitment procedures showed that appointments among the three best-ranked candidates sporadically occur in the region, and there is no clear evidence that limitations on acting appointments to existing civil servants, where prescribed, are consistently observed. The deficiencies in enforcing merit-based recruitment also translate into a low number of eligible candidates per top management vacancy, which averages around two across the region. Perceptions of key informants strongly confirm the persistence of

undue influences, confirming that efforts to ensure professionalism remain largely unsuccessful.

Civil service remuneration systems across the Western Balkans are generally based on clear and simple legislative frameworks, with well-defined coefficients per rank or position. However, legal provisions on salary supplements remain inconsistent in terms of prescribing all relevant aspects of statutory and discretionary supplements, creating differences in the overall transparency and fairness of pay systems. North Macedonia stands out with the most comprehensive regulatory framework, while discretionary salary supplements are not allowed in Albania and Serbia. Despite formal clarity in legal frameworks, detailed salary information remains largely unavailable, with only Albania and Serbia having publicly available general data on salaries. Similarly, vacancy announcements disclose the salary for specific job positions only in BIH and North Macedonia. A positive development in terms of salary transparency was noted in Serbia, where the Human Resource Management Service offers an online *salary calculator*, allowing users to estimate salaries by position, rank, and institution, making remuneration information more understandable and accessible. Finally, key informants across the region express mixed views on the transparency and clarity of remuneration systems. Interviewees in Albania, BIH, and Kosovo were generally positive, while those in North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia pointed to the absence of practical transparency. Commonly suggested reforms include consolidating all remuneration information into a single, accessible source, developing digital tools for salary transparency, and linking bonuses (where existing) more clearly to performance.

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Looking at the entire region, despite formal alignment with principles of transparency, this standard remains only partially embedded in civil service systems in the Western Balkans. Ensuring that civil service and HRM data are comprehensive, regularly and timely published, and user-friendly is not merely a technical issue, but a precondition for professional and accountable public administration.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ALB	Albania
BIH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSL	Civil Service Law
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DoPA	Department of Public Administration
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FOI	Freedom of Information
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
HRMS	Human Resource Management Service
KS	Kosovo
MKD	North Macedonia
MNE	Montenegro
NES	National Employment Service
PAR	Public Administration Reform
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SRB	Serbia
WB	Western Balkan
WeBER 3.0	Western Balkan Enablers for Reforming Public Administrations

# I. WEBER PAR MONITOR: WHAT WE MONITOR AND HOW?

## I.1 WeBER PAR Monitor: What we monitor and how?

The Public Administration Reform (PAR) Monitor methodology was developed in 2015-2016, as part of the first Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform (WeBER) project. Since the onset, WeBER has adopted a markedly evidence-based approach in its endeavour to increase the relevance, participation and capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans to advocate for and influence the design and implementation of PAR. The PAR Monitor methodology is a cornerstone WeBER product, enabling civil society monitoring of PAR based on evidence and analysis.

In line with WeBER's focus on the region's EU accession process, once the SIGMA *Principles of Public Administration* were revised in 2023, the WeBER PAR Monitor methodology was also redesigned in 2024, building on the Principles,<sup>3</sup> and on SIGMA Methodology,<sup>4</sup> and complementing the monitoring by SIGMA by providing additional observations focused on transparency, inclusiveness, openness or other aspects of state administrations' work depending on PAR area in question. This revision helps maintain the focus of WeBER's recommendations on EU-compliant reforms, thus guiding the governments in the region towards successful EU accession and future membership. The main changes in the revised PAR Monitor methodology are briefly listed below.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2023), *The Principles of Public Administration*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7f5ec453-en>.

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/my9bs5ap>

<sup>5</sup> For detailed information on the scope and process of methodology revision please visit <https://tinyurl.com/mrymz5kk>



**Table 1: Main changes in the PAR Monitor methodology**

## **STRUCTURE**

In order to align with the new SIGMA methodological approach, the following structural changes are introduced:

- Introduction of single indicator per PAR area, divided into sub-indicators, further consisting of several sub-indicator elements (i.e. specific criteria assessed), in order to streamline the approach and emphasise the focus on transparency, inclusiveness and openness in each PAR area.
- Introduction of types of sub-indicator elements, ensuring that all following aspects of reform are covered:
  - 1) Strategy and Policy,
  - 2) Legislation,
  - 3) Institutional Setup,
  - 4) Practice in Implementation, and
  - 5) Outcomes and Impact.
- Introduction of a 100-point scale, for a more nuanced assessment of progress in each PAR area.

## **DATA SOURCES**

- Introduction of interviews with “key informants”, i.e. key non-state actors engaged and familiar with the processes. These interviews serve as a data source for the “Outcomes and Impact” elements instead of the formerly implemented survey of civil society organisations.
- More systematic use of public perception survey results as a data source for “Outcomes and Impact” elements and expanding the scope of the survey to complement the assessment in five PAR areas – all except “Strategy for PAR”.
- Removal of the survey of civil servants as a data source due to persistent issues with ensuring adequate response rates across the region’s administrations.

## **PAR MONITOR REPORTING**

- Six national PAR Monitor reports, one per PAR area (36 in total for the entire PAR Monitor), in order to facilitate timely publication and advocacy for the monitoring results rather than publishing the results of 18 months of research at the end of the process.
- Six regional Western Balkan overview reports, one per PAR area (6 in total).

## I.2 Why and how WeBER monitors the “Public Service and Human Resource Management” area

A professional, transparent, and merit-based civil service is a cornerstone of public administration that works in the public interest. These principles are essential for safeguarding professionalism, integrity, and public trust in institutions. WeBER’s monitoring focuses on how these principles are applied in practice, beyond what is formally guaranteed in laws and strategies: from the accessibility and inclusiveness of vacancy announcements to the transparency of recruitment outcomes and the public availability of data on key aspects of the civil service. These issues directly affect the quality, responsiveness, and trustworthiness of public institutions. When recruitment is politicised, rules are unclear, or data is withheld, citizens are left with an administration that serves political interests rather than public needs. The monitoring of this area supports evidence-based advocacy for a more competent, accountable, and depoliticised civil service – one that citizens can trust to serve the public interest.

Monitoring in **the Public Service and Human Resource Management area** is based on four SIGMA Principles in this area:



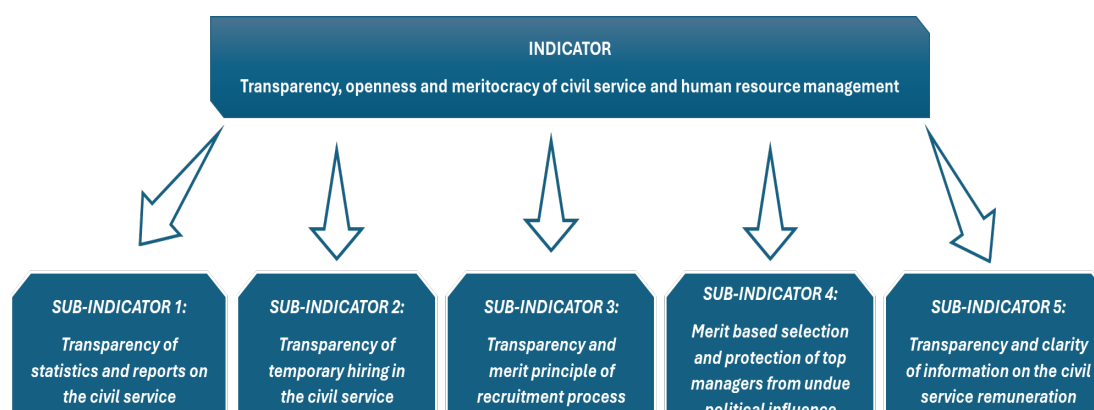
**Principle 8:** The employment framework balances stability and flexibility, ensures accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal

**Principle 9:** Public administration attracts and recruits competent people based on merit and equal opportunities

**Principle 10:** Effective leadership is fostered through competence, stability, professional autonomy and responsiveness of accountable top managers

**Principle 11:** Public servants are motivated, fairly and competitively paid and have good working conditions

These Principles are assessed from the perspective of availability of all relevant information on different key areas of the civil service, while also examining the extent to which merit-based recruitment is present within the system, including the procedure for temporary hiring, and merit-based appointment of top managers. A focus on transparency and openness seeks to determine the extent to which relevant authorities publish information which helps interested public gain insight into crucial aspects of the system and the extent to which civil service is open to external candidates when recruiting new employees.



The monitoring period for the Public Service and Human Resource Management covers developments since the last PAR Monitor cycle, which lasted from January until November 2022. Thus, this report focuses primarily on 2023 and 2024, as well as the end-of-2022 developments not covered in the previous cycle. Although this report provides a comparison of findings with previous PAR Monitor editions, country scores are incomparable to the previous monitoring due to methodological changes.

The **first sub-indicator**<sup>6</sup> focuses on the existence of statistics and reports that cover important data and key policy areas of the civil service system (such as recruitment, career development, and such). Monitoring of strategy and policy, legislation and practice aspects is performed by combining qualitative analysis of strategic documents, regulations and publicly available official data. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct three key informants' interviews with non-state actors who possess significant expertise in the area and/or experience participating in the analysed processes.

**Table 2: Indicator elements under sub-indicator 1**

Indicator element: number and title	Type
E 1.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements in transparency of basic information on civil service	Strategy and policy
E 1.2 Regulations stipulate that data on civil service and employees in the central state administration are publicly available	Legislation
E 1.3 The Government regularly publishes reports pertaining to the civil service	Practice in implementation

<sup>6</sup> The first sub-indicator focuses on the following SIGMA sub-principles: The government has a clear policy on public service, and the political-level responsibility for the area is established; A central body, sufficiently empowered, effectively leads and co-ordinates the human resource management (HRM) system for the public service, provides support to public administration bodies, and monitors implementation; Public administration bodies have sufficient capacities for professional HRM; An effective information system supports HRM processes and provides data allowing for evidence based public service policy.

E 1.4 Published reports include data on employees other than civil servants in the central state administration	Practice in implementation
E 1.5 Published reports segregate data based on gender, age, and education	Practice in implementation
E 1.6 Civil service data is available in open format(s)	Practice in implementation
E 1.7 The government comprehensively reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM	Practice in implementation
E 1.8 Key non-state actors consider reports on civil service policy as transparent and comprehensive	Outcomes and impact

The **second sub-indicator**<sup>7</sup> assesses openness and transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service, while also looking into the application of the merit principle and the limitations to the use of temporary hiring.

Monitoring of this sub-indicator is based on the review of regulations and websites of relevant institutions, as well as official documents and data obtained through FOI requests. The assessment of the practice-type elements is conducted on a sample of most recently completed competitions for hiring temporary staff in five different central state administration bodies, i.e. 5 competition procedures for hiring fixed-term civil servants (one per body) and 5 competition procedures for hiring contracted staff (one per body), resulting in 10 procedures observed in total. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, as in the first sub-indicator, researchers conduct interviews with key informants.

**Table 3: Indicator elements under sub-indicator 2**

Indicator element: number and title	Type
E 2.1 Regulations stipulate conditions and limitations for hiring temporary staff	Legislation
E 2.2 Regulations stipulate openness and application of merit-principle when hiring temporary staff	Legislation
E 2.3 Procedure for hiring temporary staff is open and transparent	Practice in implementation
E 2.4 Temporary hirings are limited in practice	Practice in implementation
E 2.5 Key non-state actors consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful	Outcomes and impact

<sup>7</sup> The second sub-indicator focuses on the following SIGMA sub-principle: The public administration uses temporary employment in justified situations and within reasonable time limits.

**The third sub-indicator<sup>8</sup>** examines the transparency of the recruitment process and the application of the merit-principle. Specifically, the assessment focuses on the accessibility of vacancy announcements, the inclusiveness and fairness of procedures for external candidates, the level of institutional support to applicants and of any administrative burden, as well as the availability of information on selection outcomes, including the annulment of procedures.

Monitoring of strategy and policy, legislation and practice aspects is performed by combining various data sources to maximise reliability of results. It includes qualitative analysis of strategic documents, legal acts and official data that is publicly available or obtained from responsible institutions using FOI requests. The analysis of Practice type elements under this sub-indicator is conducted on the same five ministries/central state administration bodies sampled under sub-indicator 2. For the outcomes and impact assessment, researchers conduct three key informants' interviews. Unlike the first two sub-indicators, researchers also use public perception survey results to assess outcomes and impact within this sub-indicator. The public perception survey was conducted specifically for the purposes of the 2024/2025 PAR Monitor cycle.

**Table 4: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 3**

Indicator element: number and title	Type
E 3.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements of openness, transparency and merit principle of the recruitment process	Strategy and policy
E 3.2 Regulations stipulate openness, transparency, and merit principle of the recruitment process	Legislation
E 3.3 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are made broadly publicly available	Practice in implementation
E 3.4 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are presented in a way to motivate and attract external candidates	Practice in implementation

<sup>8</sup> The third sub-indicator focuses on the following SIGMA sub-principles: The public administration analyses human resources (HR) and prepares and implements HR plans aligned with the budget to ensure the appropriate workforce size, mix of competencies, skills and expertise to fulfil its mission, considering both current and future needs; Public servants are recruited through transparent and open competitions, based on merit; Inclusive recruitment policies and practices support diversity and equal opportunities in the public administration; Recruitment is based on accurate job descriptions providing the required candidate profile (experience, knowledge, skills, competencies) for effective performance, reflected in vacancy announcements, along with work and salary conditions; Selection committees are composed of members qualified to perform the assessment of candidates against the job requirements, without any conflict of interest, and free from political influence; Selection methods provide fair and valid assessment of the experience, knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform the job and enable the selection of the most suitable candidates; Recruitment and selection processes are efficient, timely, user-friendly and supported by digital tools; Applicants are informed of recruitment decisions in a timely manner and have the right to ask for justification and appeal through administrative and judicial channels.

E 3.5 Responsible institution provides support and guidance to applicants	Practice in implementation
E 3.6 There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates	Practice in implementation
E 3.7 The application procedure imposes minimum administrative/paperwork burden on candidates	Practice in implementation
E 3.8 Candidates can supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe	Practice in implementation
E 3.9 Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are made publicly available, with due respect to the protection of personal information	Practice in implementation
E 3.10 Information about annulled public competitions, including reasoning for the annulment, is made publicly available	Practice in implementation
E 3.11 Key informants consider recruitment into civil service as transparent and merit-based	Outcomes and impact
E 3.12 Citizens' perception of merit-based civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact
E 3.13 Citizens' perception of the influence of personal connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact
E 3.14 Citizens' perception of the influence of political connections in civil service recruitment	Outcomes and impact

The **fourth sub-indicator**<sup>9</sup> focuses on the merit-based selection of top managers and the existence of mechanisms for their protection from undue political influence. Specifically, WeBER examines if the recruitment and appointment practices for civil service top management are based on merit, by looking into the limitations on acting appointments, use of objective dismissal criteria, and the extent to which appointments are protected from political influence in practice.

<sup>9</sup> The fourth sub-indicator focuses on the following SIGMA sub-principles: The law establishes top managers as a specific category. The scope of top management is adequately defined, ensuring that senior managerial positions in ministries and agencies are not treated as political offices; Top management positions are made attractive through fair recruitment, competitive remuneration, professional challenges, autonomy and mitigation of career risks; Recruitment procedures are merit-based, professionally led, impartial and transparent, allowing selection and appointment of top managers with sufficient high-level experience, knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform their job well against predefined standards; Recruitment policies and practices support equal opportunities, gender balance and non-discrimination in top managerial positions; Top managers in public administration have clearly defined objectives, aligned with the mission of the organisation and objectives of the government, and their performance is regularly assessed; Top managers in public administration have sufficient professional and managerial autonomy, enabling them to assume responsibility for the management of staff, resources, and work.

Monitoring relies on the review of strategy and policy, legislation, institutional websites and official documents, supplemented by data obtained through FOI requests sent to the responsible institutions. The analysis of Practice type elements under this sub-indicator is conducted on the same five ministries/central state administration bodies sampled under sub-indicator 2. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct key informants' interviews, while public perception survey data is not used.

**Table 5: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 4**

Indicator element: number and title	Type
E 4.1 Strategic framework envisages strengthening of professionalism of the civil service top management	Strategy and policy
E 4.2 Regulations stipulate competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of civil service top management	Legislation
E 4.3 Regulations stipulate that acting appointments to top management positions are only made from within the civil service, for a limited period	Legislation
E 4.4 Regulations stipulate objective criteria for the termination of hiring of top management positions	Legislation
E 4.5 Existence of procedures on appointments to top management positions outside of the scope of the civil service legislation	Legislation
E 4.6 The merit-based recruitment for top management positions is applied in practice	Practice in implementation
E 4.7 Acting appointments are, in practice, only made from within the civil service	Practice in implementation
E 4.8 Ratio of eligible candidates per top managerial-level vacancy	Practice in implementation
E4.9 Share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions	Practice in implementation
E4.10 Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is merit-based and that they are protected from undue political influence	Outcomes and impact

Finally, the **fifth sub-indicator**<sup>10</sup> examines the transparency and clarity of the civil service remuneration system, primarily focusing on the availability of information on salaries and its citizen-friendliness.

Monitoring of this sub-indicator is based on the review of regulations and websites of relevant institutions. For the assessment of outcomes and impact, researchers conduct key informants' interviews.

**Table 6: Indicator elements under the sub-indicator 5**

Indicator element: number and title	Type
E 5.1 Regulations define a simply structured remuneration system	Legislation
E 5.2 Information on civil service remuneration system is available online	Practice in implementation
E 5.3 Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information exist	Practice in implementation
E 5.4 Key informants consider information on the civil service remuneration system as transparent and clear	Outcomes and impact

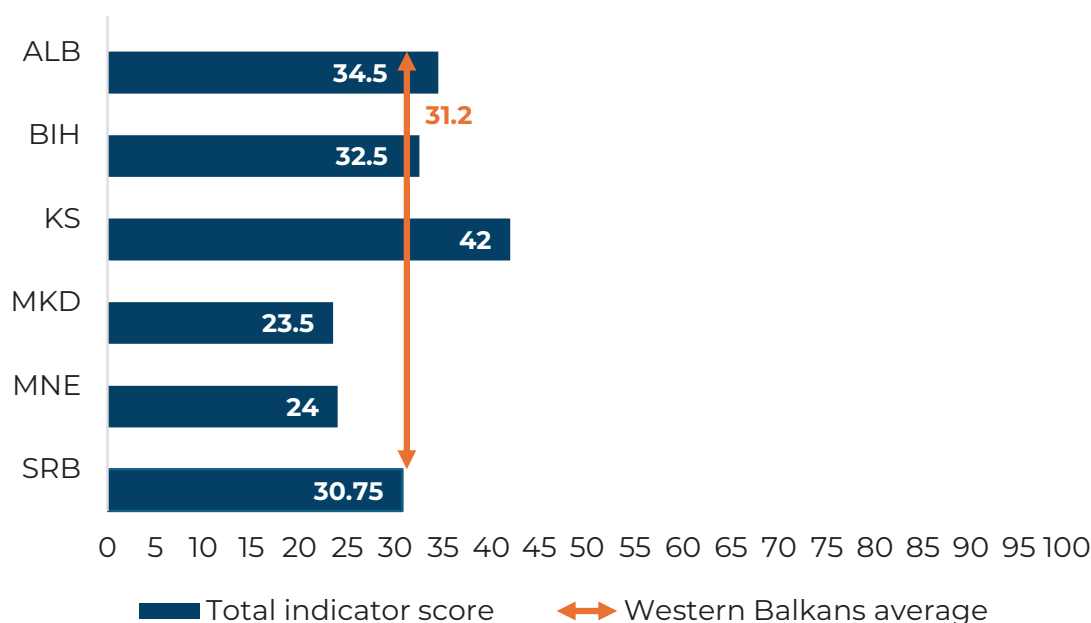
<sup>10</sup> The fifth sub-indicator focuses on the following SIGMA sub-principles: The public administration offers a competitive package of financial and non-financial compensation: remuneration and benefits, development and career opportunities, job security, and a respectful and inclusive work environment, to attract, motivate and retain employees and teams with the required skills and competencies; The salary system is transparent to employees and the public, while ensuring a sufficient degree of protection of sensitive personal data.



## II. PUBLIC SERVICE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: COMPARATIVE WESTERN BALKAN FINDINGS

This section presents the assessment results for Western Balkan administrations. Each sub-section presents the results for one sub-indicator (five in total), beginning with a brief overview of developments since the PAR Monitor 2021/2022. This is followed by a detailed assessment of the sub-indicator elements, starting with the policy, legislative, and institutional framework, then moving to the practice in implementation, and finally outcomes and impact. Each sub-indicator assessment concludes with the presentation of awarded points.

The graph below displays the overall results for the Public Service and Human Resource Management area, measured on a scale from 0 to 100 points.



National reports for the Public Service and Human Resource Management area for all WB administrations are available at: [www.par-monitor.org](http://www.par-monitor.org)

## II.1 Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service

**Principle 8: The employment framework balances stability and flexibility, ensures accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal.**

*Since the previous monitoring cycle, Western Balkans (WB) administrations have shown uneven progress in improving availability of the civil service data. Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS) are continuously developed, however, shortcomings in their reporting capacities, interoperability with the payroll system, and data collection and quality are still present across the region. Furthermore, the practice of reporting on the civil service significantly varies – for example, comprehensive reports are not produced in Serbia, while those available in BIH, Kosovo and North Macedonia suffer from the same issues related to data quality, thus providing little analytical value and failing to address critical HR topics.<sup>11</sup>*

Transparency has been a persistent overarching issue across WB administrations. Initiatives for improving the availability of data on the civil service, explicitly defined in PAR strategic documents, represent an important step in the overall PAR process. However, Kosovo is the only case where the strategic framework includes concrete measures to enhance transparency of information on the civil service. Specifically, these measures and activities focus on publishing data on salaries in the public sector, aiming to establish a transparent and fair salary system that retains, attracts, and motivates professionals in the public service. On the other hand, legal provisions requiring the publication of official reports or statistics on the civil service are present in half of the region, with exceptions of Albania, BIH and Serbia. While in North Macedonia and Kosovo legislation requires the production and publication of annual reports on the HRM in public administration bodies, Montenegro's Law on Free Access to Information obliges individual bodies to publish statistics on their employees, including official titles and salaries. Despite this, the lack of a clear strategic framework and sporadic legal obligations indicates that the transparency of data and reports is not considered a key element of the civil service policy, ultimately failing to deliver sustainable improvements.

When it comes to the practice of publishing civil service reports and statistics, the situation remains unsatisfactory across the region. Complete lack of such

<sup>11</sup> SIGMA country reports on the Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration for all WB countries, along with an overview WB report, are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwz5dh7>.

information in the previous two years was observed in Kosovo,<sup>12</sup> Montenegro and Serbia, while in the other three countries, there are common issues of reports being published after legal deadlines or not containing at least basic data on the civil service. Specifically, none of the observed reports in Albania, BIH and North Macedonia that were published contained basic statistics: total number of civil servants, number of civil servants per state administration body, or types/categories of bodies, per ranks of civil servants, and total number divided by managerial and non-managerial positions. Furthermore, none of the reports contained more advanced data on employees other than civil servants in the central state administration (such as contracted staff or general employees) or data segregated per gender, age, and education. Overall, the analysis of practice indicates that even when they are produced, reports remain of low quality and scarce in terms of the information they offer. Such fragmented and incomplete reporting practices do not provide a solid ground for long-term civil service planning and reform, while simultaneously preventing stakeholders from building a comprehensive picture of how the civil service systems function.

Even though the reviewed annual reports do not contain statistical data, sporadic examples of publishing such data outside of the reports were noted in two WB administrations. These examples suggest that alternative mechanisms to increase data availability and transparency can be used in the absence of strong reporting practices. One example was observed in BIH, as the Civil Service Agency website offers statistics on the number of employees segregated by gender, national affiliation and age group, which can be further filtered by institution and civil servant rank.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the website of the Civil Service Agency of the Federation of BIH offers an additional statistical database established in January 2021.<sup>14</sup> Besides representing a good example in terms of data availability and presentation, this is one of only two cases in the Western Balkans where civil service data is available in an open data format. The other such case was noted in Montenegro – the Government website offers a regularly updated table on the number of employees in both local and central government bodies, along with a visual presentation of total number of employees per year, further divided by sectors, and the share of employees at central and local levels in total employment in Montenegro per year.<sup>15</sup> Apart from this, data on the number of planned and filled positions by job category and institution are available on Montenegro's open data portal.<sup>16</sup> Such transparency initiatives are

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<sup>12</sup> The Department for Management of Public Officials prepared the annual analytical report on civil service and HRM in Kosovo. However, this report was not considered for point allocation as it was published outside of the assessment period. The report is available at: <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/40/Publications>.

<sup>13</sup> Available at: <https://www.ads.gov.ba/bs-latn-ba/statistics>

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://www.adsfbih.gov.ba/AgencyWorkPlan/StaffCondition>

<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/vizuelizacija-broja-zaposlenih-u-javnoj-upravi>

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdz6thmc>

important in terms of the general availability of information and user-friendly data presentations, but also in terms of data pieces offered. However, the fact that they are not integrated into formal reporting systems suggests a lack of a systematic approach to civil service data management.

### GOOD PRACTICES – USER-FRIENDLY STATISTICS PRESENTATION IN BIH AND MONTENEGRO

*The **Civil Service Agency of BiH** website offers a database containing statistics on the civil service, with user-friendly visual presentations of data pieces. Specifically, the website offers statistics on the number of employees segregated by gender, national affiliation and age group, which can be further filtered by institution and civil servant rank. Furthermore, an additional statistical database, established in January 2021, is available on the website of the Civil Service Agency of the Federation of BiH, which allows data search by level of government and public administration body, while the data is segregated by: gender, reasons for termination of employment, age, civil servant rank/category, and basis for career progression.*

*In addition, the website of the Government of **Montenegro** offers a visual presentation of the total number of employees in central and local government bodies per year, the number of employees per sector (and per year), and the share of employees at central and local levels in total employment in Montenegro per year, all available from 2021.*

As previously noted, the state of play in the region is, generally, below standard when it comes to the availability of data on the overall civil service structure in the observed reports. The situation is more favourable when it comes to the coverage of key elements of civil service and human resource management.<sup>17</sup> However, this aspect also remains at an unsatisfactory level, as none of the administrations have reports that cover all topics, while Kosovo does not have any such report (see Table 7 below). Reports on the civil servants' wages were available only in Albania, while in Serbia, the Ministry of Finance published an ad-hoc report on salaries per sector and typical workplaces for June 2025 – however, not as part of regular reporting on civil service and public sector.<sup>18</sup> Taken together, with the scarcity of comprehensive reports on the civil service structure, the lack of topic-specific reports points to systemic shortcomings

<sup>17</sup> These are planning, recruitment, performance appraisal, career development (promotions and demotions), professional development (training), remuneration (salaries/wages), and disciplinary responsibility and ethics and integrity issues and measures.

<sup>18</sup> Although it covers the aspect of remuneration in the civil service, this report was not taken into consideration for point allocation under this element, as it was not produced on a yearly basis, but presented the data from the moment of publishing. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/358zwv44>

in reporting practices across the region. This leaves decision makers without tools to develop better-informed policies and the public without access to key information about government employees.

**Table 7: Availability of reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM**

	Key element/topic of civil service policy						
	Planning	Recruitment	Performance appraisal	Career development	Professional development	Remuneration	Disciplinary /ethics/ integrity issues
<b>ALB</b>	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>BIH</b>	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
<b>KS</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>MKD</b>	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X
<b>MNE</b>	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓
<b>SRB</b>	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓

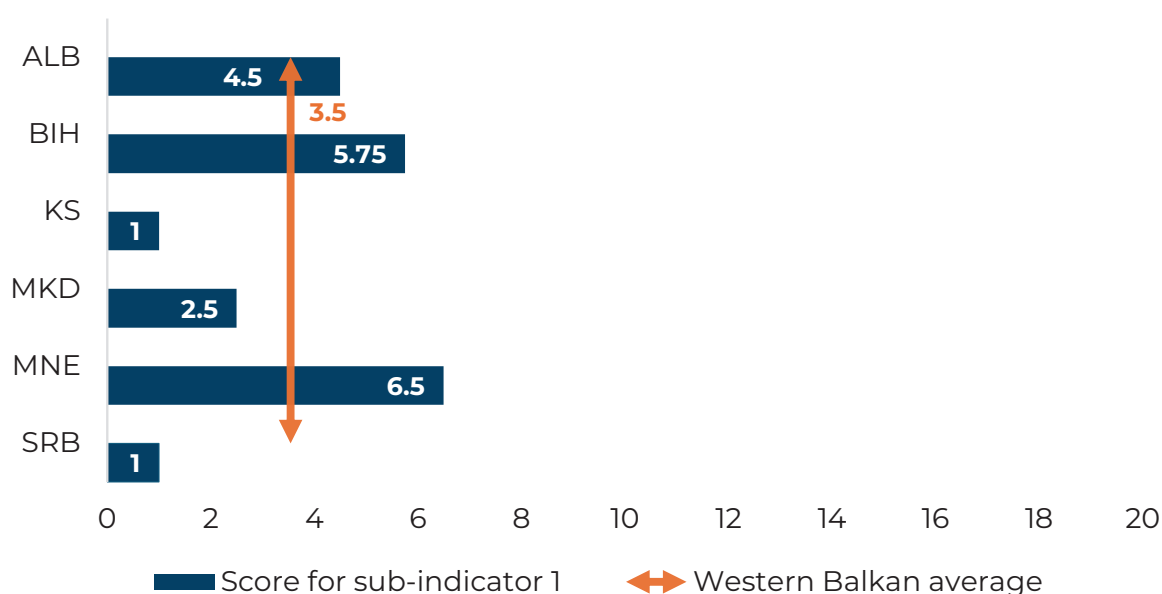
Finally, key informants across the region agree that reports in their respective administrations are not transparent or comprehensive (see Table 8 below).<sup>19</sup> The only exception was noted in BIH, where key informants agreed that the reports were transparent, but mainly due to their availability on the Civil Service Agency's website. Moreover, most key informants in the WB see significant space for improvement when it comes to civil service reporting practices. Some of the main common issues were insufficient coverage of critical HRM issues – recruitment, remuneration, staff turnover – and a lack of data segregated by public administration body, job position, gender, managerial and non-managerial positions, and so on. While some data are collected, they are often incomplete, inconsistently published, or presented in formats that do not prioritise analytical insight. Furthermore, key informants generally point out that data in such reports is rarely used to inform decision-makers, but rather produced to simply meet legal obligations, leading to lengthy reports written in a bureaucratic language, not suitable for the wider audience. These findings suggest that reporting practices across the region remain largely formalistic. Overall, improving reporting practices in the region will require broader coverage of key HR issues, systematic collection of disaggregated data, and publication in formats that are accessible and analytically useful.

<sup>19</sup> Researchers identified and interviewed relevant non-state actors with experience and knowledge in the field (key informants). Non-state actors are selected among representatives of civil society organisations, academia, professional organisations, media associations, investigative journalism outlets, or thematic experts. As a rule, three non-state actors were interviewed per administration for all statements.

**Table 8: Number of non-state actors' responses per agreement scale**

Statement	Administration	Fully disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Fully agree
Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are transparent	ALB		1	2	
	BIH			2	1
	KS	1	1	1	
	MKD		1	2	
	MNE	1	2		
	SRB	2	1		
Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are comprehensive enough	ALB		2	1	
	BIH		2	1	
	KS	1	1	1	
	MKD		1	2	
	MNE	2	1		
	SRB	2	1		

**Sub-indicator 1:** Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service (maximum score 19.5)



## II.2 Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service

**Principle 8: The employment framework balances stability and flexibility, ensures accountability of public servants and protects them against undue influence and wrongful dismissal.**

*In the period since the last PAR Monitor, temporary hiring practices within civil service systems in the Western Balkans continued to pose a challenge for various reasons. As SIGMA notes in its latest monitoring reports, temporary recruitments often circumvent merit-based principles and expose significant weaknesses in implementation. These include, but are not limited to, insufficient oversight mechanisms, as observed in Montenegro; excessive duration of temporary posts, as in North Macedonia; and an extensive reliance on temporary contracts for filling vacancies, as in Serbia.<sup>20</sup> Overall, such practices continue to undermine the integrity of civil service systems in the region, weakening accountability and degrading professionalism.*

The regulatory framework for temporary employment, including both fixed-term civil service positions and contracts outside the civil service system, lacks sufficient detail and safeguards, which fosters an overuse of temporary hiring across the region. While the status of fixed-term civil servants is typically governed by civil service legislation, the engagement of non-civil service staff is usually regulated by labour codes, though other legal acts apply in some cases.<sup>21</sup>

The legal frameworks generally specify the circumstances under which civil servants may be hired on a fixed-term basis (such as filling a position during temporary absence of an employee, execution of a specific project, increased workload, etc). However, similar provisions for engaging non-civil service staff are present only in Kosovo, where such recruitment occurs under “special services agreements” concluded through public procurement procedures. Numerical or percentage limits for both observed categories of temporary staff are present only in Serbia: under its Budgetary System Law, temporary engagements may not exceed 10% of the total number of permanent employees, although exceptions are possible (see Table 9 below).<sup>22</sup> In Albania, the annual cap for temporarily hired staff exists only for non-civil service contracts and is determined each year by a decision of the Council of Ministers, as a maximum

20 SIGMA country reports on the Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration for all WB countries, along with an overview WB report, are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwz5dh7>.

21 Such as Law on Obligations in Montenegro, or public procurement regulations in Kosovo.

22 Exceptionally it can exceed 10%, with the consent of the Government, at the proposal of the competent body, with the prior opinion of the Ministry of Finance. Article 27k, the Law on Budgetary System.



number of temporary contracts for each central state administration body.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the duration of temporary posts in the region is typically regulated only for fixed-term civil servants, while contracts for non-civil service staff are rarely subject to clear time limits (see Table 9 below). Finally, renewals of temporary contracts with the same individual are restricted solely for fixed-term civil service posts, and only in three cases: BIH (up to a total duration of two years), Kosovo (no extensions permitted), and Montenegro (until the total duration, continuous or cumulative, exceeds 24 months). Overall, the lack of clear and uniform standards for temporary hiring, particularly outside the civil service framework, leaves room for systemic vulnerabilities to misuse.

**Table 9: Legal regulation of conditions and limitations for hiring temporary staff**

	Conditions for temporary hiring		Numerical or percentage limits		Duration		Contract renewal limits	
	Fixed-term CS	Contracted staff	Fixed-term CS	Contracted staff	Fixed-term CS	Contracted staff	Fixed-term CS	Contracted staff
<b>ALB</b>	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
<b>BIH</b>	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X
<b>KS</b>	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	X
<b>MKD</b>	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X
<b>MNE</b>	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X
<b>SRB</b>	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X

Furthermore, legal frameworks across the Western Balkans also fail to comprehensively regulate the openness and application of the merit principle in temporary recruitment procedures, which further undermines the overall integrity of government hiring. In general, open and merit-based procedures are prescribed when engaging civil servants on a fixed-term basis. Serbia is exception, to an extent, as public competitions for fixed-term civil service positions are legally mandated in two out of six possible cases: due to increased workload, and for the training of interns.<sup>24</sup> Conducting competitions is, however, not mandatory in the region when concluding other forms of temporary contracts outside the civil service framework, that administrative

<sup>23</sup> Council of Minister's Decision defines a maximum number of individuals that can be hired through service contracts per public administration body and per work position. Council of Minister Decision for 2025 available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3bdpxhej>

<sup>24</sup> Art. 63, Civil Servants Law, Official gazette of RS, no. 79/05-13, 81/05-11 (correction), 83/05 (correction), 64/07, 67/07 (correction), 116/08, 104/09, 99/14, 94/17, 95/18, 157/20, 142/22, 13/25(CC), 19/25. This provision has yet to take effect, having been postponed several times with the latest delay pushing back its application until 1 January 2026. According to the same article, public competitions are not mandatory for – replacing an absent civil servant, job positions within cabinets of public officials, replacing civil servant who was appointed as acting head while his/her duty lasts, replacing a civil servant whose employment relationship is suspended due to the performance of an internship.



bodies frequently use. Exception is Kosovo, where temporary contracting is conducted through the aforementioned “special services agreements,” and carried out via open procurement procedures and based on performance evaluation criteria. With these limited exceptions, a regional pattern emerges. It indicates that legal frameworks formally uphold the principles of openness and merit in temporary recruitment of civil servants yet fall short of stipulating the same standards to other forms of temporary engagement, leaving room for non-transparent, discretionary and excessive temporary hiring.

Tracking the implementation of legally prescribed procedures for hiring civil servants on a fixed-term basis remains difficult due to limited or inconclusive evidence.<sup>25</sup> Evidence of open and transparent procedures exists only in North Macedonia and Kosovo, where vacancy announcements for temporary civil service jobs included detailed job descriptions, requirements, remuneration, selection process, application deadlines, and required documentation.<sup>26</sup> Regarding non-civil service staff, following the legal requirements, only Kosovo applies transparent procurement-based procedures through special service agreements.<sup>27</sup> Overall, evidence from this monitoring cycle shows that some form of transparency in temporary hiring practices exists, fully or partially, in only a third of the Western Balkan administrations.

Monitoring results further indicate that numerical or percentage limits on temporary engagements are not consistently observed in practice. As noted earlier, such limits are regulated in Serbia and partially in Albania (see Table 9 above). For Albania, the collected evidence shows that the share of non-civil service temporary contracts in the sampled bodies ranges from as low as 0.7% (Ministry of Health) to as high as 29% (Ministry of Agriculture).<sup>28</sup> However, due to incomplete data, full compliance with the legally prescribed limit could not be confirmed. In Serbia, by contrast, all sampled bodies exceeded the statutory ceiling, with the combined share of fixed-term civil servants and other temporary staff ranging from 13% (Tobacco Administration) to 46% (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management). Such findings

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25 This is largely the result of missing publicly available data or lack of institutional responses to freedom of information requests (Albania, BiH), absence of temporary employment in the sampled bodies (partly Montenegro), or delayed application of relevant legal provisions regulating public competitions for fixed-term posts (Serbia).

Assessment of practice is based on vacancy announcements for temporary hiring by 5 central state administration bodies for each WB administration (one vacancy announcements per body). List of sample central state administration bodies is provided in the annexe of this report.

26 Example of vacancy announcement by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy in North Macedonia - <https://tinyurl.com/57tnh8jk> . Example of vacancy announcement by the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure in Kosovo - <https://tinyurl.com/ytey7rrh>

27 Example of tender announcement for special services by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in Kosovo - <https://tinyurl.com/yc2vck5n>.

28 Council of Minister’s Decision defines a maximum number of individuals that can be hired through service contracts per public administration body and per work position. Sample institutions provided only aggregate figures per institution.

suggest that even where quantitative limits on temporary hiring exist, compliance remains weak and insufficiently monitored.

When reflecting on the transparency, limitations, and purposefulness of temporary hiring in the civil service, key informants across the region expressed a wide range of opinions, with negative stances slightly prevailing (see Table 10 below).<sup>29</sup> In terms of transparency, the predominant agreement among respondents in Kosovo aligns with the earlier assessment of the practices of the sampled administrative bodies, which showed mostly open and transparent approaches to hiring temporary staff. On the other hand, respondents in BIH, unlike their counterparts elsewhere in the region, largely agreed that the use of temporary hiring is limited in practice. This corresponds with their views that fixed-term employment occurs only rarely and under exceptional circumstances, such as prolonged absence of a civil servant or maternity leave substitution. Finally, the strongest regional tendency towards agreement emerged regarding the purposefulness of temporary hiring in the civil service. This may suggest that respondents acknowledge administrative challenges such as staff shortages, lack of specific expertise, or temporary increases in workload. Taken together, however, perceptions of temporary hiring are mixed and sceptical, reflecting the identified inconsistencies of these practices.

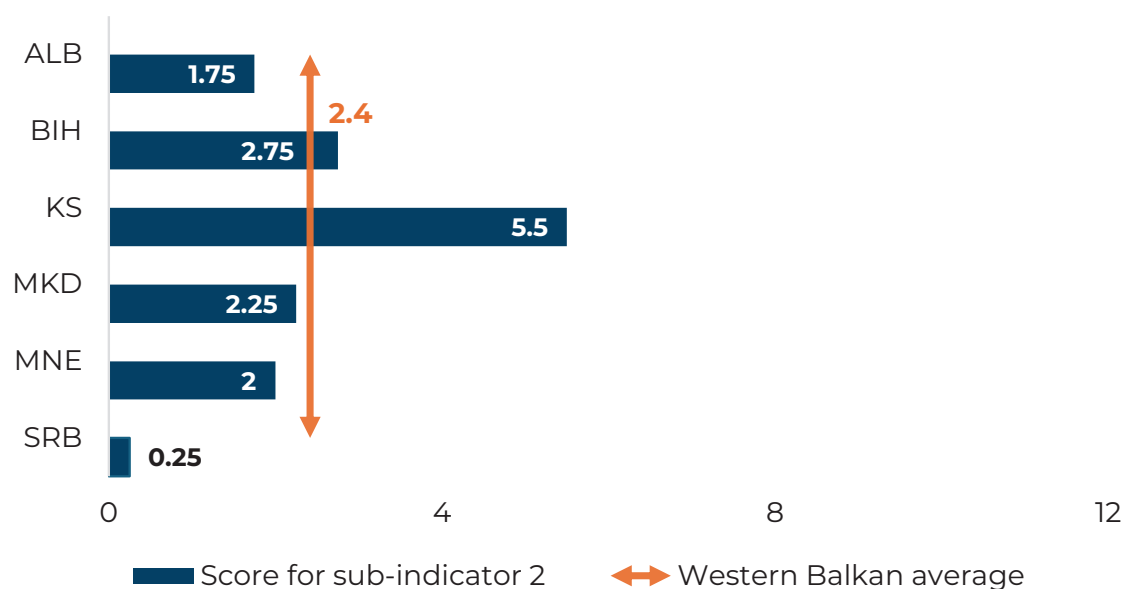
**Table 10: Number of non-state actors' responses per agreement scale**

Statement	Administration	Fully disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Fully agree
<b>Use of temporary hiring in civil service, such as fixed-term employment of civil servants, and hiring of contracted staff, is transparent</b>	ALB		2	1	
	BIH		1	2	
	KS	1		2	
	MKD	2	1		
	MNE	3			
	SRB	3			
<b>Use of temporary hiring in civil service is, in practice, limited</b>	ALB	3			
	BIH				3
	KS		3		
	MKD		3		
	MNE	2	1		
	SRB	1	2		

<sup>29</sup> Researchers identified and interviewed relevant non-state actors with experience and knowledge in the field (key informants). Non-state actors are selected among representatives of civil society organisations, academia, professional organisations, media associations, investigative journalism outlets, or thematic experts. As a rule, three non-state actors were interviewed per administration for all statements.

Use of temporary hiring in civil service is purposeful	ALB			3	
	BIH			3	
	KS		1		2
	MKD		3		
	MNE	2	1		
	SRB	1	1	1	

**Sub-indicator 2:** Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service (maximum score 12.5)



## II.3 Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process

**Principle 9: Public administration attracts and recruits competent people based on merit and equal opportunities.**

*Openness and transparency in civil service recruitment remain low. While all administrations in the Western Balkans have established basic legal frameworks for merit-based recruitment, significant challenges remain in ensuring efficiency and fairness. According to SIGMA's latest assessment,<sup>30</sup> key weaknesses include inconsistent implementation, limited strategic workforce planning, insufficient professionalism of selection committees, underdeveloped use of modern recruitment and selection methods, and limited public disclosure of recruitment outcomes. On the positive side, information on public competitions is generally available to the public. However, these weaknesses continue to undermine the consistent application of merit-based recruitment in the civil services across the region.*

A comparative overview of the PAR strategic frameworks across the WB administrations reveals notable variation in the extent to which 1) openness, 2) transparency, and 3) the merit principle in civil service recruitment are addressed. Half of the administrations – Albania, BIH, and Montenegro – have adopted measures covering all three dimensions, demonstrating a strategic approach to improving recruitment practices. Kosovo and North Macedonia, envisage improvements on a more modest scale, addressing two of these three aspects. Serbia stands out as the only administration that envisages measures solely to strengthen the merit principle, without complementary actions to improve openness or transparency. Overall, while all six administrations recognise the importance of merit-based recruitment, the strategic commitment to its openness and transparency remains uneven across the region.

Legislative frameworks across administrations generally provide a solid foundation for ensuring openness, transparency, and the merit principle in civil service recruitment (see Table 11). All six administrations regulate the use of public competitions to fill vacancies for permanent civil service jobs, demonstrating a shared legal commitment to merit-based entry into the civil service. However, when it comes to openness and transparency, the level of regulation differs. Provisions ensuring the wide advertising of vacancies through nationwide channels are in place in five administrations, while Montenegro's regulations provide a more limited scope of advertising, not fully meeting the criterion

<sup>30</sup> SIGMA country reports on the Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration for all WB countries, along with an overview WB report, are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwz5dh7>

of diverse, nationwide outreach.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, most administrations (except Montenegro) regulate the obligation of publishing the information on selected candidates, while Albania is the only example of legislation explicitly providing for the publication of decisions annulling competition procedures. Overall, while the legal frameworks across the region broadly uphold merit-based recruitment, the consistency and depth of transparency-related provisions remain limited, indicating room for further legal improvements.

**Table 11: Regulations on openness, transparency, and application of merit principles in recruitment**

	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Use of public competitions to fill in vacancies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertising vacancies through different channels	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Publication of list of successful candidates	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
Publication of information on selected candidate	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Publication of decisions on competition annulment	✓	X	X	X	X	X

A review of the sampled vacancy announcements indicates a general commitment to broad public outreach in practice (see Table 12).<sup>32</sup> All six administrations ensure that vacancy announcements are published on a single portal which includes all recruitments in the central state administration, thereby providing a centralised access point for applicants. Beyond this, the use of additional channels varies. Overall, while all administrations meet the basic requirement of centralised publication, several go beyond this minimum standard by using multiple channels to enhance the visibility of recruitment opportunities, reflecting differing levels of commitment to ensuring broad public access.

Furthermore, across the WB administrations, sampled vacancy announcements are generally presented in a standard textual format, with limited use of visually appealing elements to motivate and attract external candidates (see Table 12). In Albania, BIH, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, all sampled announcements are purely textual and follow standard templates without infographics, images, charts, or other visual aids. Kosovo's announcements use tables and bullet points, which improve readability, but do not incorporate visual elements that actively enhance attractiveness to potential applicants. Serbia represents an exception: while competition notices remain bureaucratic and formal in tone, the HRMS has made efforts to summarise key information, supported

<sup>31</sup> Article 42 of the Law on Civil Servants and Employees, public job announcements and public competitions are published on the website of the HRM authority and in a daily printed media outlet distributed throughout the entire territory of Montenegro. <https://tinyurl.com/3djsyt8p>

<sup>32</sup> Assessment of practice is based on vacancy announcements by 5 central state administration bodies for each WB administration (one vacancy announcements per body). List of sample central state administration bodies/vacancy announcements is provided in the annexe of this report.

by social media communication<sup>33</sup>, dedicated platforms<sup>34</sup>, and visual aids such as a selection process map<sup>35</sup> and explanatory videos<sup>36</sup>. Overall, despite these isolated initiatives, administrations have not yet adopted visually engaging formats when announcing vacancies for civil service jobs, indicating limited focus on making recruitment information more attractive to external candidates.

The provision of support and guidance to applicants in the public competition process varies considerably across the WB administrations (see Table 12). All administrations, except Montenegro, provide a guide or roadmap through the recruitment process.<sup>37</sup> Materials to assist candidate preparation, such as test examples or useful sources, are available in more than half administrations (Albania, BIH, North Macedonia, and Serbia), and frequently asked questions with corresponding answers are provided in half the region. However, only the Serbian administration explicitly provides information on how applicants can request and obtain clarifications during the recruitment process, reflecting a more comprehensive approach to candidate support. Overall, while most administrations provide some forms of guidance for applicants, Serbia has rolled out the most comprehensive set of measures.

**Table 12: Availability and presentation of vacancy announcements and applicant support mechanisms**

	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Advertised through a single portal for all recruitments in CS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertised through hiring bodies' social media	X	X	X	X	X	X
Advertised through hiring bodies' website	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Advertised through additional means	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
At least single vacancy announcement is made more attractive to external candidates	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guide/roadmap through the public competition process	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Materials for the preparation of candidates	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓
Frequently asked questions and answers	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓
Information on requesting and obtaining clarification	X	X	X	X	X	✓

33 HRMS is active on the following social media: Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Additionally, there is the Viber community and the YouTube channel.

34 See: <https://kutak.suk.gov.rs/>

35 See: <https://kutak.suk.gov.rs/vodic-za-kandidate>

36 See: <https://www.youtube.com/c/Slu%C5%BEbazaupravljanjekadrovima/videos>

37 In Montenegro, a so-called candidate's corner for support applicants is being developed and was not functional when writing this report.

### **GOOD PRACTICES: CANDIDATE SUPPORT AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN SERBIA**

Serbia stands out in the region for the proactive approach of HRMS in ensuring transparency and candidate support throughout the recruitment process. The HRMS has established a dedicated online platform – “*Candidate Corner*” – which consolidates all relevant information and resources for job applicants in one place.

The “*Guide for Candidates*” provides a clear and user-friendly roadmap through each stage of the public competition process, explaining the sequence of steps, criteria, and decision-making points in a narrative format. Additionally, the platform provides sample tests and learning materials for each phase of the selection process, enabling applicants to prepare more effectively and ensuring equal access to information. Moreover, both the HRMS website and the *Candidate Corner* include a comprehensive *FAQ section*, addressing the most common questions and uncertainties candidates might have. Transparency is further enhanced by the requirement that each vacancy announcement specifies the *contact person* from the institution conducting the competition, along with their name, phone number, and availability for inquiries.

Such an integrated and user-centred approach significantly improves the accessibility, clarity, and fairness of the recruitment process, making Serbia’s HRMS platform a strong example of good practice in the Western Balkans.

The assessment of whether public competitions impose unreasonable barriers for external candidates reveals the degree of variation across the administrations (see Table 13). In Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, the review of relevant legislation and sampled vacancy announcements indicates that standard application requirements, such as identity documents, diplomas, and proof of work experience, do not create undue burdens for candidates outside the civil service. Serbia and Albania, in particular, ensure that all positions are accessible under equal conditions, with no preconditions or exclusive certificates required for external applicants. In contrast, BIH and North Macedonia exhibit certain barriers: in BIH, many vacancies require candidates to provide proof of passing the state exam, computer literacy certificates, and foreign language proficiency certificate, often at the candidate’s expense; in North Macedonia, requirements such as certificates of general health fitness and proficiency in MS Office programs impose additional costs and could reasonably be postponed to later stages of recruitment. Overall, while most administrations maintain recruitment processes that are largely accessible to external candidates, specific practices



in BIH and North Macedonia illustrate areas where procedural requirements may disproportionately favour internal candidates.

Similarly, the extent to which application procedures minimise the administrative (paperwork) burden on candidates differs across the region (see Table 13). In Serbia, the process is the least burdensome, as applicants are required to submit only an application form during the initial phase, while all other documentation (from state registers) is obtained ex officio by the administration.<sup>38</sup> Kosovo demonstrates progress in this area through its recruitment module within the HRMIS<sup>39</sup> which enables applicants to store and reuse documents, with some data automatically retrieved from state databases. However, in most administrations (Albania, BIH, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro), candidates are required to submit numerous documents at the outset of the recruitment process, including diplomas, certificates, and various proofs of eligibility, which increases the administrative load and potential financial costs. Overall, only Serbia fully meets the standard of minimum administrative burden, while Kosovo shows promising elements of digital integration. The remaining administrations still rely on document-heavy procedures that may discourage potential applicants and limit the attractiveness of the administration as an employer.

In most of the region, candidates are deprived of the possibility to supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe (see Table 13).<sup>40</sup> Only in North Macedonia is supplementation formally allowed, as candidates can submit missing evidence before the verification and interview stage.<sup>41</sup> Overall, this aspect of the recruitment process remains underdeveloped in most administrations, limiting flexibility and potentially excluding qualified candidates due to minor administrative omissions. This is particularly important in those administrations where the documentation burden in the initial phase of the process is higher, while less problematic in Serbia where this phase includes minimum administrative load.

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38 The Law on General Administrative Procedure stipulates that authorities are obliged to, in accordance with their official duties, distribute, inspect, process and obtain personal data on facts contained in official records free of charge, unless the party expressly states that it will obtain the data itself. It is necessary for the competition participant to circle in the section "Request" in the invitation form how they wish to obtain their data from official records. <https://tinyurl.com/3ee7zsbd>

39 The online recruiting system, HRMIS, is established for collecting the necessary data and documents of applicants. The applicants can save their documents and edit them in the system, which they can use multiple times when applying for jobs in the civil service. The HRMIS is connected to a state database that has basic personal information like birth, social status, sex, and address.

40 For the purpose of this element, a reasonable timeframe is defined as a minimum of five working days.

41 Administration Agency responded to FOI request: If any of the required documents are not uploaded to the profile, the candidate is allowed to submit them additionally, no later than the beginning of Phase 3 – verification of the authenticity of the evidence and interview.



**Table 13: Existence of unreasonable barriers, administrative burden, and the possibility to subsequently supplement missing documentation in practice**

	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
No unreasonable barriers	✓	X	✓	X	✓ <sup>42</sup>	✓
Documents were requested in the initial phase of submission of documents are easily obtainable	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Hiring bodies collect data and information about the candidates from the state-kept registries	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Candidates can supplement missing documentation	X	X	X	✓	X	X
Time allowed to supplement missing documentation was at least five working days	X	X	X	✓	X	X

The region displays a tendency to transparently manage the work of selection panels, with four administrations publishing their decisions - Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia. Moreover, such decisions are accompanied by some form of reasoning, such as a statement of the number of points obtained by the winning candidate(s) or otherwise. In contrast, only in Kosovo and Serbia are these decisions accompanied by points obtained or another form of reasoning, ensuring a more transparent and accountable process. In contrast, BIH and Montenegro do not publish selection decisions nor provide any reasoning, which limits public insight into the selection outcomes. Overall, Kosovo and Serbia fully meet the transparency standard regarding the outcomes of selection processes, while Albania and North Macedonia ensure partial transparency through the publication of selection decisions without detailed reasoning. In contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro do not publish such decisions at all. Ensuring the transparent publication of selection outcomes is essential for strengthening candidates' trust in the fairness of recruitment, promoting accountability, and reinforcing merit-based principles across the region.

While information on annulled public competitions is publicly available in almost all administrations across the region (see Table 14), the overall level of transparency remains limited due to the lack of accompanying reasoning. Only BIH provides accompanying reasoning for the annulments, ensuring a higher level of transparency and clarity for applicants. In Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, although annulments are published, they lack further explanations of the reasons for annulment, which is an important prerequisite for full transparency in such cases. Such a lack of consistent and detailed communication regarding annulled competitions continues

<sup>42</sup> In Montenegro, amendments to the Civil Service Law adopted in July 2025 removed the provision that allowed candidates to be recruited without having passed the state exam, subject to the obligation to pass it within their first year of employment. These amendments were adopted outside the monitoring period covered by this report.

to undermine transparency and accountability in the recruitment process across the region.

**Table 14: Availability of information on the outcome of the recruitment process**

	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
A decision of selection panel was made publicly available	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓
Decision was followed by reasoning	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Information on annulled vacancy are publicly available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Information on annulment was followed with a reasoning	X	✓	X	X	X	X

Key informants across the Western Balkans generally express scepticism about the transparency and merit-based nature of civil service recruitment, highlighting persistent political influence, inconsistent implementation of legal procedures, and limited transparency as major obstacles.<sup>43</sup> They also point to weak enforcement and limited effectiveness of appeal mechanisms as additional factors undermining trust in the system. Further challenges include the extensive use of temporary staff, outdated approaches to defining job profiles, the absence of standardised eligibility criteria, and the tailoring of vacancy announcements to favour particular candidates. According to informants, while legal frameworks formally provide for merit-based recruitment and transparency, in practice, recruitments often bypass competitive procedures, while evaluation criteria or rankings are rarely published. Certain key informants displayed more positive assessments for specific aspects. In Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, two out of three key informants tend to agree that recruitment is transparent. While scepticism persists overall, perceptions of transparency appear to be slightly more positive than those regarding merit. Suggested improvements across the region include stronger implementation of existing rules, full digitalisation of recruitment, standardisation of job descriptions, transparent publication of evaluation results, and the establishment of depoliticised, independent selection panels. Overall, key informants convey that despite legal provisions, merit-based recruitment remains only partially realised, while political will remains the decisive factor in ensuring greater transparency and fairness.

<sup>43</sup> Researchers identified and interviewed relevant non-state actors with experience and knowledge in the field (key informants). Non-state actors are selected among representatives of civil society organisations, academia, professional organisations, media associations, investigative journalism outlets, or thematic experts. As a rule, three non-state actors were interviewed per administration for all statements.

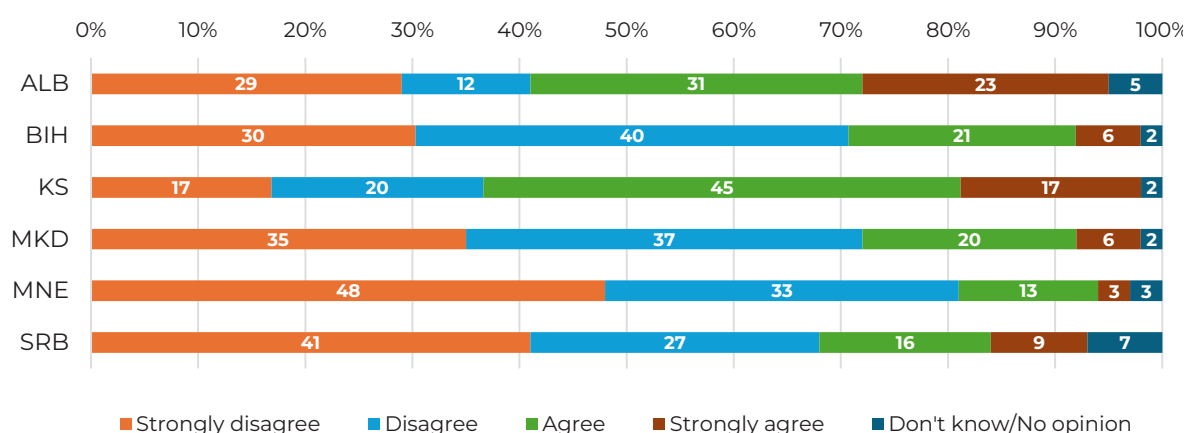
**Table 15: Number of non-state actors' responses per agreement scale**

Statement	Administration	Fully disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Fully agree
<b>Recruitment process is merit based</b>	ALB		2	1	
	BIH	3			
	KS		3		
	MKD		3		
	MNE	3			
	SRB		2	1	
<b>Recruitment process is transparent</b>	ALB		1	2	
	BIH	1	2		
	KS		1	2	
	MKD		1	2	
	MNE	1	2		
	SRB		1	2	

Citizens in the Western Balkans generally have low confidence in civil service recruitment practices. Public perception survey results indicate that, on average, a minority of all respondents (35%) believe that public servants are hired based on merit.<sup>44</sup> The share of citizens who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement is above half of the population only in Albania (54%) and Kosovo (61.5%), while in the rest of the region, confidence is considerably lower, ranging from 27% in BIH to only 16% in Montenegro. Overall, these findings highlight a widespread public perception in the region that recruitment processes are vulnerable to various influences, suggesting a significant gap between formal legal provisions and the fairness and transparency of civil service hiring practices.

<sup>44</sup> The survey was conducted between the 1st and 26th of February 2025 in all WB administrations, on a representative sample of 6077 citizens. For additional information, see the Methodology appendix.

**Chart 1: Share of citizens' responses per agreement scale on the statement: *Public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit (i.e. best candidates are enabled to get the jobs)* (%)**



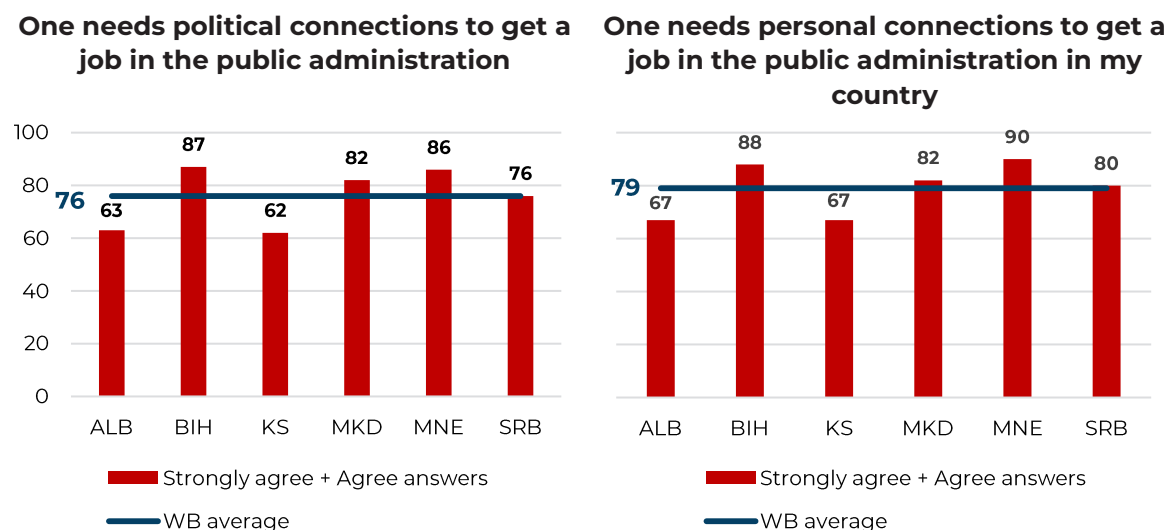
**Note:** All results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. The base for these questions was N = 6077 for the entire Western Balkans.

Additionally, citizens generally perceive that political connections play a significant role in civil service recruitment, adding clarity to the previously discussed result. On average, around 76% of citizens across the Western Balkans believe that political connections are necessary to get a job in the public administration, indicating low trust in the independence of recruitment processes from political influence. The highest levels of this opinion are observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (87%), Montenegro (86%), and North Macedonia (81%), where more than four-fifths of citizens believe that political ties influence hiring. By contrast, in Albania and Kosovo, this view is shared by around 63% of respondents. Serbia comes close to the regional average, with approximately 76% of citizens believing that political influence affects recruitment. These findings point to widespread public scepticism regarding merit-based recruitment across the region.

Finally, low public confidence in the impartiality of civil service recruitment is also confirmed by the share of citizens perceiving a strong influence of personal connections in hiring decisions. Survey results show again that, on average, around 17% of respondents believe recruitment is free from personal ties, while four out of five Western Balkan citizens recognise the need for personal connections to help secure recruitment. Trust is particularly low in North Macedonia (16%), Serbia (16%), BIH (11%) and Montenegro (8%), where majority of respondents believe that personal connections affect recruitment. Slightly higher confidence is observed once again in Kosovo and Albania, with around 31–32% of citizens expressing belief in the fairness of the process and that no personal connections are involved. Taken together, these results point to a persistent perception of vulnerability of civil service employment across the region to political and other influences. Chart 2 below presents total agreement

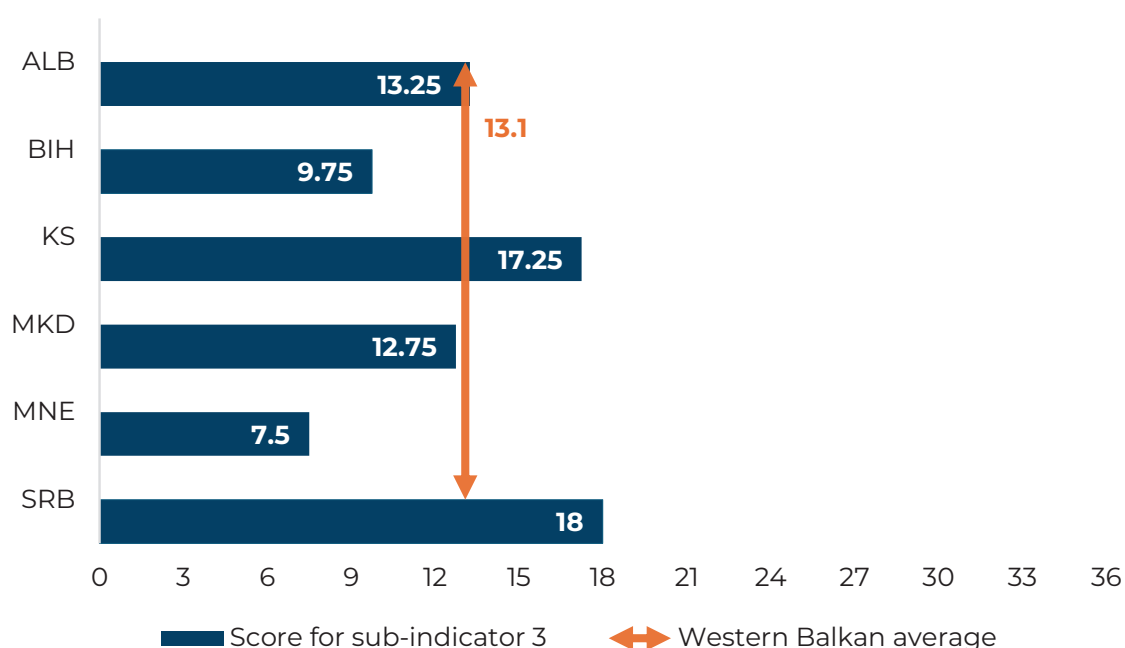
per administration on whether one needs political or personal connection to get hired.

**Chart 2: Share of citizens' agreeing one needs personal and political connections to get a job in the public administration (%)**



**Note:** All results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. The base for these questions was N = 6077 for the entire Western Balkans.

**Sub-indicator 3:** Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process (maximum score 36.5)



## II.4 Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence

**Principle 10: Effective leadership is fostered through competence, stability, professional autonomy and responsiveness of accountable top managers.**

*Professionalisation of top managers (senior-level civil servants) has remained one of the most persistent challenges in the region since the last PAR Monitor. According to the latest SIGMA assessments across the Western Balkans, despite generally merit-based recruitment frameworks (in all countries except for North Macedonia), implementation remains weak. SIGMA notes limited competitiveness and attractiveness of top management posts, as well as their low stability, reflected in frequent turnovers. Moreover, a considerable share of top management positions in parts of the region continues to be filled through acting appointments, with frequent breaches of legal duration limits, which further undermines stability and circumvents regular competition-based procedures.<sup>45</sup>*

PAR strategic frameworks across the Western Balkans include measures and activities aimed at strengthening the professionalism of civil service top management, with BIH being the only exception. These measures are generally embedded within the PAR Strategy Action Plans and vary in scope, from establishing the legal framework for top management (North Macedonia), to implementing concrete actions such as developing specialised professional training programmes for top managers (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia) or raising awareness among senior staff on managerial accountability (Montenegro). Overall, these planned interventions demonstrate that PAR authorities across the region recognise the need to address the professionalisation of top management as a distinct policy priority, essential for building a stable, competent, and integrity-based civil service.

Legal frameworks across the region stipulate that the recruitment of top managers should be conducted through competitive and merit-based procedures. Despite variations in recruitment and selection approaches, legislation generally requires the publication of vacancy announcements and the testing of candidates' skills and competencies (see Table 16 below). A notable exception is North Macedonia, where political discretion largely persists: the sole condition for an individual to be appointed as a top manager (state secretary or secretary general of an institution) by the head of the institution is to occupy a specific job classification level (B4 – head of unit). The long-awaited reform of the civil service system, including

<sup>45</sup> SIGMA country reports on the Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration for all WB countries, along with an overview WB report, are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwz5dh7>

the adoption of a new Law on Senior Civil Service, under preparation since 2017 and aimed at ensuring merit-based recruitment as well as fair promotion and dismissal procedures, has not yet progressed much.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in some Western Balkan administrations, legislative frameworks do not require that one of the three best-ranked candidates be selected for appointment, leaving a significant degree of discretion in the final selection process.

**Table 16: Basic legal requirements competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of top managers**

	Vacancy announcement	Competencies/skills testing	Selection among the three best-ranked candidates
ALB	✓	✓	✓ <sup>47</sup>
BIH	✓	✓	✓
KS	✓	✓	✓
MKD	X	X	X
MNE	✓	✓	✓
SRB	✓	✓	X

When it comes to the status and appointment of acting top managers – those temporarily holding positions until they are competitively filled – there are both similarities and differences in legislative approaches across the region. In three administrations (Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia), legislation requires that acting appointments be made exclusively from the pool of existing employees who have entered the civil service through competitive, merit-based procedures.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, acting appointees may also be selected from outside the civil service, without undergoing any competency checks. North Macedonia is an exception, as its legislation does not regulate the position or appointment of acting top managers, although the pending civil service reform is expected to address this gap. Also, legislation defines clear time limits of six months for acting appointments in three Western Balkan administrations – BIH, Montenegro, and Serbia. This limit is extendable for an additional six months in BIH, and three months in Serbia. In Kosovo, the acting appointments are limited to twelve months. Country-specific nuances are significant: although legislation in Serbia and Montenegro prescribes

<sup>46</sup> The Draft Law on the Senior Civil Service: <https://tinyurl.com/3j4evfxd>

<sup>47</sup> The CoM Decision no. 118, dated 5 March 2014 “On the procedures for appointment, recruitment, management, and termination of employment in the civil service for senior management level civil servants and members of the TND”, in Chapter VI, art. 2 stipulates that “Candidates who complete the advanced training with at least 70 points are appointed by the Department of Public Administration (DoPA) as senior-level civil servants, members of the TND, **based on their ranking in the final examination** organized by ASPA and within the approved number of admissions to the TND.”

<sup>48</sup> In Albania, the subject of acting appointments is regulated through the Law no. 90/2012 “On the organization and functioning of the state administration”, Chapter III, art. 12, 14, and 15.



time limits, the fact that it does not explicitly regulate whether an acting appointment can be renewed with the same individual, or how many times, has serious practical implications, as acting mandates often extend far beyond the prescribed limits.<sup>49</sup> Overall, the legal frameworks governing the status and appointment of acting top managers remain insufficiently or imprecisely regulated across the region, with immediate and negative consequences for the integrity and professionalism of civil service.

As noted in previous PAR Monitor cycles, in parts of the region, separate procedures exist outside the scope of civil service legislation, which can interfere with the appointment process of top managers. This is particularly evident in Montenegro and Serbia, where governments' permanent working bodies, the Commission for Personnel and Administrative Issues in Montenegro and the Personnel Commission in Serbia, play a decisive role. Following the completion of the competition procedures regulated under the civil service frameworks, these commissions are authorised to prepare proposals or give consent for appointments and dismissals of top managers before the government formally acts. As a result, there is no guarantee that the most successful candidates will be appointed, since the commissions may withhold their proposal or consent, for undisclosed and even politically motivated reasons, given that their members include members of government (ministries), and other public officials. Such vetting mechanisms, operating outside the civil service system, continue to represent one of the key structural barriers to the professionalisation and depoliticisation of senior civil service.

Finally, legislative frameworks across the region generally define objective criteria for terminating the employment of top managers. These typically fall into four main categories:

1. recurrent negative performance appraisals;
2. restructuring for objective technical, financial, economic, or organisational reasons;
3. verifiable factual circumstances such as retirement, a final court ruling for a criminal offence, loss of citizenship, or permanent incapacity and similar; and
4. breaches of ethical standards or disciplinary responsibility (see Table 17 below).

However, specific country cases deviate from this general pattern. In North Macedonia, the previously mentioned absence of comprehensive regulation of senior civil service issues results in limited legal provisions on termination. For instance, under the Law on Administrative Servants, a secretary's mandate ends with that of the appointing official, after which the secretary is reassigned to their

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<sup>49</sup> In Montenegro, amendments to the Civil Service Law adopted in July 2025 limit such appointments to two acting terms. These amendments were adopted outside the monitoring period covered by this report.



previous position.<sup>50</sup> In Serbia, on the other hand, termination grounds are considered among the least objective, for two specific reasons. According to the Civil Servants Law, a top manager may be dismissed if it is determined that a “serious disruption” has occurred in the work of the state body due to the manager’s responsibility for failing to achieve work plans or strategic goals, without further defining these terms.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, termination may occur if the position itself is abolished through the adoption or amendment of the internal organisation rulebook, without specifying the conditions that justify such changes.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Montenegrin legislation permits the dismissal of top managers for failing to submit an annual work report or where the reports reveal irregularities, without specifying procedures to distinguish such irregularities as they are not connected to disciplinary responsibility.<sup>53</sup> Taken together, these examples indicate that in half of the Western Balkans, top managers’ employment can be terminated on vague or discretionary grounds.

**Table 17: Existence of objective criteria for termination of top managers’ employment**

	Recurrent negative performance appraisals	Reorganisation for objective reasons	Verifiable factual circumstances	Ethics and disciplinary responsibility
ALB	✓	✓	✓	✓
BIH	✓	✓	✓	✓
KS	✓	X	✓	✓
MKD	X	X	X	X
MNE	✓	✓	X	✓
SRB	X <sup>54</sup>	X <sup>55</sup>	✓	✓

50 Article 23, the Law on Administrative Servants, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5n6p3vs4>

51 Article 78, the Civil Servants Law, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3ecs3rnp>

52 Article 77, the Civil Servants Law.

53 Such provision affects only the heads of administration authorities, and does not apply to other senior managers, e.g. secretaries and directors in the ministries.

54 Under the Article 78 of the CSL, a senior civil servant (top manager) may be dismissed if, following annual or extraordinary appraisal, a final decision confirms that most performance expectations were not met.

According to Article 84b, when regular performance monitoring identifies underperformance, the head of authority must issue a written notice of deficiencies and grant at least three months for improvement. After this period, an extraordinary appraisal may be conducted, but only within the same annual appraisal cycle. In other words, extraordinary appraisals must occur within a single performance appraisal cycle.

55 Under Article 77 of the CSL, a senior civil servant position may be abolished when: 1. the state body is abolished, and its competences are either transferred to another body or not transferred at all; 2. part of the competences of the state body is transferred to another body; or 3. through the adoption of a new or amended rulebook on internal organisation and systematisation. For point 3, the CSL does not specify any objective criteria that would justify such amendments, leaving broad discretion to modify rulebooks in ways that can effectively remove individuals from their posts. Article 81 further regulates the rights and duties of senior civil servants whose positions are abolished under grounds 1 and 2.

Practice in implementing legal provisions on merit-based selection of top managers in the region reveals gaps and challenges that question professional character of top civil service layer. From significant data gaps, absence of relevant data collection by responsible authorities, to non-regulation of certain critical aspects discussed in previous paragraphs, assessment of regional practices returned mainly negative or incomplete results.<sup>56</sup>

Sample analysis, consisting of the five most recently completed selection procedures for filling top management vacancies shows that, where regulated, the procedure generally includes both written and verbal competency assessments. Clear evidence that appointments were made from among the three best-ranked candidates exists only for Kosovo and Montenegro, and partially for the sample analysed in Serbia. In Albania, due to the specific nature of the selection process, which is not conducted for individual top management positions within a single institution but rather centrally, for a broader group of posts, all candidates who surpass a defined score threshold are eligible for appointment. When it comes to acting appointments, there is no clear evidence in any Western Balkan administration that these are made exclusively from the existing civil service pool, and this occurs for different reasons. As previously established in this report, in some cases regulations do not require such a standard while in others, where this requirement exists (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia), central HRM institutions do not collect or monitor relevant data. For the same reasons, the share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions could not be determined.

Finally, the available data on the number of eligible candidates per top management vacancy show that in BIH and Kosovo the ratio is around five or more candidates per post, while in the rest of the region it is significantly lower (around two). Taken together, the evidence points to limited progress in ensuring merit-based recruitment and, consequently, in safeguarding top managers from undue political influence. Table 18 below provides an overview of all practice-related aspects in implementing top management recruitment covered by PAR Monitor methodology.

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<sup>56</sup> Assessment of practice is based on vacancy announcements for top management positions by 5 central state administration bodies for each WB administration (one vacancy announcements per body). List of sample central state administration bodies is provided in the annexe of this report.

**Table 18: Practice in implementation of top management recruitment**

	Competition procedure in practice entails:		
	1) Written competency check (simulation, essays, tests)	2) Verbal competencies check (interviews, simulations etc.)	3) Appointment among the three best-ranked candidates
ALB	✓	✓	Cannot be established
BIH	No data available		
KS	✓	✓	✓
MKD	X	X	X
MNE	✓	✓	✓
SRB	✓	✓	✓ (with exceptions)
Acting appointments are only made from within the civil service			
ALB	No sufficient evidence available/obtained through freedom of information requests		
BIH	The legal framework does not require that the acting appointments are made from within the civil service		
KS	No central institution collects data on acting appointments		
MKD	The legal framework does not regulate the position of acting appointments, although they occur in practice		
MNE	No sufficient evidence available/obtained through freedom of information requests		
SRB	No central institution collects data on acting appointments		
Ratio of eligible candidates per top managerial-level vacancy <sup>57</sup>			
ALB	2		
BIH	9.36 <sup>58</sup>		
KS	5.5		
MKD	Not applicable (no competitive appointments are implemented)		
MNE	2.1		
SRB	1.78		
Share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions <sup>59</sup>			
ALB	No sufficient evidence available/obtained through freedom of information requests		
BIH	No central institution collects all the necessary data for calculation		
KS			
MKD	Not applicable (no competitive appointments are implemented)		
MNE	No central institution collects all the necessary data for calculation		
SRB			

<sup>57</sup> Data for the last 12 months prior to monitoring or for 2024 were observed, depending on data availability for individual administrations. Includes only completed competition procedures (internal and public).

<sup>58</sup> For BiH, available database of competitions was used for the assessment, available at the Civil Service Agency website, at: <https://rb.gy/ne9yo>. Six competitions exclusively for top management positions were analysed.

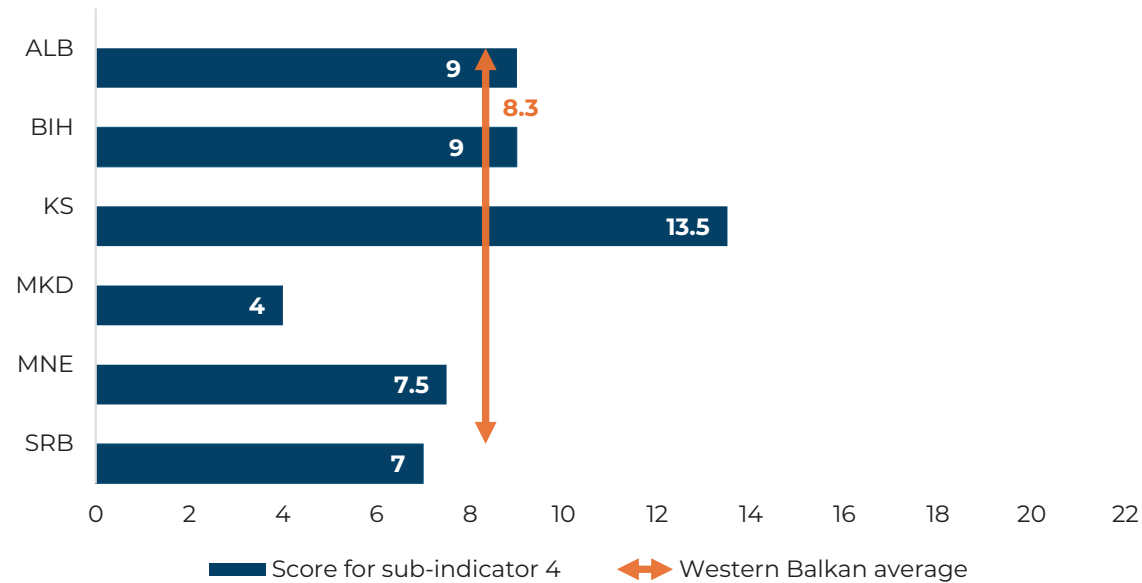
<sup>59</sup> All appointments to top management positions that were not based on the assessment of requirements and testing of competencies, out of the total number of appointments to these positions for the last 12 months.

Key informants across the region are almost unanimous that top managers are neither selected nor appointed based on merit, and that they are insufficiently protected from undue political influence. Such views clearly indicate that the top tier of the civil service remains highly vulnerable to political pressures, and that professionalism is difficult to ensure. Some of the main messages emerging from interviews across the region are: that appointments are often made through discretionary decisions (Albania); that top management positions are perceived as part of the division of “political cake” (BIH, Montenegro); that existing mechanisms to prevent political pressure are weak (Kosovo); that such mechanisms are largely non-existent (North Macedonia, Montenegro); and that political loyalty, rather than merit, continues to drive appointments (Serbia). These opinions strongly reflect the monitoring findings presented in this report and, altogether, point to a persistent and deep-rooted political influence within the top management layer of the civil service.

**Table 19: Number of non-state actors’ responses per agreement scale**

Statement	Administration	Fully disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Fully agree
<b>Top managers (senior civil servants) are selected and appointed based on merit</b>	ALB		2	1	
	BIH	3			
	KS		2	1	
	MKD	3			
	MNE	2		1	
	SRB	2	1		
<b>Top managers (senior civil servants) are sufficiently protected from undue political influences</b>	ALB		3		
	BIH	3			
	KS	1	2		
	MKD	3			
	MNE	2	1		
	SRB	3			

**Sub-indicator 4:** Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence (maximum score 22.5)



## II.5 Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration

**Principle 11: Public servants are motivated, fairly and competitively paid and have good working conditions.**

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*In all WB administrations, there have been no improvements in the matter of transparency of the civil service remuneration system. Although some mechanisms exist to inform candidates and the public, the lack of comprehensive data and analysis persists region-wide. Specifically, SIGMA notes the absence of regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms and publicly available information across the WB. On the other hand, salary information for advertised vacancies in the civil service is somewhat available, but only in BIH and North Macedonia. However, these slight improvements do not contribute to the long-term transparency of the system.<sup>60</sup>*

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The legislative frameworks in WB administrations generally provide a clear outline of the remuneration systems in the civil service. The system is assessed by looking into coefficients or other numerical values per civil service rank/position (or ranges of coefficients), and the existence of a clear and limited set of rules for calculating supplements (both statutory and discretionary). While coefficients are clearly defined in all WB countries, legal provisions on salary supplements remain uneven. In Montenegro, the legal framework does not set out conditions or limits for the use of salary supplements, rules for their combination, or clear criteria and ceilings for performance-related discretionary supplements (performance bonuses). On the other hand, the regulatory framework in North Macedonia stands out as the one that covers all observed aspects. Finally, performance bonuses are not envisaged in the legal acts of Albania and Serbia, thus limiting the possibility of arbitrary awarding of civil servants (see Table 20 below).

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<sup>60</sup> SIGMA country reports on the Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration for all WB countries, along with an overview WB report, are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwz5dh7>

**Table 20: Existence of legal provisions on the remuneration system aspects**

	Coefficients or other numerical values per civil service rank/ position	Amounts of salary supplements	Conditions and/ or limits to the use of salary supplements	Options for combination of different salary supplements	Limited amounts of performance bonuses or no bonuses allowed	Clear criteria for performance bonuses or no bonuses allowed
<b>ALB</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>BIH</b>	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
<b>KS</b>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
<b>MKD</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>MNE</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>SRB</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

On the other hand, more specific information on salaries, apart from coefficients available in legal acts, is largely absent across the region – general information such as average, median, minimum and maximum salary; salaries per civil service ranks/positions; salaries for specific job positions in vacancy announcements; and gender-sensitive information on salaries or on the gender pay gap. None of the observed aspects were recorded in Kosovo and Montenegro, while other administrations contained only partial information (see Table 21 below). At the same time, gender-sensitive or information on the gender pay gap is lacking in the entire WB. Despite gradual progress in a few administrations, the overall absence of detailed and comparable salary data continues to impede alignment with standards on transparency and equal pay.

**Table 21: Available types of information on civil service remuneration**

	General (average, median, minimum, maximum)	Per civil service ranks or positions	In job vacancy announcements	Gender-sensitive of gender pay gap information
<b>ALB</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗
<b>BIH</b>	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>KS</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>MKD</b>	✗	✗	✓	✗
<b>MNE</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>SRB</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗

Besides the widely absent concrete information on salaries, citizen-friendly information or presentations of the salary system are available only in Serbia, showing that remuneration information is often limited only to that contained in legal acts defining the system. In Serbia, the Human Resource Management

Services' website offers a tool called the *salary calculator*, which provides salary estimates (see the text box below).<sup>61</sup> Such tools significantly enhance the transparency and citizen-friendliness, especially given that the most relevant information is otherwise available only in legal documents, which do not provide case-specific information and are not easily understood by those without prior knowledge of the system.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE – USER-FRIENDLY TOOL FOR CALCULATING POTENTIAL SALARY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IN SERBIA**

*The **Human Resource Management Service in Serbia** offers a salary calculator on their website, which provides salary estimates based on the selected state administration body, rank, and pay grade. While the tool does not provide a comprehensive overview of the entire system, it allows candidates to estimate their potential earnings and enables other interested parties to gain an understanding of the potential salary range for different civil servants' ranks. Moreover, this section contains a table outlining the required years of experience and education for each rank, helping candidates assess their eligibility and estimate potential salaries more precisely.*

Finally, opinions of key informants across the region on the transparency and clarity of the remuneration system are divided. Positive stances are recorded in Albania, BIH and Kosovo, while interviewees in North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia do not consider that their respective systems meet these standards. Although positive responses were recorded in half of the region, the interviewees there pointed out that transparency and clarity standards are met mainly due to the public availability of official acts outlining the system, but that user-friendly explanatory materials are unavailable. Interviewees highlighted similar challenges in civil service remuneration systems across the WB: fragmented regulations spread across multiple legal acts, a lack of user-friendly explanations, and limited practical transparency despite formally clear legal frameworks. Commonly proposed improvements included consolidating remuneration information into a single, accessible source, developing digital or visual tools for salary transparency, and linking bonuses to clear performance appraisal mechanisms. Taken together, these insights suggest that the core challenge is not the absence of a clear legal framework, but a lack of effective communication that would make remuneration systems genuinely transparent and comprehensible.

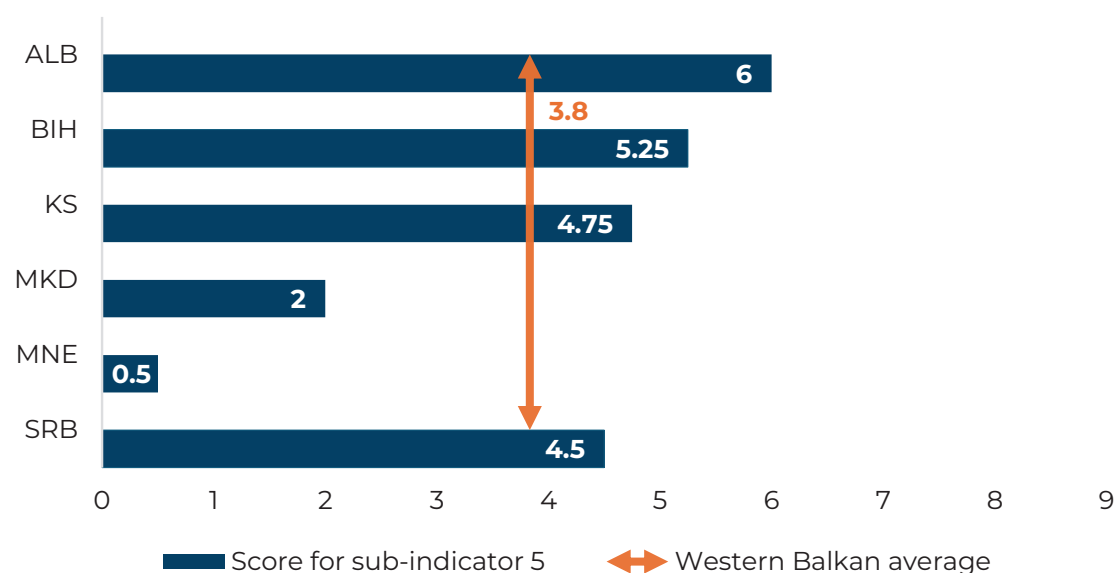
<sup>61</sup> Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/c8raptx9>



**Table 22: Number of non-state actors' responses per agreement scale**

Statement	Administration	Fully disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Fully agree
Civil service remuneration (salary) system is transparent	ALB			2	1
	BIH				3
	KS			3	
	MKD		2	1	
	MNE	1	1	1	
	SRB	1		2	
Civil service remuneration system (salary) is sufficiently clear	ALB			1	2
	BIH				3
	KS			3	
	MKD		2	1	
	MNE	2		1	
	SRB		1	1	1

**Sub-indicator 5:** Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration (maximum score 9)



## CONCLUSION

### ***Data transparency and quality as a long-standing overarching issues***

The lack of strategic direction and specific activities aimed at increasing the transparency of civil service statistics and reports across the WB indicates that administrations do not perceive this issue as their priority in the wider PAR process. As legal obligations to produce and publish annual reports on HRM in state administration bodies exist only in Kosovo and North Macedonia, the lack of a strategic framework that addresses transparency issues becomes even more prominent.

Although practice shows that certain reports are produced, the absence of a clear legal framework leaves these practices arbitrary and inconsistent, while the quality of published data remains unreliable. Specifically, available reports do not provide an overview of, at least, basic statistics and lack important data pieces, indicating that even when they are produced, they remain of low quality and scarce in terms of information offered. The limited availability of statistics separate from the reports adds another layer to the issue – the absence of citizen-friendly data presentations. Although some transparency initiatives were recorded, they too remain voluntary in the absence of mandatory publication requirements and clear guidance on what data pieces should be offered and how they should be presented.

Improvement of transparency of the civil service systems in the region should not stop at ensuring compliance with legal obligations to produce reports or publish civil service data but also focus on the data quality and presentation. Furthermore, ensuring coverage of all HRM elements is necessary, along with defining standards for systematic collection and data segregation. Finally, refraining from bureaucratic language and prioritising analytical insights will not only have a positive impact in terms of user-friendliness but also in terms of the practical value of the offered data, as it would help inform future decisions and policies pertaining to the civil service.

### ***Temporary hiring in the civil service: flexibility outweighs integrity***

Overall, the legislation and practice on temporary hiring practices across the Western Balkans remain uneven, leaving considerable scope for improvement in ensuring compliance, transparency, and merit-based process. Some positive examples emerge: Kosovo, where procurement-based engagement of non-civil service staff offers a degree of openness, and in the introduction of quantitative

limits to temporary hiring of civil service on a fixed term in Serbia, and non-civil service contracted staff in Albania. Still, these examples remain the exception rather than the rule. Gaps in regulating non-civil service contracts, weak enforcement of existing limits, and frequent absence or postponement of merit-based recruitment procedures all point to a systemic challenge in reconciling administrative flexibility with the principles of professionalism and merit.

Future reforms should therefore prioritise the establishment of uniform and enforceable standards governing all forms of temporary hiring, accompanied by robust monitoring mechanisms to prevent misuse. In parallel, greater transparency and consistent application of the merit principle are needed to strengthen trust in temporary hiring practices. Only through such measures can temporary employment be used as a legitimate and well-regulated tool to transparently address short-term administrative needs rather than an overused mechanism often leading to unjustifiable hiring.

### ***Formal progress, practical gaps: the state of merit-based recruitment in the WB***

The comparative review of civil service recruitment across the WB highlights significant variation in both strategic commitment and practical implementation of merit-based, transparent, and open hiring practices. While all administrations formally recognise the importance of merit, only a subset, Albania, BIH, and Montenegro, demonstrates comprehensive measures in PAR strategic documents addressing merit, transparency, and openness. Other administrations, including Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, show only partial or narrowly focused commitments, which is reflected in the uneven implementation of merit-based principles in practice. Legal frameworks broadly provide merit-based recruitment through public competitions, centralised publication of vacancies, and standardised application procedures. However, differences remain in the accessibility of vacancy announcements, candidate support mechanisms, and the level of administrative (paperwork) burden for applicants. Also, four out of six administrations exemplify practices that minimise barriers for external candidates, while BIH and North Macedonia impose procedural requirements (such as mandatory certificates or health checks) that may disproportionately favour some applicants. Transparency of selection decisions varies, with Kosovo and Serbia showing greater openness and explanation of selection outcomes. Key informants underline persistent challenges, including political influence, inconsistent application of rules, limited transparency, and reliance on temporary staff, suggesting that merit-based recruitment is yet to be achieved. Public perception mirrors these findings: confidence in meritocracy is low, with most WB citizens perceiving that personal or political connections influence hiring. Overall, the monitoring findings reveal a substantial gap between legal provisions and practical enforcement

of merit-based procedures, on one end, and public trust in the recruitment process, on the other.

To strengthen civil service professionalism, administrations should put additional focus on consistency in the enforcement of legal frameworks, enhancing transparency of selection procedures, reducing administrative burdens, providing more robust candidate support, and independence of selection panels. Digital tools, standardised job descriptions, and visually accessible vacancy announcements can further support wider outreach and equitable access. Closing these gaps is important not only for improving the fairness and efficiency of recruitment but also for building citizens' trust in public institutions and ensuring that the civil service functions as a professional, merit-based pillar of governance.

### ***Top management in the civil service: strong undue influence despite formal safeguards***

Across the Western Balkans, the formal frameworks for managing the senior civil service reflect a shared recognition of the need to professionalise top management as one of the cornerstones of PAR. Most PAR strategic frameworks include measures to enhance the merit-based recruitment, accountability, and professional development of top managers, and legal provisions formally require open and competitive selection procedures, except in North Macedonia. In practice, however, implementation remains only partially aligned with these standards. Where regulated, selection procedures generally combine written and verbal competency assessments, yet clear evidence that appointments are made from among the best-ranked candidates exists only for Kosovo and Montenegro, and partially in Serbia. Acting appointments continue to be an area of particular concern: there is no clear evidence across the region that appointees are drawn exclusively from the existing civil service pool, either because regulations do not require it or because central HRM institutions fail to collect or monitor relevant data. Available figures on competitions illustrate a weak merit environment with, in most cases, around two candidates per top management post. Besides this, the persistence of parallel procedures outside the civil service frameworks, such as government commissions with *de facto* veto powers on appointments and dismissals in Montenegro and Serbia, further weakens the recruitment process. Taking into account the existence of discretionary bases for termination of employment in half the region, these systemic gaps compromise the stability of the top management staff.

Looking ahead, strengthening the professionalism and stability of top management civil service requires addressing both structural and practical dimensions. Primarily, legal reforms should ensure that top managers are appointed exclusively from among the best-ranked candidates and that acting appointments are strictly

temporary solutions with clearly limited terms. However, strong enforcement, oversight and collection of reliable data on appointment practices are equally necessary across the board. At the same time, depoliticisation efforts in concrete cases should focus on dismantling the parallel mechanisms that enable political interference in appointments, where they exist, on fostering a culture of merit and on achieving greater competition for top management posts. Persistent issues and the entrenched instability of these positions underline that establishing a professional, competent, and politically neutral senior civil service demands comprehensive and sustained efforts.

### ***Effective communication for increased clarity of the remuneration framework***

Remuneration systems in the region are mainly characterised by clear rules for defining salary coefficients for each civil service position. However, rules for calculating supplements are not widely present, indicating a potential risk of misuse and suggesting deeper issues of transparency, especially regarding the discretionary supplements, i.e., bonuses. Apart from what the regulatory framework prescribes, more specific information and citizen-friendly presentation on salaries are largely absent across the region. Such a state of play indicates that remuneration information is often limited only to that contained in legal acts defining the system, without significant efforts devoted to increasing transparency and user-friendliness.

Strengthening the transparency of the remuneration system would require both better legal coverage of supplements and proactive communication towards the interested public. Primarily, legal coverage should focus on clearly linking bonuses to performance and outlining rules for awarding them, limiting the possibility of favouritism and arbitrary decisions. Furthermore, decision-makers should engage in proactive and effective communication of the salary system in order to make it genuinely transparent and comprehensible, by consolidating relevant information into a single, accessible source and developing visual and digital tools for user-friendly presentations.

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Despite formal alignment with principles of transparency, this standard remains only partially embedded in civil service systems in the Western Balkans. The frequent absence of publicly available data, inconsistent or voluntary disclosure practices, and the lack of systematic data collection by responsible institutions make civil service systems in the region insufficiently transparent and accountable for their performance. In such an environment, citizens and civil society cannot meaningfully scrutinise key elements of civil service, i.e., recruitment into civil service, senior civil service management, remuneration policy and others, and Western Balkans administrations cannot monitor their

performance, leading to suboptimal reforms. Across all examined aspects of civil service in this report, a consistent pattern emerges - transparency is not yet embedded as a governing principle but persists largely as a voluntary or *ad-hoc* practice. Establishing fully transparent civil service and human resource management systems, where data are comprehensive, regularly and timely published, and user-friendly, is therefore not a mere technical requirement but a foundational condition for professional and accountable civil service systems.

## METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

### OVERVIEW OF COUNTRY SCORES PER EACH INDICATOR ELEMENT

**Table 23: Score for sub-indicator 1 - *Transparency of statistics and reports on civil service***

Sub-indicator elements	Element type	Maximum points	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
E 1.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements in transparency of basic information on civil service	Strategy and policy	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0	0
E 1.2 Regulations stipulate that data on civil service and employees in the central state administration are publicly available	Legislation	1	0	0	0.5	1	1	0
E 1.3 The Government regularly publishes reports pertaining to the civil service	Practice in implementation	3	1.5	1	0	1	0	0
E 1.4 Published reports include data on employees other than civil servants in the central state administration	Practice in implementation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
E 1.5 Published reports segregate data based on gender, age, and education	Practice in implementation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
E 1.6 Civil service data is available in open format(s)	Practice in implementation	3	0	1.5	0	0	3	0
E 1.7 The government comprehensively reports on the key elements of civil service policy and HRM	Practice in implementation	3.5	3	2	0	0.5	2.5	1
E 1.8 Key non-state actors consider reports on civil service policy as transparent and comprehensive	Outcomes and impact	2.5	0	1.25	0	0	0	0
<b>Total points</b>		19.5	4.5	5.75	1	2.5	6.5	1

**Table 24: Score for sub-indicator 2 - *Transparency of temporary hiring in the civil service***

Sub-indicator elements	Element type	Maximum points	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
E 2.1 Regulations stipulate conditions and limitations for hiring temporary staff	Legislation	2	0.75	0.75	1	0.5	0.75	1
E 2.2 Regulations stipulate openness and application of merit-principle when hiring temporary staff	Legislation	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0.25
E 2.3 Procedure for hiring temporary staff is open and transparent	Practice in implementation	3.5	-0.5	-0.5	3.5	1.25	0.75	-1
E 2.4 Temporary hirings are limited in practice	Practice in implementation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
E 2.5 Key non-state actors consider the use of temporary hiring as transparent, limited and purposeful	Outcomes and impact	3	1	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total points</b>		12.5	1.75	2.75	5.5	2.25	2	0.25

**Table 25: Score for sub-indicator 3 - *Transparency and merit principle of recruitment process***

Sub-indicator elements	Element type	Maximum points	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
E 3.1 Strategic framework envisages improvements of openness, transparency and merit principle of the recruitment process	Strategy and policy	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.25
E 3.2 Regulations stipulate openness, transparency, and merit principle of the recruitment process	Legislation	1.25	1.25	0.75	1	1	0.25	1
E 3.3 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are made broadly publicly available	Practice in implementation	3	0.75	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.25
E 3.4 Vacancy announcements for public competitions are presented in a way to motivate and attract external candidates	Practice in implementation	2	0	0	0	0	0	0



<b>E 3.5 Responsible institution provides support and guidance to applicants</b>	Practice in implementation	3	1.5	2.25	0.75	2.25	0	3
<b>E 3.6 There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates</b>	Practice in implementation	3	3	0	3	0	3	3
<b>E 3.7 The application procedure imposes minimum administrative/ paperwork burden on candidates</b>	Practice in implementation	4	0	0	2	0	0	4
<b>E 3.8 Candidates can supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe</b>	Practice in implementation	3	0	0	0	3	0	0
<b>E 3.9 Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are made publicly available, with due respect to the protection of personal information</b>	Practice in implementation	4	2	0	4	2	0	4
<b>E 3.10 Information about annulled public competitions, including reasoning for the annulment, is made publicly available</b>	Practice in implementation	4	2	4	2	2	2	0
<b>E 3.11 Key informants consider recruitment into civil service as transparent and merit-based</b>	Outcomes and impact	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>E 3.12 Citizens' perception of merit-based civil service recruitment</b>	Outcomes and impact	2	1	0.5	1.5	0.5	0	0.5
<b>E 3.13 Citizens' perception of the influence of personal connections in civil service recruitment</b>	Outcomes and impact	2	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0
<b>E 3.14 Citizens' perception of the influence of political connections in civil service recruitment</b>	Outcomes and impact	2	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0
<b>Total points</b>		36.5	13.25	9.75	17.25	12.75	7.5	18

**Table 26: Score for sub-indicator 4 - *Merit based selection and protection of top managers from undue political influence***

Sub-indicator elements	Element type	Maximum points	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
<b>E 4.1 Strategic framework envisages strengthening of professionalism of the civil service top management</b>	Strategy and policy	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
<b>E 4.2 Regulations stipulate competitive, merit-based procedures for the recruitment of civil service top management</b>	Legislation	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	0	1.5	1
<b>E 4.3 Regulations stipulate that acting appointments to top management positions are only made from within the civil service, for a limited period</b>	Legislation	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1
<b>E 4.4 Regulations stipulate objective criteria for the termination of hiring of top management positions</b>	Legislation	2	1.5	1.5	1	0	1	0.5
<b>E 4.5 Existence of procedures on appointments to top management positions outside of the scope of the civil service legislation</b>	Legislation	3	3	3	3	3	0	0
<b>E 4.6 The merit-based recruitment for top management positions is applied in practice</b>	Practice in implementation	4	2	0	4	0	4	4
<b>E 4.7 Acting appointments are, in practice, only made from within the civil service</b>	Practice in implementation	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>E 4.8 Ratio of eligible candidates per top managerial-level vacancy</b>	Practice in implementation	2.5	0	2.5	2.5	0	0	0
<b>E4.9 Share of non-merit-based appointments to top management positions</b>	Practice in implementation	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>E4.10 Key non-state actors consider that the selection and appointment process of top managers is merit-based and that they are protected from undue political influence</b>	Outcomes and impact	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total points</b>		22.5	9	9	13.5	4	7.5	7

**Table 27: Score for sub-indicator 5 - *Transparency and clarity of information on the civil service remuneration***

Sub-indicator elements	Element type	Maximum points	ALB	BIH	KS	MKD	MNE	SRB
<b>E 5.1 Regulations define a simply structured remuneration system</b>	Legislation	1.5	1.5	1.25	1.25	1.5	0.5	1.5
<b>E 5.2 Information on civil service remuneration system is available online</b>	Practice in implementation	2	1	0.5	0	0.5	0	1
<b>E 5.3 Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of the remuneration information exist</b>	Practice in implementation	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>E 5.4 Key informants consider information on the civil service remuneration system as transparent and clear</b>	Outcomes and impact	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	0	0	0
<b>Total points</b>		9	6	5.25	4.75	2	0.5	4.5

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For producing this report, the following research methods and tools were used for data collection and calculation of elements:

- Analysis of official documentation, data, and official websites
- Requests for free access to information
- Interviews with stakeholders and key informants.
- Public perception survey.

Monitoring heavily relied on the analysis of official documents publicly available on the websites of administration bodies and on the data and information contained therein. However, in cases where the data was not available, researchers sent requests for free access to information to relevant institutions in order to obtain information necessary for awarding points for the elements.

**Table 28: FOI requests**

Administration	Institution	Date of request	Date of reply to the request
ALB	National Agency for Information Society	02.06.2025	12.06.2025
	Ministry of Finances	02.06.2025	No reply
	Ministry of Interior	02.06.2025	16.07.2025
	Ministry of Health and Social Protection	02.06.2025	12.06.2025
	Social State Service	02.06.2025	23.06.2025
	Department of Public Administration	02.06.2025	17.06.2025
	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	15.09.2025	01.10.2025
	Ministry of Justice	15.09.2025	30.09.2025
BIH	Secretary of the Presidency of BIH	18.07.2025.	25.07.2025.
	Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of BIH	18.07.2025.	05.08.2025.
	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BIH	18.07.2025.	15.08.2025.
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	18.07.2025.	31.07.2025.
	Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of BIH	18.07.2025.	05.08.2025.

<b>KS</b>	Department for Managing Public Officials	5.6.2025	10.6.2025
	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	5.6.2025	13.6.2025
	Ministry of Justice	5.6.2025	3.7.2025
	Ministry of Economy	5.6.2025	17.6.2025
	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	5.6.2025	25.6.2025
	Ministry of Internal Affairs	5.6.2025	10.7.2025
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	11.8.2025	28.8.2025
	Food and Veterinary Agency	11.8.2025	19.8.2025
	Ministry of Justice	11.8.2025	26.8.2025
	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports	11.8.2025	13.8.2025
	Ministry of Health	11.8.2025	13.8.2025
<b>MKD</b>	Ministry of Public Administration	02.06.2025	08.07.2025
	Ministry of Finance	02.06.2025	25.06.2025 03.07.2025
	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	02.06.2025	25.06.2025
	Ministry of Economy and Labour	02.06.2025	23.06.2025
	Ministry of European Affairs	02.06.2025	01.07.2025
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	02.06.2025	23.06.2025
	Agency for Administration	02.06.2025	20.06.2025
<b>MNE</b>	Ministry of Maritime Affairs	9.5.2025.	13.5.2025.
	Ministry of Justice	9.5.2025.	15.5.2025.
	Ministry of Health	9.5.2025.	
	Ministry of Sport and Youth	9.5.2025.	29.5.2025.
	Tax Administration	9.5.2025.	23.5.2025.
	Human Resource Management Authority	8.5.2025.	29.5.2025.
	Human Resource Management Authority	8.5.2025.	22.9.2025.
	Secretariat-General of the Government	17.9.2025.	8.10.2025.
	Human Resource Management Authority	17.9.2025.	30.09.2025.

SRB	HRMS	15.04.2025.	16.04.2025.
	Tobacco Administration	29.04.2025.	06.05.2025.
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	29.04.2025.	20.05.2025.
	Ministry of Education	29.04.2025.	08.05.2025.
	Directorate for Measures and Precious Metals	29.04.2025.	07.05.2025.
	Ministry of Information and Telecommunications	29.04.2025.	12.05.2025.
	HRMS	05.05.2025.	05.05.2025.
	Tobacco Administration	19.05.2025.	20.05.2025.
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	19.05.2025.	29.05.2025.
	Ministry of Education	19.05.2025.	26.05.2025.
	Directorate for Measures and Precious Metals	19.05.2025.	21.05.2025.
	Ministry of Information and Telecommunications	19.05.2025.	20.05.2025.
	Tobacco Administration	19.05.2025.	20.05.2025.
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	19.05.2025.	29.05.2025.
	Ministry of Education	19.05.2025.	26.05.2025.
	Directorate for Measures and Precious Metals	19.05.2025.	21.05.2025.
	Ministry of Information and Telecommunications	19.05.2025.	20.05.2025.
	HRMS	27.05.2025.	09.06.2025.
	HRMS	04.06.2025.	11.06.2025.
	HRMS	05.05. 2025.	09.05.2025.

**Table 29: Overview of Sampled Institutions by Sub-indicator and Administration**

	Sub-indicator 2		Sub-indicator 3	Sub-indicator 4
	Temporary staff	Contracted staff		
ALB	Ministry of Health	public vacancy for <b>contracted staff</b> are not mandatory	Ministry of Health	
	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development		Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	
	Ministry of Justice		Ministry of Justice	
	Ministry of Interior		Ministry of Interior	
	Ministry of Finance		Ministry of Finance	
BIH	Temporary staff	Contracted staff		
	Foreign Investment Promotion Agency	public vacancy for <b>contracted staff</b> are not mandatory	Foreign Investment Promotion Agency	
	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees		Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	
	Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies		Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies	
	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations		Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	
	Secretariat of the Presidency		Secretariat of the Presidency	
KS	Temporary staff	Contracted staff		
	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	
	Ministry of Communities and Return	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports	Ministry of Justice	
	Agriculture Development Agency	Food and Veterinary Agency	Ministry of Economy	
	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	
	Ministry of Regional Development	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	Ministry of Internal Affairs	

<b>MKD</b>	<b>Temporary and contracted staff</b>		
	Ministry of Public Administration		Ministry of Public Administration
	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning		Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
	Ministry of Economy and Labour		Ministry of Economy and Labour
	Ministry of European Affairs		Ministry of European Affairs
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy		Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
<b>MNE</b>	<b>Temporary staff</b>	<b>Contracted staff</b>	
	Ministry of Public Administration	public vacancy for <b>contracted staff</b> are not mandatory	Ministry of Health
	Directorate for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs		Ministry of Sports and Youth
	Tax Administration		Tax Administration
	Ministry of Justice		Ministry of Maritime
	Human Resource Management Authority		Ministry of Justice
<b>SRB</b>	<b>Temporary staff</b>	<b>Contracted staff</b>	
	Tobacco Administration	public vacancy for <b>contracted staff</b> are not mandatory	Tobacco Administration
	Ministry of Education		Ministry of Education
	Directorate for Measures and Precious Metals		Directorate for Measures and Precious Metals
	Ministry of Information and Telecommunications		Ministry of Information and Telecommunications
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management		Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Interviews with key informants were conducted and used as a base for point allocation for elements 1.8, 2.5, 3.11, 4.10 and 5.4. Additionally, they were used to collect qualitative, focused, and in-depth inputs on monitored phenomena. Interviews with other stakeholders (such as representatives of public administration bodies) were additionally used in the research to complement and verify otherwise collected data and findings. Selection of interviewees was based on purposive, non-probability sampling, targeting interlocutors based on their expertise on the topic.

Key informant interviews were comprised of a set of up to four questions where the participants expressed their agreement on a four-point scale: fully disagree, tend to disagree, tend to agree and fully agree. Points under



elements 1.8, 2.5, 3.11, 4.10 and 5.4 were allocated if all key informants stated that they tend to agree/fully agree with the statement. Additionally, a set of open-ended questions was used, allowing for a discussion with interviewees and on-the-spot sub-questions rather than strictly following a predetermined format. Interviewees were given full anonymity in terms of personal information and institutional/organisational affiliation.

**Table 30: Interviews with non-state actors**

Administration	Date	Number of interviews
ALB	03.06.2025	3
	12.06.2025	
	23.06.2025	
BIH	01.08.2025. (3)	3
KS	06.05.2025	3
	23.05.2025	
	18.06.2025	
MKD	09.04.2025	3
	22.04.2025.	
	09.05.2025	
MNE	03.06.2025. (2)	3
	12.06.2025.	
SRB	30.05.2025.	3
	13.06.2025.	
	02.07.2025.	

### List of interview questions

- **Element 1.8**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 1.8. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are transparent.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree

- c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Publicly available reports and statistics on civil service are comprehensive enough.**
- a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How would you assess the quality and reliability of data published in official civil service reports?
2. Can citizens, the media, and civil society easily find and understand these reports?
3. Do the reports and statistics cover all relevant aspects of the civil service (such as recruitment, promotion, and staff turnover)?
4. Are there any critical data points missing from publicly available civil service reports? If so, which ones?
5. To what extent are the published data used to improve human resource management policies in the public administration?
6. How would you assess the usability and structure of the reports – are the data clearly presented and tailored to different audiences?
7. Is there room for improvement in the comprehensiveness and level of detail in these reports? If so, how?

#### • **Element 2.5**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 2.5. Point allocation is determined based fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service, such as fixed-term employment of civil servants, and hiring of contracted staff, is transparent.**

- a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service is, in practice, limited.**
- a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Use of temporary hiring in civil service is purposeful.**
- a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

- 1. In your opinion, is there sufficient publicly available information about temporary hiring in civil service?
- 2. Are there clear criteria and procedures for hiring temporary civil servants and contracted staff?
- 3. Do you think the selection process for temporary positions is adequately documented and communicated to the public?
- 4. In your opinion, what are the most common problems with using temporary hiring in civil service?
- 5. In your opinion, how frequently are fixed-term and contracted positions used compared to permanent employment? Are temporary positions primarily used to address short-term needs, or are temporary engagements sometimes becoming permanent roles instead?
- 6. Are there cases where temporary hiring is used beyond its intended scope?
- 7. What measures, if any, are in place to prevent excessive reliance on temporary staff in public administration?

- **Element 3.11**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 3.11. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Process of recruitment into civil service is based on merit.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Process of recruitment into civil service is transparent.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. Do you think the merit-based recruitment process in civil service is consistently applied in practice?
2. Do you consider the mechanisms in place to ensure that recruitment decisions are based on merit to be adequate and of sufficient quality?
3. Are there any factors that undermine merit-based recruitment in civil service?
4. How transparent are the selection criteria and procedures for civil service recruitment?
5. Do you consider that candidates have access to clear and detailed information about job openings and selection processes?
6. What challenges exist in making civil service recruitment fully transparent and merit-based?
7. How effective are appeal mechanisms for candidates who believe the recruitment process was unfair?
8. What improvements could be made to enhance both transparency and meritocracy in civil service recruitment?

- **Element 4.10**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 4.10. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Top managers (senior civil servants) are selected and appointed based on merit.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Top managers (senior civil servants) are sufficiently protected from undue political influences.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How do you assess the process of selecting and appointing top managers in civil service?
2. Do you believe that the selection of senior civil servants is consistently based on merit rather than political considerations? How could the selection and appointment process for top managers be improved to ensure greater merit-based decision-making?
3. What safeguards are in place to ensure that top managers in civil service are selected based on their qualifications and experience?
4. In your opinion, is the current system for appointing senior civil servants transparent and fair?
5. In your opinion, how would you assess mechanisms for protection of top managers from undesirable political interference, if any?

- **Element 5.4**

The following questions are used for point allocation for the element 5.4. Point allocation is determined based on fully agree/tend to agree responses. For each question where all key informants fully agree/tend to agree with the statement, 1 point is allocated.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Civil service remuneration (salary) system is transparent.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: **Civil service remuneration system (salary) is sufficiently clear.**
  - a) fully disagree
  - b) tend to disagree
  - c) tend to agree
  - d) fully agree

Additional guiding questions (not used for point allocation, but relevant for providing qualitative insight necessary for the assessment):

1. How would you assess the transparency of the civil service remuneration system?
2. Do you consider the current salary system in civil service to be clear? Are the criteria for determining salaries and bonuses in civil service publicly available and easily accessible?
3. How do you evaluate the fairness of the civil service salary structure in relation to the duties and responsibilities of different positions?
4. In your opinion, is the civil service remuneration system regularly updated to reflect changes in the cost of living or other economic factors?
5. Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that the salary system remains equitable across different levels of civil service?
6. How is the transparency of the civil service remuneration system communicated to both current employees and potential candidates?
7. Do you think that the public is adequately informed about how civil service remuneration is structured and allocated?
8. What improvements, if any, would you suggest to make the civil service remuneration system more transparent and clearer for all stakeholders?

The public perception survey was conducted based on a questionnaire targeting the general public (18+ permanent residents) of Western Balkan countries. The survey was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in combination with computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI). The survey was conducted between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2025. The margin of error for the sample of 6077 citizens is  $\pm 3,51\%$ , at the 95% confidence level.

**Table 31: Public perception survey questions in the area of Public Service and Human Resource Management**

<b>Statement 2</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
Public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit (i.e. best candidates are enabled to get the jobs).	1	2	3	4	99
<b>Statement 3</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
One needs personal connections to get a job in the public administration in my country (i.e., family ties, kinship, friendship and similar)	1	2	3	4	99
<b>Statement 4</b>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>Don't know/No opinion</i>
One needs political connections to get a job in the public administration (i.e., membership in political party/organisation, personal ties with political parties)	1	2	3	4	99

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