

Hungary's development of public administration is a model to be followed

Even simpler arrangement of affairs; even more transparent tasks and a public administration organisation tailored to them; public servants who are even more respected and professionally trained: these are the main directions which need to be maintained for further improvement of effectiveness in public administration. The Ministry of Public Administration and Justice summarised the implemented measures for development of public administration included in the Magyary Zoltán Programme for development of public administration (launched in June 2011), and the results so far. It also indicated the direction of further developments, included in the Magyary Programme 12.0, presented on 31 august. The Programme was presented by Tibor Navracsics, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Administration and Justice.

In his opening speech, Mr. Navracsics said that the aim of the Programme is the creation of the Good State – and so the attainment of public good – and the elimination of party and factional interests, so that the government of the day may work in the national interest.

Mr. Navracsics thinks that one of the most important virtues of the Magyary Programme is its self-appraisal and flexibility, which in contrast to former practice is not aligned with one absolute goal, but with continually changing circumstances in its mission to achieve aims such as public administration being an aid to competitiveness rather than a hindrance.

The Minister stressed that the creators of the Magyary Programme had made great efforts to find its weaknesses and the differences between plans and realisation. In this way, self-appraisal is a strength, and the comparison of aims and achievements brings us closer to our original goals.

The reform process of the last two years has brought the effectiveness of the central government's decision-making system to the forefront in European terms and without this it would have been impossible to implement changes such as those in education, healthcare, local government, public administration and the justice system. The Minister also sees the Magyary Programme as potentially defining a new era, in the sense that this could be the first Hungarian public administration reform, which the OECD could also 'patent' and hold up as an example to other Member States.

The Magyary Zoltán Public Administration Development Programme is one of the important pillars of reform in public administration launched by the Government. The programme is closely linked to reform of the regional public administration and local government system, the reform of the justice system and the programme for elimination of corruption in public administration.

The new Civil Code is now before Parliament and, together with the new Criminal Code to be enacted in July 2013, forms the cornerstone of reform in the justice system. Both respond to high priority aims in the development of public administration: the fight against corruption and the demand for responsible management of state assets.

In the development of both the Magyary Zoltán Programme 11.0 – which was introduced last year – and its successor, The Ministry of Public Administration and Justice has taken account of international experience and directives (from the EU, OECD etc.). As a result, the Programme has garnered international recognition, and has become a model to follow. This autumn the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

will sign an agreement on close specialist cooperation. The international organisation has indicated that it is keen to collaborate with the Hungarian government, because the broad range and comprehensiveness of Hungary's development of public administration is exceptional in an international context. Thus Hungary will be able to provide other states with valuable know-how through the Magyary Programme. According to the agreement, cooperation will be particularly close in the areas of strategic planning, the simplification of public administration procedures, the fight against corruption and methodology in internal governmental communication. The level of international recognition gained by the programme is illustrated by the fact that it will be presented at a specialist conference in London in October 2012.

The programme identifies further necessary measures in four areas of intervention: further simplification of the organisational system of public administration; accountability and transparency of public administration tasks (the creation of a register of state tasks); the further simplification of public administration procedures and regulations, and making them more comprehensible (deregulation); and management of human resources in public administration.

Other fundamental values in the development of public administration also have an important place in the work to be done (accountability, prevention of corruption and fostering active citizenship).

Significant simplification of the central organisation of public administration has taken place in the first two years of the present government's term in office, mainly at the level of ministries, government foundations and public foundations. A vital element in the next phase is the supervision and simplification of mid-level management organisations, background institutions and foundations transferred from counties in the course of the consolidation of counties. There will also be oversight of the institutions and organisations which operate as legal successors to the satellite organisations of the Marxist-Leninist Hungarian Socialist Workers Party during the period of the single-party state : the KISZ (the Hungarian Young Communist League), the Patriotic People's Front, the Hungarian Pioneers Association, the Hungarian Soviet Friendship Society, etc.).

The most effective indicator of the streamlining of the organisational system is the creation of a register of state tasks. The state, public administration and individual institutions need to be fully conversant with the range of tasks that fall within their remits, and this information must be kept up to date within a changing regulatory environment. This is in effect a stocktaking of tasks, something which has been neglected since the political transition of 1989/ 90. The creation of the register of tasks has begun, and at present comprises more than thirty thousand state tasks.

Alongside this catalogue of tasks, the accurate survey of real estate assets, resources and information technology infrastructure is also important. In this regard the development of a methodology for the unified management of real estate used by the state or local governments has been launched, as has an appraisal of real estate held by the Hungarian state outside the borders of Hungary. Following a reliable survey of real estate, a further task will be realisation of more cost-effective operation of properties owned outside Hungary.

The Government sees the streamlining of public administration procedures and service provision as still being far from ideal. The reduction of bureaucracy is a commitment previously stated in the Government's programme, and is vital for improvement of national competitiveness, because the

state wishes to be a facilitator and not an obstacle for citizens and economic players in their dealings with it. State bureaucracy must not be allowed to hinder economic growth. For this aim to be achieved, the rollout of public administration through the internet must continue to be consistently developed, together with further reductions in administrative burdens on citizens and Hungarian businesses, further steps leading to introduction of one-stop services to the public, and an increase in the number of government public service points and the services offered by them.

It is important to emphasise that in these areas of governance there has been significant progress recently: the administration of 228 services to the public has been simplified (e.g. matters related to the commitment to raise children, employment, taxation, welfare benefits, the issue of official documents, marriage documentation, adoption, etc.), and administrative burdens on economic players have been reduced by several hundred million forints through the Ministry of National Economy's Simple State Programme. An extraordinary achievement in the second year of this government was the opening of government public service points across the country, in January 2011. Currently such offices are operating in twenty-nine locations, where they have provided services to nearly half a million people so far. By 2014 it is planned to increase the number of these offices to 300, and the number of services that can be provided will be increased to as many as 2,500, through one-stop service provision. From 2013 the operation of regional offices will serve to simplify and increase access to public administration services for citizens – particularly those not living in large settlements.

The deregulation programme, which aims to simplify regulation, has already produced significant results with its extremely intensive work in creating legislation. Unnecessary, outdated regulations will be eliminated in six phases. A total of 1,025 parliamentary resolutions, 1,971 government and cabinet resolutions and 455 Acts have been dealt with, and the work will continue with the deregulation of a further 3,348 Acts and 4,000 government and ministerial decrees. In parallel with this, the textual simplification of regulations is ongoing.

Since this government entered office, a deliberate policy on personnel in public service has been emphasised as vital for the restoration of society's trust in public service and for the effective functioning of public administration. Professional competence and proficiency have become important selection criteria, and public administration is open to young people starting their professional careers; the development of ethical vocational norms has begun, as has the development of a methodology to equip public servants to identify manifestations of corruption. New rules have been formulated for the basic and advanced training of public service personnel, and for their professional examinations. Special emphasis has been placed on the training of personnel in contact with the public at government public access points. On 1 March 2012 the Act on Public Service Officials came into force, which lays the foundations for a career structure in public service, and which provides a unified framework for rules related to civil servants and government officials. In central public administration, development work has begun on the system based on spheres of activity; this year analysis of these spheres will come to an end, and from next year the new system will be gradually introduced, in parallel with the renewal of the system for performance appraisal. This September the first full academic year will begin at the National University of Public Service,

which will have an important role in the formation of a unified career structure and the education of new recruits to public service. It can be seen from the above that measures in the interest of public service employees continue to be important to the development of public administration.