

Administrative reformists face tough job in Croatia

CARDS 2001

Administrative Capacity Building

Country

Croatia

Implementation period

2003-2004

Funding

€1.2 million

€0.3 million (Investment)

Results

Recommendations and guidance on legislative and administrative reform in the Croatian State Administration

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Urgent need for reform of Croatia's public administration

Following a tumultuous decade, stability and economic growth are critical for Croatia. So too is a functioning and transparent public administration to ensure that the nation's administrative needs are met. Moreover, as the country moves towards accession with the European Union, it is vital that Croatia's civil service is capable of developing and implementing new EU-related legislation and policies.

At the outset, this CARDS project expected that their target audience would be civil servants at the level of administrators and executives, excluding those in the judiciary. However, once the project got underway, the team discovered that the numbers affected by the reform were to be higher than the original estimates, and cut across the entire public administration.

Although the project has gained more political support towards its conclusion, its progress was hampered by poor awareness of the need for thorough public administration reform, and the transformation of the original counterpart the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-Government, into the Central State Office for Administration at the end of 2003.

Firm objectives, delayed response

Generally, the project's aims were to strengthen and modernise civil service legislation and related practices in Croatia; to strengthen the institutional and organisational capacity of the Central State Office for Administration (CSOA) and line institutions; and to manage and reform the civil service, as well as to support the setting up of a continuous training system for different categories of civil servants.

In practice, the project has drafted a new civil service law, which aims to depoliticise the civil service and provide more transparent practices in civil service recruitment, job classification, career management and development.

In parallel to drafting the new law, the project also contributed to strengthening management structures and skills within the civil service. The project team prepared a functional review of the management of human resources within the central administration and this was followed by the implementation of a plan to relay the team's findings, based on pilot experience with four ministries.

Star system

A training proposal – based on consultations with 700 civil servants – presented useful ideas for improving civil servants' managerial and professional skills, as well as giving them career stimulation. A Civil Service Training Centre has now been created within the CSOA, and more than 40 trainers have been prepared to deliver training courses on general management and HR management.

Introducing a 'star system' for grading civil servants who have completed training courses now make the link between career prospects and the training process. With the star system, human resource managers can assess whether to promote someone based on their training performance. On-the-job training is also considered a valuable HR tool, as are job rotation schemes which give people a chance to experience other roles in the organisation.

Long-term vision

The project team is keen to see if the draft civil service law is passed by the Croatian Parliament, and what changes may be made to it. It is also conscious of the long-term need for eliminating corruption and nepotism in the civil service mainly through political interference, as well as seeing civil servants empowered to become active decision-makers.