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Commission

Directorate-General for

**STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT**

**Governance and public  
administration**

Structural  
Reform Support



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# INTRODUCING THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR **STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT**

The Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) helps EU Member States carry out reforms to stimulate job creation and sustainable growth. EU Member States can ask DG REFORM for support, which is then delivered in the form of tailor-made expertise.

Today, DG REFORM is engaged in **over 1 000 reform projects in all 27 EU Member States**.

## PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Since 2017, DG REFORM has been managing a dedicated programme – the Structural Reform Support Programme – with a budget of **EUR 222.8 million** for 2017 to 2020.

The programme is the main source of funding for **technical support projects** in EU Member States and does not require co-financing.

Member States can request help from the programme to implement the following:

- **reforms identified by the European Commission**, for example in its annual economic policy recommendations (the ‘European Semester’ process);
- measures they have to take to **implement EU priorities and EU law**;
- reforms undertaken on their **own initiative**.

## HOW IT WORKS

DG REFORM provides Member States with expertise, which can take the form of:

- expert and fact-finding missions on the ground to assess the situation;
- diagnostic analyses and recommendations on ways to address the situation;
- sharing relevant best practices through seminars, conferences and workshops;
- developing and implementing targeted solutions to address the situation.

To deliver this support, DG REFORM uses a **wide range of experts** from national administrations (including through the TAIEX-SRSP Peer 2 Peer instrument), international organisations, private firms and consultancies, or expertise directly from the European Commission.



# GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The **quality of a country's governance and public administration** is a key factor in its economic performance and the wellbeing of its citizens. Efficient public administrations serve the needs of citizens and businesses. It is essential that public authorities are able to adjust to changing circumstances.

DG REFORM helps EU Member States undertaking reforms in the area of governance and public administration by providing technical support. **Areas of intervention** include the central administration, local administration, digital government, public procurement, better regulation, the judicial system, the fight against corruption and fraud and the better absorption of European Structural and Investment Funds.

DG REFORM is also responsible for coordinating the European Commission's activities in the field of governance and public administration, via the management of the **competence centre for governance and public administration**.



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# STATE GOVERNANCE AND BETTER POLICYMAKING

A key focus of DG REFORM's technical support is improving **public administration performance**. An effective, agile and efficient administration is a prerequisite for a country's sound management and a key driver of growth.

A well-functioning public administration provides a solid platform for the development of businesses and ensures quality services to citizens and professionals. This, in turn, attracts investment. It is also a central tool for structuring the work of the government and transforming political guidelines into reality.



## EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Ensuring **interministerial coordination** to improve dialogue between government services in the design and implementation of public policies.
- Improving structures and processes to ensure the **sound design of public policies** based on evidence and analysis.
- Codifying and planning laws to ensure a **sound design of the legal framework**.
- Supervising reform implementation through the design of a strong **governance and monitoring system**.



## INNOVATION LABORATORY AND REFORM SUPERVISION IN LATVIA

DG REFORM supported the State Chancellery of Latvia in designing and setting up an innovation laboratory in the public administration. The staff were identified and trained by private sector experts and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The lab is now fully operational and assists services across the administration in identifying innovative solutions to improve the quality of public services and policymaking.

In addition, DG REFORM has been cooperating with the Chancellery to build a governance system to supervise the implementation of reforms. It also supported setting up a system for identifying and disseminating innovation.



## INTERMINISTERIAL COORDINATION IN GREECE

DG REFORM provided support to governing bodies and public entities to improve interministerial coordination by clarifying procedures and increasing transparency through an interministerial coordination manual. This manual included the mapping of coordination processes, tasks, operational steps and templates.

DG REFORM also helped to reinforce interinstitutional coordination for the transposition and implementation of EU legislation by mapping the competences of relevant authorities and delivering recommendations to improve processes.

Lastly, it contributed to establishing a network of EU affairs coordinators in all ministries and provided capacity building for officials to improve the coordination with Secretariat General for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

# EFFICIENCY OF THE STATE'S ORGANISATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Strong and effective state governance is a necessary requirement for implementing reforms, and reform management is a central element of state administration. There is often a need to strengthen the steering, coordination and planning at the centre of the government to ensure **effective public management**. Such improvements allow for an effective monitoring of reforms and for the early identification of strategic issues. DG REFORM helps EU Member States with developing such governance at both strategic and technical levels.



## EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Implementing **administrative practices** based on modern user-centric approaches such as life events and customer journey mapping.
- Designing and implementing **administrative simplification strategies** and actions to reduce red tape for citizens and businesses.
- Implementing **functional reviews** that enable Member States to analyse large segments of their public policies in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness.



## REFORM OF THE INTERIOR SECTOR IN LATVIA

In the context of Latvia's Public Administration Reform Plan 2020, DG REFORM supported the reorganisation of the interior sector, which accounts for the largest share of the Latvian state budget. With expertise drawn from Estonia, Lithuania and Finland, the project presented concrete proposals for the reform of the State Police, the State Fire and Rescue Service and the Office for Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

The recommendations for organisational and functional changes, as well as the proposal for performance management systems, are being implemented. Moreover, the project led to further reform initiatives and projects in the interior sector.



# DIGITAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The digital transformation of public administrations is a way to provide faster, cheaper and better services. **E-government** improves efficiency and increases user-friendliness and accessibility. It also helps promote ethical practices and reduce the risks of corruption.

The implementation of solid **e-governance** is at the core of the development of e-government. Once decision-making and supervision bodies are in place, EU Member States can define their strategies, architectures and frameworks and proceed with implementation. E-government has a strong interministerial aspect as it requires an overall simplification of administrative processes across services to meet citizens' needs.



## EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT


- Helping administrations make use of new **digital technologies** to overcome the lack of interoperability of IT systems.
- Improving services delivered by EU Member States' administrations to citizens, companies and other administrations by using **information and communication technologies** such as artificial intelligence.
- Designing **digital governance systems** and putting in place the right management framework.



## IMPLEMENTING THE DIGITAL STRATEGY IN ITALY

The Directorate for IT Systems and Innovation of the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance is responsible for the digital transformation, promoting innovation and supplying IT services. It also provides shared payroll services and other services to the wider Italian public sector. It manages around EUR 52 billion in payments each year.

Following a reform of the administration, the human resources service provision was centralised. Italy's digital strategy provided for a largescale digital transformation of the HR system for public sector staff. As a result, the directorate's client base increased from 2 million employees in 100 public organisations to 3.3 million employees in 10 000 organisations. DG REFORM supported the design of the management reform needed to undertake such a change.



## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER OF SLOVAKIA

Slovakia established a government Chief Information Officer (CIO) responsible for the digital agenda. This office focuses on e-government services and IT systems to address the low level of digitalisation of the government and the economy. DG REFORM provided support to the CIO Office to help develop a solid strategy on digital skills for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The support included a survey and discussions with focus groups, collecting EU good practices, drafting of recommendations and a transition plan.

The project resulted in a strategy for the CIO Office with short and long-term recommendations to improve the digital skills of employees of SMEs.



# JUDICIAL SYSTEMS

Effective judicial systems play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and the EU's fundamental values. They are also an important structural element for an investment- and business-friendly environment. Therefore, improving the **effectiveness of national judicial systems** is an EU priority.

EU Member States are engaging in reforms to make their judicial systems more effective. DG REFORM provides hands-on support to improve the capacity of national institutions to implement reforms in the judicial sector. DG REFORM also facilitates the exchange of best practices among EU Member States.



## RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION OF JUDGES IN CYPRUS

In the context of its judicial reform, DG REFORM supported Cyprus in creating objective criteria for the recruitment, evaluation and promotion of judges. With expertise from Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, the project presented concrete recommendations on how to put these criteria in place.

The recommendations were based on a comparative analysis of best practices from selected jurisdictions, and led the Cypriot authorities to introduce new procedures for the recruitment, evaluation and promotion of judges. The recruitment of new judges will follow the new procedure and selection criteria.



### EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Reducing the length of **court proceedings**, improving the **clearance rate** of pending cases and strengthening the **enforcement of judgments**.
- Improving **access to the courts**, improving **assessment tools** (e.g. information and communications technology systems for case management or court statistics) and introducing standards for **timeliness and quality of judgements**.
- Supporting the **independence of judicial systems** by improving procedures for the appointment, promotion and evaluation of judges and prosecutors.
- Redesigning the **allocation of cases in courts**.



# CONTROL ENVIRONMENT AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Ethics in public life starts with attitudes and values at the top of the administration. In the first instance, it is a matter for the government itself and for the top managers who are selected to lead the administration. However, standards of ethical behaviour also apply to all officials.

DG REFORM supports Member States in embedding **transparency and accountability** in their administrative practices. It offers hands-on technical support for the design and implementation of ethical guidelines and anti-corruption and anti-fraud strategies and policies. Support is provided at all stages of reform design and implementation.



## EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Designing and implementing **anti-corruption and anti-fraud strategies and action plans**, including defining indicators to measure success.
- Drafting **ethics guidelines** (e.g. on conflicts of interest or disciplinary measures) to strengthen the integrity of the public administration.
- Designing **internal control and internal audit systems, strategies and methodologies** to reinforce the control environment in public bodies.
- Developing and modernising **procurement structures, standards and systems** to ensure sound management of the national budget and EU funds.



## ANTI-CORRUPTION TRAINING IN GREECE

This project provided support to the Greek National Transparency Authority with the aim of enhancing public officials' knowledge of international best practices in fighting fraud and corruption.

In total, 550 prosecutors, judges and investigators were trained on topics such as evidence collection in economic and corruption crimes, asset recovery and asset declarations, data analytics and forensic investigations. The training sessions helped the Greek public officials acquire a better understanding of advanced tools and techniques to fight corruption and fraud.



## INTERNAL AUDIT IN ROMANIA

DG REFORM supported the Central Harmonisation Unit for Public Internal Audit in Romania to improve the operation of the public internal audit system and to reinforce the internal audit function. The project supported the design of a new public internal audit strategy for 2020-2024. It also increased internal auditors' professional skills and reinforced the public financial control framework, notably at local level.

The new strategy is being implemented to support the prevention of fraud and corruption and to improve the use of available resources at central and local level.

# HUMAN RESOURCES

Budgetary constraints put pressure on civil services to make effective use of scarce resources. At the same time, countries must respond to the changing needs of their citizens. Therefore, EU administrations are encouraged to improve their workforce planning and set up human resources (HR) systems that promote learning and career development opportunities.

In this context, **professional HR strategies** are key in attracting the most competent staff. HR development tools are, more than ever, a key component in building a quality public administration and fostering economic growth.



## INNOVATIVE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN IRELAND

This project supported the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in its efforts to introduce strategic human resources management in the Irish civil service. Following a series of one-to-one sessions, discussions and extensive design processes, the project helped to develop a blueprint for the future HR operating model and a work plan for its implementation.

Through capacity reallocation, human resources management will be able to focus on real issues, such as strategic workforce planning and talent management. Furthermore, the recommended creation of a cross-department project team will help deliver the reforms across the entire civil service.



### EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Defining processes and procedures to depoliticise and professionalise the **selection of top managers**.
- Designing good practices to ensure **internal mobility of staff**.
- Implementing systems for the **performance assessment of civil servants**, including reviews of appraisal systems.
- Designing a **workforce planning process** in the public administration to address future human resources needs.
- Implementing **change management** actions, including the development and implementation of organisational strategies.



# MANAGEMENT OF EU FUNDS

Several EU Member States are facing delays in implementing EU Funds, in particular the **European Structural and Investments Funds (ESIF)**. This is often caused by weak administrative structures, inadequate programming and management capacity and limited project design skills.

DG REFORM supports EU Member States in increasing their capacity to programme, manage and implement the ESIF operational programmes.



## IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MARITIME AND FISHERIES FUND IN SPAIN

The implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in Spain had experienced substantial delays, affecting the fund's absorption. Two key issues identified were the complex governance scheme, involving several players at national and regional levels, and the difficulty to apply the appropriate rules to the regional specificities.



### EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

- Drafting recommendations for **policy and development priorities**, including regional specialisations.
- Drafting guidelines to design more **effective operational programmes** focused on territorial development investments.
- Assessing the **ESIF governance ecosystem** and providing recommendations to simplify and strengthen its efficiency.
- Drafting recommendations to improve **project design skills** for infrastructure projects.
- Providing **capacity-building activities** at national, regional and local levels with key stakeholders, international experts and representatives of other EU Member States to generate policy dialogue and receive feedback from peers.

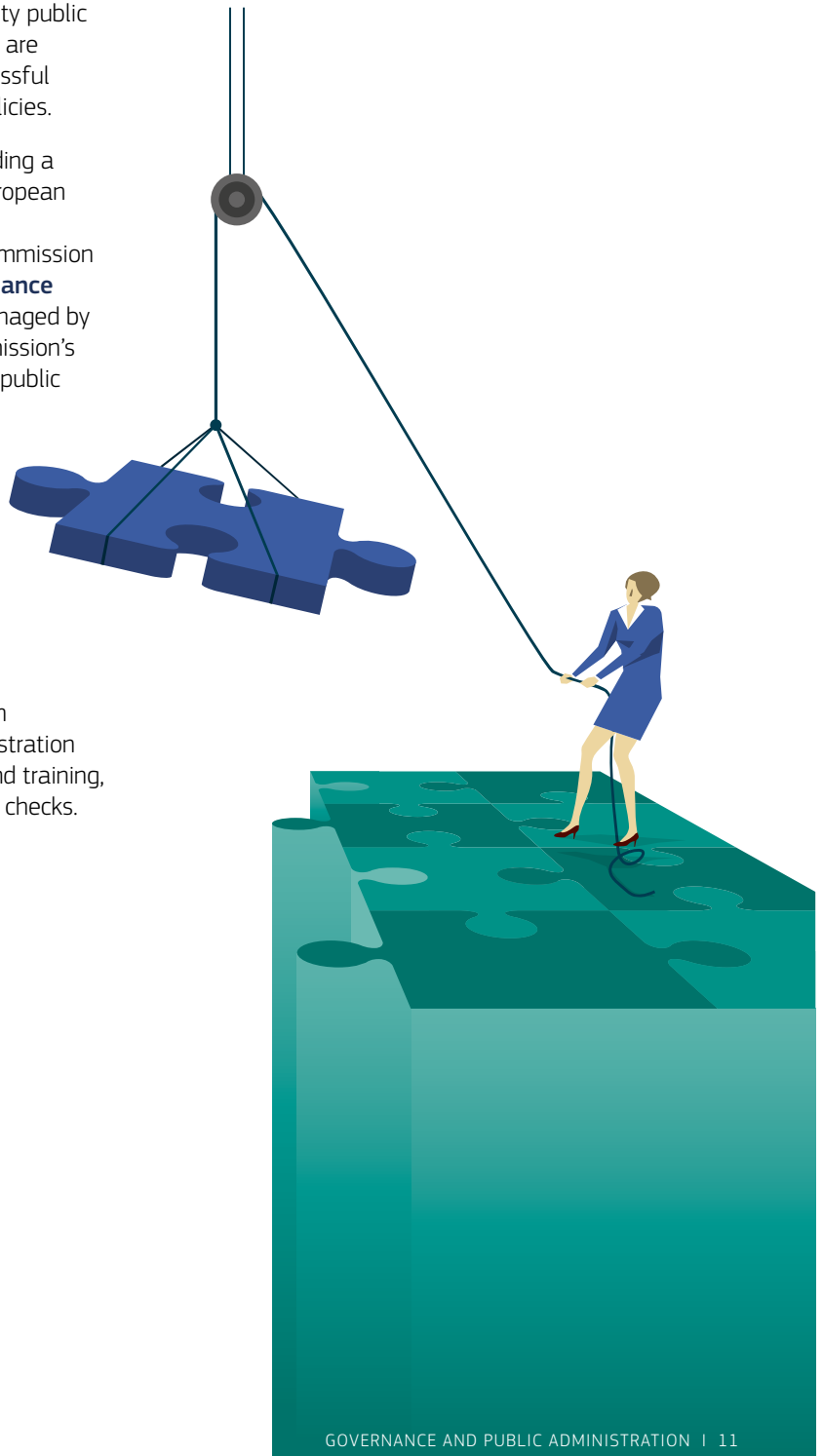
DG REFORM provided technical support to the Spanish managing authority of the EMFF. The main objective of the project was to improve the authority's management capacity and enhance the overall performance and use of the fund. The project provided recommendations and an action plan to reinforce the institutional capacities of the bodies involved in the management of the EMFF.

# GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION POLICY

Strong institutions and high quality public administration in Member States are important prerequisites for successful delivery on EU objectives and policies.

DG REFORM has the task of building a coherent approach within the European Commission in the area of public administration. The European Commission **competence centre for governance and public administration**, managed by DG REFORM, develops the Commission's knowledge on the functioning of public administrations in EU Member States. It looks into challenges and approaches that can help improve their operations and foster trust.

The centre coordinates and supports the EU's economic governance system (the European Semester) and the rule of law mechanism in relation to governance and public administration with methodological guidance and training, country analysis and consistency checks.



## CONTACT DETAILS



**Head of Unit Governance and public administration:**

**DANIELE DOTTO**

### **Main contact point for applying for the Structural Reform Support Programme**

**REFORM-SRSP@ec.europa.eu**

### **Further details on the work related to governance and public administration**

**REFORM-02@ec.europa.eu**

### **Find out more**

- DG REFORM:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/structural-reform-support\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/structural-reform-support_en)
- Structural Reform Support Programme:  
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