**EU-SERBIA 10th SPECIAL GROUP ON**

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM**

**19 April 2024 (11:00-15:00)**

**OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS (final)**

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| **Strategic framework of public administration reform, including public financial management:**   1. The parties agreed on the need for effective implementation, monitoring and reporting on the PAR strategic framework, including through the strengthening of discussions with donors and civil society organisations. 2. Serbia committed to ensuring strong political steer, budgetary commitment and effective coordination to underpin the reform process, including through moreregular meetings of the PAR Council. 3. Serbia committed to systematically following up on recommendations presented in the annual implementation reports, and to reporting on them in the subsequent annual reports. 4. Serbia remains committed to the implementation of the Local Government Reform Programme and will provide sufficient human resources capacities – by carrying out the recruitments planned in the systematisation decision - for managing and reporting on this programme. 5. Serbia will consult, by summer 2024, the European Commission on the draft action plan covering the 2024-2025 period of the Local Government Reform Programme. 6. Serbia will consult, by Q3 2024, the European Commission on draft amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government. 7. Serbia also remains committed to the effective functioning, through regular meetings, of the Commission for Financing Local Self-Governments. Such Commission will make proposals based on the analysis of June 2023 of the Ministry of Finance. Serbia will ensure that the Commission for Financing Local Self-Governments regularly meets and analyses the methodology and criteria for allocating any earmarked transfers to local self-government units. |

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| **Public Financial Management (PFM):**   1. Serbia will establish a unified, comprehensive and transparent system for prioritising all public investments, regardless of type and source of financing. 2. Serbia will increase the number of internal auditors, ensuring establishment of an effective internal audit function in all central budget institutions of importance for Chapter 32. 3. Serbia will increase efforts, in the next budgetary cycle, to improve budget transparency, as well as public participation and parliamentary oversight over the budget process. 4. Serbia will provide, in writing, the answer to the additional question: *“Has there been a public consultation procedure before the adoption of the regulation on projects of special importance that you shared with the European Commission recently”?* 5. As recommended by the European Commission, Serbia will create by Q3 2024, and regularly update, an overview of projects that have been marked as being of “special importance” under the Regulation or before that through the lex specialis. |

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| **Policy development and coordination:**  1. The parties agreed on the importance of a strong quality control role of the Public Policy Secretariat and other Centre of Government institutions to ensure effective implementation of the law on the planning system and other relevant legislation, including at the local level where necessary.  2. This relates inter alia to the quality of sector planning documents and of regulatory and financial impact assessments, the timely adoption of mid-term plans, and the regular publication of implementation reports on key government and sector planning documents. On the latter, the parties agreed that the current number of published reports was insufficient and needed to be increased.  3. The question of quality control also applies to public consultations regarding which Serbia commits to systematically publishing reports, including explanations on why comments were accepted or not, as required in the legislation. Serbia agreed to strengthen quality control mechanisms on public consultations.Serbia also agreed to improve the percentage of draft legislation subject to public consultations.  4. As regards the optimisation of sectors, Serbia agreed to increase further the number of optimised sectors.  5. On all these matters, Serbia will make the full use of the Unified Information System (UIS), and related Online Monitoring Tool (OMT).  6. Serbia will consult the European Commission, once the Draft revision of the Programme is prepared, on the new Programme for improvement of public policies and regulatory reform.  7. Serbia will adopt, by Q3 2024, by-laws on the Law on the planning system.  8. Serbia will keep the European Commission informed on the process of adopting a new national plan on alignment with the acquis (NPAA). |

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| **Accountability:**  1. The parties agreed on the need for Serbia to continue establishing analytical units in all ministries, without delay, to foster the effective consolidation of strategic, operational and financial management functions and managerial accountability, and in accordance with the Roadmap for Improving Managerial Accountability. Serbia will adopt such roadmap by the end of 2024 and start implementing it. Serbia will also adopt unified standards and guidelines for the functioning of analytical units by the end of 2024.  2. The parties agreed on the important role of independent bodies in promoting the accountability and transparency of the public administration. It is key to monitor the actual implementation of independent bodies’ recommendations, in addition to the formal acceptance of those recommendations by the public administration.  3. Serbia will keep the European Commission informed on plans to address potentially abusive requests for access to information. In case of legislative amendments, Serbia will consult the European Commission.  4. The authorities will support the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance by ensuring that public entities comply with obligations on proactive information under the Law on free access to information of public importance. The authorities will clarify, in writing, to the European Commission the total number of public entities concerned by the legal obligation of proactive information and the total number of entities currently fulfilling this obligation. |

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| **Public service and human resources management:**  1. Due to the absence of some speakers, Serbia will provide answers, in writing, to the original questions raised in this part of the agenda.  2. The European Commission encouraged the authorities to look into the possibility of enhancing the effectiveness of recruitment procedures, in respect of both managerial and non-managerial selections, while ensuring merit-based recruitments. The European Commission reiterated its and SIGMA’s offer for assistance in this regard. Serbia will share, in writing, information about the ex post analysis of the Law on civil servants and the timeline of the next steps.  3. The parties stressed the need to continue improving data collection in all areas of human resources management, including on categories of temporary contracts and dismissals – monitoring also the dismissal cases overturned by court decisions – in order to be able to detect possible irregularities. Regarding the implementation of legal provisions for granting temporary contracts based on competitions, Serbia will either apply these provisions from 2025, or adopt an amendment to postpone them.  4. In this regard, Serbia committed to establishing HRMIS obligations in state administration bodies by Q3 2024, and to connecting local self-governments with HRMIS by mid to late 2025.  5. The Ministry of Finance, responsible for the implementation of the project Central Information System for Calculation of Salaries of Public Sector Employees (ISKRA), remains committed to cooperation with the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government and the Personnel Management Service in order to ensure interconnection between ISKRA and HRMIS.  6. The parties underlined as an urgent priority the phasing out of the high number of acting senior management posts, in line with the targets and timelines set in Serbia’s PAR strategy.  7. In this context, the European Commission stressed the need for the ‘Special Working Group’ to finalise its work as soon as possible and to propose to the Government, by summer 2024, measures and corresponding timeline for improving the normative framework and better coordination of senior civil servants as well as a calendar for organising competitions to gradually phase out acting posts, with priority given to those that are not civil servants. Serbia will share the quarterly reports with the European Commission and will schedule a dialogue on this matter with the European Commission in autumn 2024.  8. Serbia remains committed to establishing a stronger link between budget and staff planning, by putting in place the new methodology for personnel planning after the HRMIS is fully operational.  9. The further dynamics of the salary system reform process – whether the Law on the Salary System for Public Sector Employees will enter in force in 2025 as planned or not - will be realised in accordance with the determination of the new Government, which is responsible for its proposal. |

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| **Service delivery to citizens and businesses:**  1. The European Commission noted that the key issue of institutional fragmentation in this area remains to be addressed. In this context, Serbia committed to following up on the recommendations from the ex-post analysis of the e-Government Development Programme 2020-2022.  2. Serbia will consult, by Q2 2025, the European Commission on draft amendments to the Law on e-Government.  3. As regards the ongoing extension of one-stop shops (OSS), Serbia remains committed to ensuring a citizen-centric and standardised level of service provision and quality throughout the country. Serbia also remains committed to introduce customer satisfaction methodology in the established OSS which would serve as basis for an overall methodology, to be adopted during the mandate of the current Government, for all service providers to define, implement and measure service standards.  4. Serbia committed to continuing its work on aligning provisions of all sectoral laws with the Law on General Administrative Procedure (LGAP), with the overall aim of ensuring legal security and more effective service delivery to citizens and businesses. |