The Future of Civil Service in Central Europe

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In this decade, governments in Central Europe will be faced with a broad range of challenges to foster economic prosperity. These may include recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, decarbonization of large parts of the economy, digitization of public services and automation-induced labor market transformation. Irrespective of political directions and priorities, it is the civil service institutions that will be tasked to implement government policies. An effective and efficient public service can ensure that policies are implemented effectively and public funds are used in a targeted and purposeful manner. International benchmarks demonstrate that civil services in Central Europe (CE)[1] could still improve in several areas, such as setting up mechanisms for delivery of top priorities, setting goals based on outcomes and measuring them, hiring and retaining talent and digitally transforming citizen-facing services and their own way of work.

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1)   Defined as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia throughout this article.

Introduction

This article focuses on how civil services can develop to work more efficiently and towards better citizen outcomes. The case for change rests on four elements:

1. **Civil service institutions are important for the prosperity of CE countries**, as they affect a significant proportion of national GDP. In CE, total government expenditure averaged 42.9% of GDP.[2] Out of this, the direct government investment in CE reached 4.7% of GDP in 2019, which is now 50% above the EU-14[3] average and will likely grow further as post-Covid recovery programs support infrastructure investments or government digital modernization. While specific policies are decided by policymakers, it is the role of the civil service to ensure they are carried out correctly and effectively. The costs of running the civil services averaged 3.6% of GDP[4] in CE.

Chart 1: Government investment as a percentage of GDP
Source: OECD
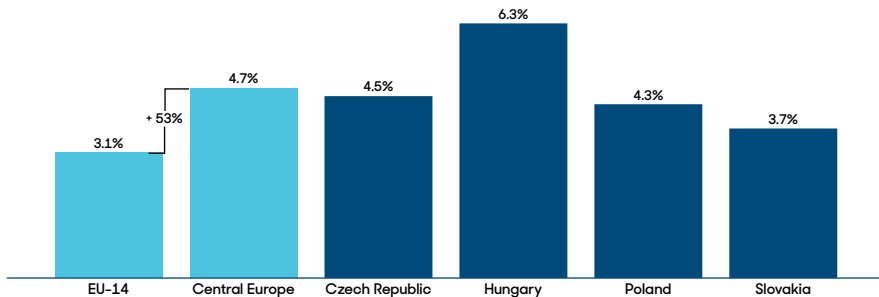
2. **Civil service institutions are facing new challenges** in their roles as policy designers, implementers, funders and facilitators. Over the next few years, CE countries will likely need to transition to low-carbon economies, digitize their public services,

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2) Government at a Glance 2021. *OECD* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2021_1c258f55-en;jsessionid=_dBPafwn3lRqtTuIgemQV8XC.ip-10-240-5-183. The figure includes payments into health and social systems, running education and justice systems, driving public investments, and supporting private investments where required to deliver public goods.
3) EU-15 minus UK, i.e., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.
4) General government expenditure by function (COFOG). *Eurostat* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/GOV_10A_EXP__custom_1300362/default/table?lang=en. Spending on general public services minus R&D, foreign economic aid and debt transactions.

reskill more than thirteen million people[5] to prepare for the future of work, and tackle regional, economic and societal inequalities.

Civil service institutions will also determine how effectively the budgets of *National Recovery and Resilience Plans* (at EUR ~57 billion for CE countries) will be deployed.[6] These plans, drawing in a large part on Recovery and Resilience Facility funding, are the most significant component of the NextGenerationEU program. More than seven times the size of the Marshall Plan (when adjusted to current prices), it represents a historic EU financial commitment. While the resources themselves are allocated by elected officials, it will fall to the respective civil service institutions to deliver the resulting programs. In order to manage the expected level of complexity and coordination, civil service may benefit from building new delivery capabilities.

3. **Citizen confidence with governments in CE, according to the Gallup World Poll, is relatively low (37%),** compared to that in Western Europe (58%).[7] Similarly, in 2020, public services such as healthcare, education and judiciary had an average citizen satisfaction rate at 52% in Central Europe, while in Western Europe citizen satisfaction with the government services stands at 71%.[8]

Looking ahead, based on the Eurobarometer survey, less than a third of CE citizens agreed or strongly agreed that their national governments "could be trusted to use the NextGenerationEU funds properly." This contrasts with 52% in the EU-14 countries.[9] The skepticism can be explained by the complexity of delivering public sector projects. A survey among three thousand civil servants in 18 countries revealed that 80% of public sector transformations fail to meet their objectives, although 93% of respondents said that objectives of these transformations were realistic.[10]

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5) The Rise of Digital Challengers. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://digitalchallengers.mckinsey.com.
The equivalent of jobs lost due to automated activities; total for the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

6) Recovery Plan for Europe. *European Commission* [online]. [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en#financing-the-eu-long-term-budget-and-nextgenerationeu.

7) Gallup World Poll quoted in OECD. *Government at a Glance 2021* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-11-03]. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2021_1c258f55-en.

8) OECD calculations based on the World Values Survey and European Values Study, 2017-20, quoted in OECD. *Government at a Glance 2021* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-11-03]. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2021_1c258f55-en.

9) State of the European Union. *Eurobarometer* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2021/soteu-flash-survey/soteu-2021-report-en.pdf.

10) ALLAS, Tera, Martin CHECINSKI, Roland DILLON, Richard DOBBS, Solveigh HIERONIMUS and Navjot SINGH. Delivering for Citizens: How to Triple the Success Rate of Government Transformations. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/delivering-for-citizens-how-to-triple-the-success-rate-of-government-transformations.

Chart 2: Confidence in government capabilities
Source: OECD, Eurobarometer

CE countries have a lower confidence in government capabilities than EU–14 countries. In percent %
Confidence that government can be trusted to use NextGenerationEU funds properly

EU–14	52 %
Central Europe	31 %
Czech Republic	34 %
Hungary	28 %
Poland	36 %
Slovakia	25 %

–41 %
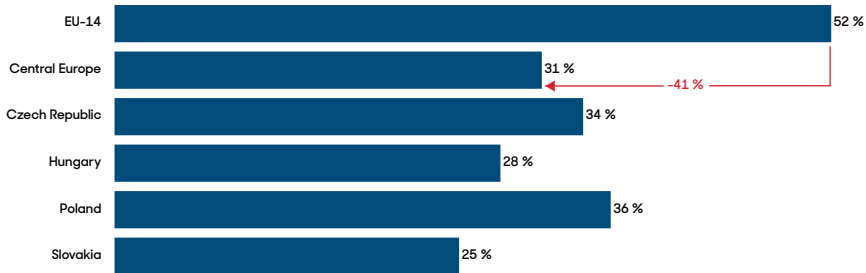
4. **There are many examples of standalone success stories of policy and civil service work across CE.** Some of them could be replicated in all government departments. For example:

The Czech Republic: BankID solution, created with a group of Czech banks, allows citizens to use their banking apps to access eGovernment services (e.g., a census application, a Covid-19 pass). Launched in early 2021 and automatically provided to customers of several Czech banks, BankID had hundreds of thousands of active users by August 2021.[11]

Slovakia: In 2012, the government launched the *ESO Program* for efficient, reliable and open state administration with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on citizens and businesses[12] as well as to save costs.[13] One-stop shops for services were

11) PEČINKOVÁ, Ivana. Konec čekání ve frontách na úřadech? ‚Zajít' se tam dá i virtuálně přes bankovní identitu. *Lidovky.cz* [online]. 29.8.2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.lidovky.cz/byznys/konec-cekani-ve-frontach-na-uradech-zajit-se-tam-da-i-virtualne-pres-bankovni-identitu.A210828_105433_ln_ekonomika_rkj.

12) OECD. *Slovak Republic: Developing a Sustainable Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform* [online]. OECD Publishing, 2014 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/slovak-republic-developing-a-sustainable-strategic-framework-for-public-administration-reform_9789264212640-en#page50.

13) ESO - Efektívna, Spoľahlivá a Otvorená verejná správa. *Ministerstvo vnútra SR* [online]. 2013 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.minv.sk/?eso-efektivna-spolahliva-otvorena-verejna-sprava.

created by integrating the specialized local administration into the central state office.[14] More than 90% of Slovak citizens valued citizen one-stop shops positively.[15]

Poland: In 2015, the digital Contact Point (biznes.gov.pl) started integrating services for entrepreneurs. It contributed to Poland being praised by the *Doing Business* report in regulatory reform for entrepreneurs among high-income OECD countries.[16]

Hungary: Since 2019, the government has digitized the income tax declaration in a citizen-centric way. For most people, the tax office prefills the application on a neat online platform and only asks people to review and approve (most do not need to make adjustments).[17]

Capabilities for Civil Service

Civil services need multiple capabilities to deliver outcomes for citizens, far beyond the traditional focus on policy expertise and running administrative functions. International and academic institutions have developed a range of frameworks for the capabilities required in the modern era that CE governments can draw upon. For example, see Box 1 of the OECD framework.

14) NEMEC, Juraj. Public Administration Reforms in Slovakia: Limited Outcomes (Why?). *ResearchGate* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326480303_Public_Administration_ Reforms_in_Slovakia_Limited_Outcomes_Why.

15) Out of the sample of 5,000 citizens surveyed.
MITRÍK, Karol. Záverečná správa: Implementácia Programu ESO. *Najvyšší kontrolný úrad* [online]. 2017 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.nku.gov.sk/documents/10157/265201/96040--110.pdf.

16) HAMMERSCHMID, Gerhard, M ORAMUS, Stanislaw MAZUR, M MOŻDŻEŃ and Nick THIJS. Public Administration Characteristics and Performance in EU28: Poland. *Publications Office of the European Union* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4a841d29-9612-11e8-8bc1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

17) See the online form on the Hungarian government website. Available at: https://onya.nav.gov.hu/#!/login.

> **Box 1: OECD framework for capabilities of civil service**
>
> **Capability areas required for the work of civil servants**
>
> 1. Policy advice and analysis
> 2. Service delivery and citizen engagement
> 3. Commissioning and contracting to ensure third party investment or service delivery
> 4. Managing networks to address the complex challenges of today.[18]
>
> **"Professional qualities" that civil services need to deliver what is asked of them**
>
> 1. Professional values
> 2. Being future-oriented and evidence-based
> 3. Being innovative to develop solutions to emerging challenges

The civil service capabilities need to be broad: this is well illustrated by the variety of tasks required from the civil service in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- For policy advice and analysis in order to define policies for contact tracing, international travel limitations or bringing children back to schools.
- For service delivery and citizen engagement, in order to clearly communicate pandemic restrictions, and provide seamless experience for citizens booking their vaccination appointments on various channels.
- For commissioning and contracting, in order to handle procurement of respirators, vaccines, or logistical services on a large scale, rapidly and from credible suppliers.
- For managing networks, in order to collaborate with regional and municipal leaders who can help minimize the impact of the pandemic on school operations, provide additional support to children in vulnerable situations, and understand better what support local businesses will need to survive the pandemic.

Civil services work in increasingly complex environments where governments are expected to deliver against new, long-term challenges. Depending on their situation, CE countries could therefore consider implementing some of the following measures in their civil service:

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18) OECD. Skills for a High Performing Civil Service. *OECD Public Governance Reviews* [online]. OECD Publishing, 2017 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/skills-for-a-high-performing-civil-service_9789264280724-en#page4.

1. Over the short term, **setting up execution-focused Delivery Units to ensure delivery of top government priorities**. Such a temporary measure could help civil service deliver programs before it builds its own capabilities on a large scale. Delivery Units can produce quick wins which create momentum for longer term improvements.

2. **Defining priority areas with their expected outcomes**. Prioritized outcomes help better allocate resources and align civil servants at where the focus should be. Monitoring and a feedback loop drives improvement of the civil service performance over time.

3. **Attracting, retaining and developing talent becomes critical as the complexity of civil service tasks increases**. Our research indicates that high performers may be eight times more effective than their peers in high-complexity roles, such as those in management or software development.[19]

4. **Digital transformation and data-driven decision-making**. Work automation, systematic data collection and analysis are transforming most industries. Civil services can draw inspiration from using data in numerous areas. These areas include e.g., improving the quality and speed of the policy-making process, increasing the effectiveness of administrative tasks, or enabling citizen-centricity of government interactions. Additional benefits can include the reduction of risks and costs from the legacy IT systems.

The remainder of the paper looks at benchmarks and examples which are directed at the following areas of government capability.

Setting Up Central Delivery Units to Ensure Delivery of Top Government Priorities

Typical policy processes tend to be slow, governed by time-honored rules and hierarchies. They place a focus on good policy-making rather than effective implementation. Planning and delivering transformations requires, in contrast, a fast and steady pace, a flatter hierarchy with close collaboration between different agencies and roles within them, and the flexibility to solve problems as they arise. Our 2017 survey of civil servants from 18 countries demonstrated that about half of successful transformations (vs. only a fourth of unsuccessful ones) were coordinated by a dedicated central organization team.[20]

19) KELLER, Scott. Attracting and Retaining the Right Talent. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2017 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/attracting-and-retaining-the-right-talent.

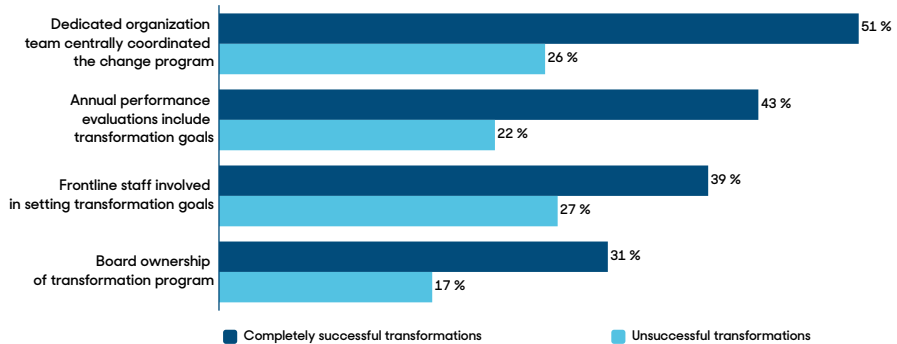20) ALLAS, Tera, Martin CHECINSKI, Roland DILLON, Richard DOBBS, Solveigh HIERONIMUS and Navjot SINGH. Delivering for Citizens: How to Triple the Success Rate of Government Transformations. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/delivering-for-citizens-how-to-triple-the-success-rate-of-government-transformations.

Chart 3: Conditions of successful transformations
Source: McKinsey Center for Government Transformation Survey

Coordination and a regular cadence are essential to successful transformations.
Respondents indicating that action was taken during transformation, weighted % of total respondents

	Completely successful transformations	Unsuccessful transformations
Dedicated organization team centrally coordinated the change program	51 %	26 %
Annual performance evaluations include transformation goals	43 %	22 %
Frontline staff involved in setting transformation goals	39 %	27 %
Board ownership of transformation program	31 %	17 %

Central European countries may now need to consider setting up such teams as they start gearing up for the delivery of their National Recovery and Resilience programs – and indeed some of them have already taken steps to build such teams.

Whilst there may be more desirable and sustainable solutions, that require organizational changes and hiring talent into individual ministries, Prime Minister level Delivery Units can bring quick wins that allow for the building of momentum and maintaining government and public support for a civil service modernization program.

Such units support the development of plans, help senior leaders prioritize, rigorously measure and report on results, encourage coordination between departments, and work to remove roadblocks in implementation through escalation or use of internal or external expertise. Such units work particularly well when sponsored directly from the center of the government.

Finland may provide an example that is relevant for the Central European countries where priorities need to be driven by government coalitions. Given the long-term issues with prioritization of key priorities, the Finnish government 2015–2019 agreed on a new system of target setting and management. It selected 26 strategic goals, including measurable targets and an implementation plan supported by financing and people resources. Split into five policy areas, biweekly 4-hour strategic meetings were set up where government ministers were expected to participate in helping drive the implementation plan.[21]

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21) ROSS, Matt. The Power of Priorities: Goal-setting in Finland and New Zealand. *Global Government Forum* [online]. 2019 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/the-power-of-priorities-goal-setting-in-finland-and-new-zealand/.

Focus on Outcomes and their Measurement

Linking an activity with an outcome is difficult. Even private organizations struggle to establish a clear link between inputs (such as hours of work), outputs (such as revenue) and broader and longer-term outcomes such as value created. Measuring the outcomes and linking them to public service initiatives is even more difficult. Faced with this complexity, public services traditionally resort to focusing on input only, such as the number of workshops organized or the amount of subsidies provided.

Civil services could therefore consider a practical approach to setting their objectives, with establishing outcome-based goals as a first step. 50% of tax returns filed and 20% Net Promoter Score (percentage of satisfied users minus percentage of dissatisfied users) are examples of specific outcome-based goals for a new digital tax return initiative.

Charting an effective path to such goals requires cascading the objectives to more granular levels (geographically and hierarchically), assigning them to initiatives and assessing the impact of individual initiatives when multiple factors influence the outcome. Once this measurement system is established, it is possible to prioritize between the initiatives with spending reviews providing transparency to the cost of each objective.

The Polish STRATEG platform measures, for example, public sector outcomes in detail and publishes them online. Updated quarterly, the system tracks indicators related to individual government strategies at various levels of government. Organized by the initiative, geographic region and policy area, the system includes transparent definitions of indicators as well as explanations as to how those indicators support broader social objectives. The data show, for example, overall energy consumption and total greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the more detailed information relevant for energy transition, such as the number of energy prosumers or households with electricity smart meters.[22] The openness of data of the Polish Statistical Office has led to receiving the second place globally (beaten only by Singapore) in the *Open Data Inventory* ranking by Open Data Watch.[23]

Focus on Civil Service Talent

Modern civil services need a new type of talent with new skill sets to deal with the new types of problems and tasks - this can be achieved through upskilling of officials and through attracting new types of talent into civil service.

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22) About the System. *STRATEG* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://strateg.stat.gov.pl/?lang=en-GB#/o-systemie.
23) Poland Open Data Watch Inventory Profile. *Open Data Watch* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://odin.opendatawatch.com/Report/countryProfileUpdated/POL?year=2020.
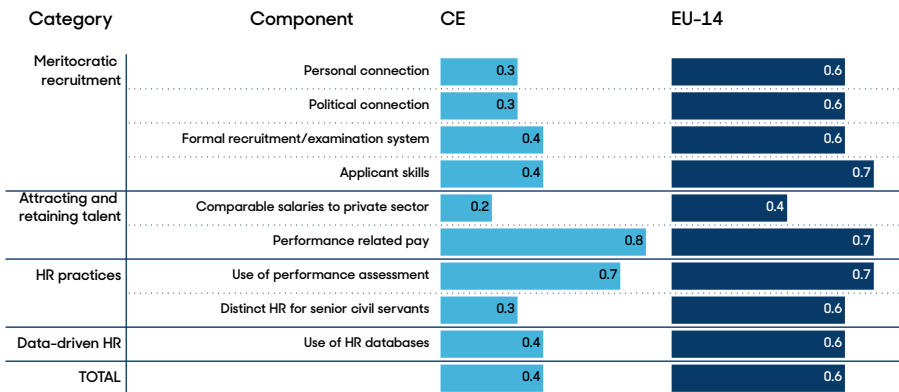
In CE, securing talent is a particularly challenging task. According to the University of Oxford's *Civil Service Effectiveness Index*, civil services in Central Europe have the potential to grow across a range of HR-related categories.[24]

Chart 4: Categories of civil service effectiveness
Source: INCISE Database, University of Oxford

Compared to EU–14, CE region has gaps in most of the evaluated categories of civil service effectiveness.
INCISE database score (relative ranking of countries; 1 – highest, 0 – lowest)

Category	Component	CE	EU–14
Meritocratic recruitment	Personal connection	0.3	0.6
	Political connection	0.3	0.6
	Formal recruitment/examination system	0.4	0.6
	Applicant skills	0.4	0.7
Attracting and retaining talent	Comparable salaries to private sector	0.2	0.4
	Performance related pay	0.8	0.7
HR practices	Use of performance assessment	0.7	0.7
	Distinct HR for senior civil servants	0.3	0.6
Data-driven HR	Use of HR databases	0.4	0.6
TOTAL		0.4	0.6

CE civil services looking to improve their talent management could therefore take inspiration in three areas of talent management: defining a comprehensive people strategy, introducing modern talent hiring practices and developing leadership capability.

1. **Comprehensive talent strategy and critical skill definition** with a clear understanding of the gaps vs. current and future skill requirements. Recent research identified 56 foundational skills across 13 skill groups that help citizens thrive in the "future of work" characterized by less clear and changing work tasks. Three of the skill groups focus on digital capabilities, others on cognitive, interpersonal and self-leadership skills (see Chart 5 below).[25] In specialized areas, skills mapping can go much deeper. A study on IT talent in Germany found, for example, that businesses looking

24) International Civil Service Effectiveness Index 2019. *University of Oxford* [online]. 2019 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/about/partnerships/international-civil-service-effectiveness-index-2019.
25) DONDI, Marco, Julia KLIER, Frédéric PANIER and Jörg SCHUBERT. Defining the Skills Citizens Will Need in the Future World of Work. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2021 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work.

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to capitalize on emerging tech trends need access to ~4,000 tech skills in addition to many more social and emotional skills.[26]

Further research and testing will be needed to define the skill groups most required by the civil service as well as to define the approach to their training and evaluation. A framework that includes both the hard and soft skills of civil servants help to define a comprehensive civil service people strategy. Specific hard skills to focus on could include capabilities such as complex project management, public procurement or digital transformation in government.

Chart 5: McKinsey framework on foundational skills
Source: McKinsey & Company

COGNITIVE		INTERPERSONAL	
CRITICAL THINKING · Structure problem-solving · Logical reasoning · Understanding biases · Seeking relevant information	**PLANNING AND WAYS OF WORKING** · Work-plan development · Time management and prioritization · Agile thinking	**MOBILIZING SYSTEMS** · Role modeling · Win-win negotiations · Crafting and inspiring vision · Organizational awareness	**DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS** · Empathy · Inspiring trust · Humility · Sociability
COMMUNICATION · Storytelling and public speaking · Asking the right questions · Synthesizing messages · Active listening	**MENTAL FLEXIBILITY** · Creativity and imagination · Translating knowledge to different context · Adopting a different perspective · Adaptability · Ability to learn	**TEAMWORK EFFECTIVENESS** · Fostering inclusiveness · Motivating different personalities · Resolving conflicts	· Collaboration · Coaching · Empowering
SELF-LEADERSHIP		DIGITAL	
SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT · Understanding own emotions and triggers · Self-control and regulation · Understanding own strengths	· Integrity · Self-motivation and wellness · Self-confidence	**DIGITAL FLUENCY AND CITIZENSHIP** · Digital literacy · Digital learning	· Digital collaboration · Digital ethics
ENTREPRENEURSHIP · Courage and risk-taking · Driving change and innovation	· Energy, passion, and optimism · Breaking orthodoxies	**SOFTWARE USE AND DEVELOPMENT** · Programming literacy · Data analysis and statistics	· Computational and algorithmic thinking
GOALS ACHIEVEMENT · Ownership and decisiveness · Achievement orientation	· Grit and persistence · Coping with uncertainty · Self-development	**UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL SYSTEMS** · Data literacy · Smart systems	· Cybersecurity literacy · Tech translation and enablement

26) DAUB, Matthias, Julia REDA KOUBA, Kate SMAJE and Anna WIESINGER. How Companies Can Win in the Seven Tech-talent Battlegrounds. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2020 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/how-companies-can-win-in-the-seven-tech-talent-battlegrounds.

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2. **Talent hiring** can ensure that people with the right talent become civil servants. Having the right talent is particularly critical for complex technical roles as well as civil service leadership at the top and middle levels. Research indicates that high performers may be eight times more effective than their peers in such high-complexity roles.[27]

   Most OECD countries currently see challenges with hiring data professionals, IT technicians, STEM professionals and senior civil service leaders. Very few find it challenging to seek out traditional roles such as policy advisers or office clerks – or novel roles that only few governments are likely searching for, such as design professionals.

   The Fast Stream program in the United Kingdom is an example of a successful proactive civil service recruitment effort. It targets talented recent graduates and young professionals with 15 schemes across the civil service. Each scheme offers 2–4 years of fast-paced, guided work experience with a competitive salary and exposure to top civil service leaders, after which participants could continue their career paths in more senior positions. The prestigious program attracted over 40,000 applications in 2018 (triple the number in 2007) with less than 1,500 admissions.[28] In 2020, Fast Stream ranked #1 in the UK in the Times Top 100 Graduate Employer ranking.

3. **Developing leadership capability:** Senior civil servants and their leadership development have an outsize impact on the functioning of the entire civil service. They set standards of work, ensure meaningful work planning, coach and evaluate more junior officials, and set examples through their role-modelling. Vision and strategy, a results-oriented mindset, networking and collaboration, public value and integrity, and communication competencies are the five areas most frequently included by the OECD countries in their senior civil servant competency frameworks. CE countries might want to evaluate their senior civil servant leadership development frameworks based on what most OECD countries do, and enrich their training and upskilling portfolio appropriately (see Chart 6).
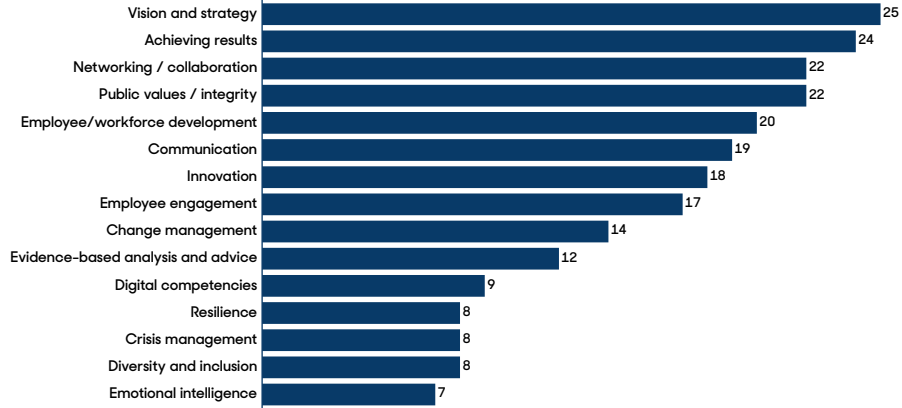
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27) KELLER, Scott. Attracting and Retaining the Right Talent. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2017 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/attracting-and-retaining-the-right-talent.

28) Civil Service Fast Stream: Annual Report 2017 and 2018. *UK Parliament* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0003/Civil_Service_fast_stream_annual_report.pdf.

Chart 6: Competency framework for senior level public servants
Source: OECD

Areas included in the competency framework for senior level public servants, 2020
Number of OECD countries including each area in their SLPS competency framework.

Competency area	Number
Vision and strategy	25
Achieving results	24
Networking / collaboration	22
Public values / integrity	22
Employee/workforce development	20
Communication	19
Innovation	18
Employee engagement	17
Change management	14
Evidence-based analysis and advice	12
Digital competencies	9
Resilience	8
Crisis management	8
Diversity and inclusion	8
Emotional intelligence	7

Note: data does not include Chile and Iceland.

We have learned from our interviews with change leaders that the more effective programs take into account individual training needs and employ various learning modes.[29] Robust capability programs might therefore include project assignments or rotations between departments, theoretical elements (external and internal training) as well as coaching (regular 360-degree feedback and mentoring).[30]

Focus on Digital Transformation

Despite an improvement, CE countries still average a lower *Digital Economy and Society Index* (DESI) score than the EU-14 countries. The overall score for Digital Public Services is 20% lower in CE than in EU-14. In particular, it is in the use of pre-filled eGovernment forms where the widest gap between the regions can be seen.

The only instance where the CE score is above the EU-14 average is the result of Poland in the open data category, which scored 8% higher.
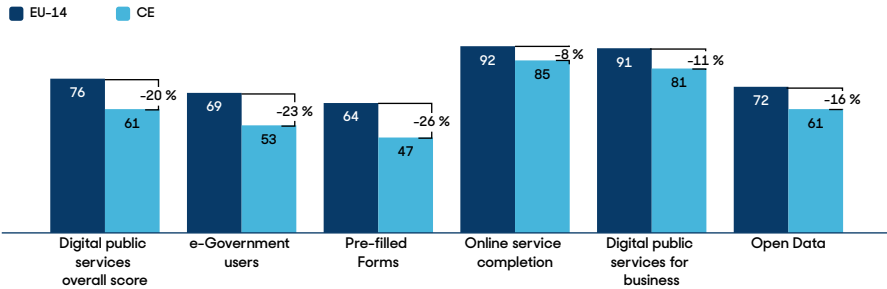
29) ALLAS, Tera, Martin CHECINSKI, Roland DILLON, Richard DOBBS, Solveigh HIERONIMUS and Navjot SINGH. Delivering for Citizens: How to Triple the Success Rate of Government Transformations. *McKinsey & Company* [online]. 2018 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/delivering-for-citizens-how-to-triple-the-success-rate-of-government-transformations.

30) For relevant roles, this might include rotation opportunities with the private sector (or at least professionally managed state-owned companies).

Chart 7: DESI score in CE and EU–14
Source: EU DESI Index

CE countries have the lower DESI score, especially as regards the number of eGov users and pre-filled forms.
DESI scores, 2020

■ EU-14 ■ CE

	Digital public services overall score	e-Government users	Pre-filled Forms	Online service completion	Digital public services for business	Open Data
EU-14	76	69	64	92	91	72
CE	61	53	47	85	81	61
	−20 %	−23 %	−26 %	−8 %	−11 %	−16 %

The digital transformation in the CE governments already has numerous success stories emerging. They include, for instance:

- Setting up digital government identities for communication with government (that also works with other systems, e.g., BankID)
- Delivering a range of Covid-19 related apps, such as a national vaccination reservation system, a contact tracing app, Covid-19 testing and vaccination passports including reading apps (an example from the Czech Republic includes a new initiative connecting the national Covid-19 passport with one of the most popular event ticketing provider in order to enable event visitors to show their ticket as well as Covid-19 status through a single QR code)
- Simplifying this year's census process through pre-filled forms

In addition to digitizing more and more services, governments may additionally want to combine the app development with a process of simplification and a customer-friendly UX design.

The service developed by the Prague municipal government, which allows citizens to apply for voting outside their home, digitized, for example, an existing paper-based process. Germany in its digitization of child benefits actually went a step further. The process was simplified by allowing citizens to only provide several select data points instead of filling in multi-page forms.[31]

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31) **Access to Family Allowances Simplified.** *The Federal Government* [online]. 2020 [retrieved on: 2021-10-19]. Available at: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/digitale-familienleistungen-1764194.

Summary of Possible Actions

The examples above illustrate five possible actions that can help create modern civil services in CE. In every country, the specific shape and applicability of those actions require consideration among ministers and senior civil servants that fully takes local circumstances into account.

- **Make civil service modernization one of the key government priorities.**
Modernization of civil service should be a non-political priority. While government priorities are selected by elected politicians with civil service inputs, civil service alone can ensure that the selected priorities are delivered afterwards. New, more complex capabilities will be needed in this decade, including highly specialized ones such as data collection and analysis, design thinking and IT delivery. Any political party will benefit from the best possible civil service and, thus, from the civil service modernization itself.

- **Set up a temporary high-capability team, e.g. a central government Delivery Unit, which will ensure that top government priorities are delivered.**
Experience from numerous countries shows that top-level focus facilitates delivery of key priorities. A team focused on delivery or priority programs, that will report directly to the Prime Minister or one of the senior ministers, can provide such a focus. Depending on the specific country setup, the team can support planning of strategic priorities, monitor their delivery, support owners as required, and help resolve any problems that emerge during execution. The team can thus provide a temporary solution for top priorities, help produce quick wins and build momentum while more long-term solutions are developed.

- **Ensure that objectives are outcome-oriented and progress monitored.**
To enable the focus and prioritization of civil servants' work, civil services can consider setting up systems to ensure that every department knows and understands the outcome they should achieve. At ministerial or departmental levels, target outcomes (e.g., improved health, workforce upskilling or export increase) are the most relevant. At the team level, practical tasks and outputs are more relevant, but should be cascaded from the overall outcomes.

- **Launch a holistic HR transformation of civil service.**
  Civil services will need new skills to resolve the challenges of the 2020s. To prepare, governments can consider launching holistic HR transformations. Initial mapping of the most critical skills can help target specific interventions. These may then include a combination of hiring, training and development programs to develop the required skills. Top talent and leadership ability are particularly important and may deserve specific attention.

- **Ensure that digital transformation of government is coupled with simpler processes that help increase citizen satisfaction.**
  Over the past few years, CE governments have digitized multiple services and expanded their eGovernment offerings. As a next step, governments could consider simplifying their design, making them more user-friendly and thus motivating citizens to use digital services more. Digital services also speed up and simplify the interactions between citizens and their governments, help make internal civil service processes more effective, and ultimately lead to higher citizen satisfaction with government services.