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## ONLINE RECRUITMENT TO THE CIVIL SERVICE IN ALBANIA AS A RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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## 1. Introduction

This note describes the recruitment procedure introduced as a response to the COVID-19 crisis by the civil service of Albania in order for it to be conducted entirely online. It may help other administrations understand what the legal, technical and organisational pre-requisites are if they consider applying a similar procedure.

The emergency resulting from the COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented challenge for recruitment of civil servants and in many countries these procedures have been suspended. With the confinement being extended and rules of physical distancing radically modifying the way public administration works, new arrangements needed to be introduced to protect public employees and candidates and eliminate health risks, but also deliver results – new civil servants selected using merit-based, competitive recruitment processes.

In this context, the Government of Albania examined ways of organising effective recruitment procedures and, in particular, how to replace in-person job interviews with virtual interactions to make the process entirely online. Vacancies related to the EU integration process were of primary importance and needed to be filled immediately. In recent years, digital technology has been one of the priorities of the Department of Public Administration (DoPA). Various online platforms have been introduced in Albania, including online application for vacant positions that has been in use for around five years now.

Following the recent changes, the recruitment process is now fully digital at all stages, from applications, evaluation of applicants' files, automatic generation of written tests, electronic correction of written tests, and finally e-testing and online interviews. These changes have not only allowed effective recruitment in the current conditions, but have also made the process more efficient, transparent and professional.

## 2. Legal basis of (online) recruitment to the civil service in Albania

### 2.1. Current Legal Framework

The legal framework in force ensures a professional recruitment process in the civil service, based on merit. The civil service is well regulated by the Law on Civil Service (CSL) No. 152/2013. The Articles 20 to 26 of the CSL lay down the principles for the recruitment procedures and provisions regarding the selection procedures (See Annex 1). The CSL is supported by the secondary legislation<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Decrees of the Council of Ministers no. 242, dated 18/03/2015, "On the filling of vacancies in the lower and middle management category" and no. 243, dated 18/03/2015, "On admission, lateral transfer, probation period and appointment in the executive category", as well as instruction no. 2, dated 27.03.2015, of the Department of Public Administration, "On the process of filling vacancies in the civil service, through the procedure of lateral transfer, promotion to the lower and middle management category and admission to the civil service in the executive category, through open competition "(the last one being mandatory to be implemented for state administration institutions, for which recruitment procedures are managed by the Department of Public Administration (DoPA).

The existing legal framework defines the principles and the steps for each procedure, as well as the timelines. It also defines the competencies of the DoPA, in its capacity as the responsible unit, and the competencies of human resource management units in each institution that falls under the scope of the CSL legislation. The types of testing to be used for each procedure are established (written test, evaluation of the CV and interview in cases of recruitment from outside the civil service in the executive category, promotion, and evaluation of the CV and interview in cases of lateral transfer), as well as the rights and obligations of the candidates.

It is important to emphasise that the current legal framework does not apply any restrictions in terms of the means or the facilities to be used to accomplish each step of each procedure (except for the definition of the obligations for the means by which the publication of vacancies will have to be done).

## **2.2. Legal framework in the pandemic emergency**

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency, the Government of Albania approved, among others, an Order "On taking special measures to prevent the spread of infection caused by COVID-19"<sup>2</sup>, through which the competition procedures for staff recruitment were suspended until 3 April 2020. Later<sup>3</sup>, the deadline for suspending the recruitment procedures was postponed until the end of the state of the emergency<sup>4</sup>. This led the Director of the DoPA to approve two Orders, "On the approval of the plan of organisational and administrative measures by DoPA, in the framework of the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus"<sup>5</sup>. These included provisions related to the suspension of the recruitment procedures, such as the provision of detailed categories of civil service affected by the Order.

However, since the state of the emergency was postponed without a time limit and due to the urgency in some key institutions to recruit personnel, the staff of the DoPA used this period to brainstorm, examine experiences from other countries, analyse the existing possibilities and propose innovative ways of using the physical or electronic means available. As the DoPA staff had moved to teleworking, they realised that the recruitment procedures in the civil service could also be adapted to the situation by being carried out

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<sup>2</sup> Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection no. 156, dated 10.03.2020

<sup>3</sup> Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection no. 223, dated 01.04/2020

<sup>4</sup> In the framework of measures taken by the Albanian Government, the Minister of Health and Social Protection, on the proposal of the Committee of Experts of the Institute of Public Health and implementing Law 15/2016, "On the prevention and control of infections and infectious diseases", approved Orders no. 132, dated 08.03.2020, "On the closure of public and non-public activities and the cancellation of mass gatherings in closed or open places" and Order no. 156, dated 10.03.2020, "On taking special measures to prevent the spread of infection caused by COVID-19", where in the latter one of the provisions was specifically to stop the competition procedures for staff recruitment until 03.04.2020. Later, with the Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection, no. 223, dated 01.04.2020, the deadline for stopping the procedures of the competition for staff employment was postponed until the end of the state emergency situation caused by COVID-19.

<sup>5</sup> Orders approved by the DoPA Director: Order no. 31, dated 11.03.2020, "On the approval of the plan of organizational and administrative measures by DoPA, in the framework of the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus" and Order no. 31/1, dated 12.03.2020, "On some additions and changes to the Order no. 31, dated 11/03/2020, of the Director of the DoPA and the abrogation of Order no. 32, dated 11.03.2020, of the director of the Department of Public Administration"

entirely online, at least for those institutions of the state administration that are managed centrally by the DoPA (*as further explained in Section 2*).

The DoPA discussed the proposed approach with the Council of Ministers, and the Minister of Health and Social Protection issued a new Order,<sup>6</sup> according to which the recruitment procedures for civil servants could continue if they could be conducted entirely online, through the means of information technology. The DoPA subsequently made the necessary changes and approved the Order no. 31/2, dated 17.04.2020, according to which: *“Recruitment procedures in the civil service for state administration institutions managed by the DoPA, are suspended until the end of the epidemic situation caused by COVID infection - 2019, with the exception of procedures which can be conducted completely online through the use of information technology tools.”*

The Directorate of Public Administration Reform Programmes, within DoPA, was tasked with ensuring the necessary technical infrastructure for the conduction of online recruitment procedures as well as ensuring the advance of this process. It evaluated the platforms and other tools that the DoPA already had and explored possibilities for adapting them to entirely online procedures. In addition, it explored the possibilities of conducting online interviews using free web applications. The same Directorate was tasked with preparation of explanatory materials regarding how to conduct the process, access the information technology tools dedicated to the completion of all recruitment phases and procedures during each phase. The Directorate of Recruitment Procedures in the Civil Service within the DoPA was tasked with informing, through electronic communication, all candidates and members of the admission committees about the phases and methodology of their development.

The DoPA used methodology they had used before for other online platforms or stages in the recruitment process. All tasks, tools and solutions were discussed, consulted and developed in-house.

The following rules were set for the development of online recruitment procedures:

- (i) The Directorate of Recruitment Procedures in the DoPA determines the recruitment procedures that can be conducted online and prepares the respective work plan for their development;
- (ii) The date and time of the written test is announced to the candidates by e-mail and is published in each of the recruitment procedures posted on the official website of the DoPA;
- (iii) Written testing takes place online. Electronic written testing takes place through a special page dedicated to this testing (web page) through the use of the portal [administrata.al](http://administrata.al), with credentials generated for the candidates during the creation of their electronic file and the application procedure for each position announcement;
- (iv) The structured oral interview takes place online using IT tools. For technical reasons and in order to ensure quality, the entire procedure of the structured oral interview, including the interviews of all candidates, is recorded;
- (v) All other stages of the recruitment procedure, until the issuance of the appointment act by the DoPA, are to be conducted online through the means of information technology.

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<sup>6</sup> Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection no. 262, dated 16.04.2020.

In light of the above Orders and the changes to recruitment procedures, the DoPA drafted two guidelines for candidates, providing details about the procedures for the online written test and for the online interviews (Annexes 2 and 3). The intention was not just to carry out the procedures, but above all to ensure their quality.

It is important to emphasise that the principles, procedures and deadlines for employment in the civil service, even for online procedures, remain the same as those defined in the legislation on civil servants (CSL No. 152/2013 and bylaws already in force, as mentioned above). The only new legal basis that had to be approved was related to the Orders of the Director of the DoPA, which would ensure that the whole process would take place entirely online, in accordance with the necessary measures taken by the Government of Albania to prevent the spread of infection caused by COVID-19.

Now that the DoPA has started implementation of the procedures for full online recruitment, DoPA staff are convinced that these online procedures can continue and be developed even further. They could be used as an alternative way of conducting recruitment procedures, especially for lateral transfers and promotions. In this regard, in terms of the legal framework, it would only be necessary to make amendments to the Instruction no. 2 of the DoPA Director, dated 27.03.2015, to define that the recruitment procedures can take place either in physical locations or online. No other changes/amendments would be necessary, as both the CSL law 152/2013 and the decrees of the Council of Ministers (CoM) are applicable in both cases (traditional recruitment with physical presence and online procedures). The law and the CoM decrees do not stipulate whether a recruitment procedure should take place in premises or online.

### **3. Specificity of centralised recruitment in Albania**

Recruitment of civil servants in Albania is a centralised process for state administration institutions and is decentralised for local government units and independent institutions. Specifically, the DoPA is the responsible unit that manages the civil service recruitment in the state administration institutions (Council of Ministers apparatus, ministries, central institutions under the Prime Minister or ministers, including their territorial branches, as well as the prefect's administration). In the independent institutions and local government units, the administration of the civil service is carried out by the human resource units in these institutions. Thus, the new online recruitment procedures, which are administered by the DoPA, are implemented to carry out recruitment procedures in the civil service for state administration institutions.

Unlike most countries, the primary and secondary legislation foresee pool recruitment processes, at the entry level (in Albania "executive level") of the civil service. Based on the Articles 19 and 22 of the CSL 152/2013, the recruitment in the civil service is done at the executive level through an open procedure, which is organised periodically for each of the following groups:

- a) general administrative positions, including positions that relate to administrative responsibility in all institutions of the civil service and the exercise of such responsibilities requires knowledge of general administration;

b) special administrative positions, including positions that deal with specific responsibilities in one or more institutions of the civil service and the exercise of such responsibilities requires special knowledge of a particular profession or similar position.

In compliance with the above legal provisions, "group recruitment" is provided for "entry level" positions in the civil service (specialist and equivalent positions). Candidates apply for positions announced by group and are subsequently selected through periodic national competitions aiming to create one or more groups of candidates who meet the general and special conditions, to be appointed to positions with similar requirements and responsibilities or comparable positions in ministries or other institutions. The successful candidates, who receive over 70% of the total evaluation points, are ranked by the permanent admission committee, according to the points obtained in the list of successful candidates. According to this pool recruitment system, the top-ranked candidate selects first, then the second ranked candidate, until all vacant positions are filled with candidates who have passed the threshold. The remaining candidates stay on a waiting list for future job openings. The candidates, who do not choose a position from the group of those published, remain on the list of admitted candidates for a period of two years.

At the end of this period, the right to be appointed to a civil service position expires. This procedure delegates the power of selection to the candidates, as the right of successful candidates to choose a vacant position eliminates the opportunities for potential collusion between selection commissions and applicants, thus enhancing the fairness of the recruitment process. Furthermore, grouping the vacant positions increases the efficiency of the whole recruitment process and the meritocracy due to the higher number of candidates.

#### **4. Online stages of the recruitment procedure, prior to COVID-19**

The DoPA has been putting emphasis on the development of technology and its use for the management of human resources. The DoPA has introduced online platforms and an online application system for vacant positions (<http://dap.gov.al/vende-vakante/shpallje>). The online application and the electronic submission of documents required by candidates in recruitment procedures have been improved over the years by the DoPA for both candidates outside the civil service as well as for civil servants within the system. The online application allowed the candidates to create a personal electronic account for each candidate in which, in addition to uploading the documentation necessary for recruitment, candidates receive the necessary information about the procedures and the results of these applications.

In recent years, due to an increased number of applicants and high number of recruitment procedures in the civil service, the DoPA has successfully used electronic assessment by means of optical reader technology to correct multiple-choice questions (MCQ) tests, considered as a preliminary stage in the comprehensive computerisation of written testing. This has increased the quality and transparency of the process of evaluating candidates.

In addition, in 2019 the DoPA completed the development of a fully electronic testing platform, (e-testing) aimed at providing communication of real-time written test results for candidates, thus aiming to further increase the transparency and quality of the recruitment process of the civil service and increase the integrity of the process. Electronic testing was only piloted for some of the management level procedures.

The development brought about by COVID-19 is that, in addition to the existing online application for recruitment, the process now also includes full application of the online testing and virtual job interviews of the candidates.

## 5. Stages of the online recruitment process

The steps that the online recruitment procedure follows are listed below:

- ✓ Any interested candidate can create their personal online account in the online recruitment system administered by the DoPA (<http://dap.gov.al/>). They can access/edit their profile at any time by uploading all the necessary documentation to apply for a job vacancy. The applicant is notified by e-mail of the successful completion of this phase.
- ✓ Upon creating a personal account, each candidate can apply online for the vacant position/group of positions for which they are interested, and the successful completion of the application is notified again by e-mail.
- ✓ Upon completion of the application process, the pre-selection process begins. During this process, the responsible unit verifies the uploaded documentation and determines whether the candidate meets the general and special criteria required for the job opening for which they applied. If the applicant meets the required criteria, they are notified by e-mail of their qualification. When the applicant does not meet the criteria provided or if required documentation is missing, they are notified electronically of the disqualification and the reasons are provided. In this case, this electronic notification also provides the applicant with a link which gives them the opportunity to file an online complaint regarding the disqualification. In the meantime, during this phase, the DoPA publishes online, on the official website of the DoPA, the list of qualified candidates, announcing the date and time of the written and oral test development.
- ✓ The qualified candidates required to participate in the written test are notified by e-mail of the date and time of the written test to be conducted online. In the same e-mail, candidates are provided with a link to access the online written test.
- ✓ Upon completion of the online written test, candidates are automatically notified as to whether they have qualified for the next stage or not (CV evaluation in the case of the recruitment procedure for the executive category<sup>7</sup>, or the interview in cases of promotion)<sup>8</sup>. During the recruitment procedure for the executive category, the candidates are notified via e-mail about the next part of the procedure, i.e. passing or not to the interview phase.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the CSL no 152/2013, Article 19 on Classification of civil service positions divides the civil service positions on the following categories: a) top-level management; b) middle-level management; c) low-level management, and ç) executive (or expert level), which is the entry level (see Annex 1)

<sup>8</sup> When the candidate ends the test the program automatically generates a notification if the candidate will further continue the procedure or not, specifically: 1- in the case of the executive category (specialists), depending on the result, two messages are generated: (a) "you are qualified to continue the procedure" generated when the candidate has received over 30 points, which means that the candidate qualifies for the next phase, the evaluation of the CV, or (b) "you are not qualified for the next stages" in case the candidate has received 30 points or less. This is because for the executive category, it is not enough to have taken over 30 points to pass the interview, but you must take over 45 points from the written test and CV assessment to pass the interview. 2- In the case of promotion, regardless of the points a candidate gets, the message that the candidate is qualified for the next phase (i.e. interviews) will be generated, because there is no minimum of points in this procedure.



- ✓ A DoPA representative in the relevant commission for admissions, promotion or lateral transfer, prepares the invitations for the interview, which now takes place in the form of a videoconference, and sends them to each qualified candidate by e-mail. Candidates are thus notified of the date and time of the interview.
- ✓ On the scheduled day and time of the interview, the DoPA representative first verifies the participation of the members of the Evaluation Commission and then initiates the interview by inviting the first candidate to conduct the interview. After the interview, the candidate leaves the videoconference either by "leaving the meeting" or is taken out by the DoPA representative. Then the DoPA representative sends an invitation by e-mail to the next candidate to enter the "interview meeting".
- ✓ Upon completion of all phases of the respective competition procedure, the candidates are notified by e-mail of their results.
- ✓ The successful candidates in the procedure for the admission in the executive category are sent an e-mail notification about when they will have to make their choice about the position they would like to occupy, based on the ranking of the points they have accumulated through all the stages of the recruitment procedure. This step in the procedure was previously organised with physical participation of the candidates and now it will also take place online.
- ✓ All the necessary documentation in a competition procedure is also generated automatically using existing templates and integration with information from the DoPA recruitment database about the competition, the process and participants.

## 6. Instructions for administrations and candidates

Following the decision to conduct online recruitment procedures in the civil service using information technology, the DoPA has drafted and published two guidelines, one for written testing and the other for interviews, providing details about the procedures for all candidates:

- (i) the way of conducting **the online written test**, how the candidates would be notified, access to the program through which the testing takes place;<sup>9</sup> and
- (ii) the way of conducting **the online interview**, the development of the video link interview, notification and access by candidates.<sup>10</sup>

Through these two guidelines, the DoPA aims to increase the level of understanding of the candidates regarding the development of these two stages of testing. (*Annex 2 and 3 to this paper*)

The guidelines contain detailed information, illustrated with images, regarding the access of candidates in the written test or in the online platform where the oral interview will take place. Access to the "online platform" for the test is through credentials that each applicant is provided with upon the creation of the personal electronic account in the online recruitment system, while access to the "DoPA Video Room"

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<sup>9</sup> The full set of guidelines on written tests can be found online at DoPA website: <http://dap.gov.al/legislacioni/udhezime-manuale/312-udhezime-per-testimin-online>

<sup>10</sup> The full set of guidelines on written interviews can be found online at DoPA website: <http://dap.gov.al/legislacioni/udhezime-manuale/313-udhezime-per-intervisten-online>

where the interview takes place is made possible through a link and details that are sent to qualified candidates by DoPA representative. In addition, the guidelines contain tips on successfully developing and completing both testing phases.

In addition, in the framework of the preparations for the fully online recruitment procedures in the civil service, DoPA drafted special guidelines for civil servants and experts, participants in evaluation committees. These guidelines include instructions about the connection of the evaluation committee in advance of the online interviews; provide steps on how to connect to the “meeting room” and how to organise the interview(s) technically. (*Annex 4 to this paper*).

Apart from the above-detailed guidelines, the e-testing platform itself provides a preliminary test simulation for applicants, while they wait online for their scheduled e-testing, thus enabling candidates to familiarize themselves with the online test platform and ensure that technically everything functions very well.

## **7. Technical requirements for the procedures**

The online recruitment procedures implemented by the Government of Albania do not require specific or special technological arrangements, or create any restrictions for the applicants from a technological point of view.

The only requirement for the candidates is for them to have a 'browser' and internet access. All recruitment processes that include uploading documentation, online application, online testing and online interview are designed to be used as "web based" and can be accessed and used by very general and standard technology. Having a computer /a laptop / or a smartphone and a regular 'browser' are enough for online application and online testing. For the online interview, it is necessary to have a camera, a microphone and headphones.

For the process, the DoPA uses the information technology tools already in use by DoPA staff (such as Google drive), or other tools such as Microsoft Teams and WebEx. The online recruitment platform is specifically built (with Microsoft ".net" and MSSQL technology) to meet the requirements of the Albanian civil service law. The e-testing (based on Joomla) is one module of this platform, while the online interviewing platform uses one of the free video communication platforms (Cisco WebEx).

## **8. Provision of documents by candidates**

Candidates who apply for positions in the civil service must submit several documents, such as:

- a) Curriculum vitae (according to the format published by the DoPA);
- b) Photocopy of diploma(s);
- c) Photocopy of the “work book” or any other documents that proves work experience;
- d) Photocopy of identification document;
- e) Certificate of health status;

- f) Self-declaration of judicial status (according to a standard format approved by decision of the Council of Ministers);
- g) Latest performance appraisal by direct superior;
- h) Certificate from their institution that there is no disciplinary measure in force.

All of the above documentation can be uploaded online by the applicant on their electronic profile, through a step-by-step procedure that is explained on the platform. The applicant is not allowed to continue their application for the position of interest if they do not upload all the required documentation.

Due to the nature of the documents required, they are simple for applicants to provide. Most of them are found in the files of the respective institutions in which the candidates are employed (performance appraisal and verification of the interdisciplinary measures), or are owned by the applicants who can access them online by completing the online template provided by the DoPA (in the case of the CV and self-declaration of judicial status). Regarding the certificate of health, currently this document is issued by the family doctor at medical centres, which function regularly even during the situation created by COVID-19. In case of lack of an identification document (ID), candidates can upload a certificate of their civil status, easily generated through the state online platform "e-Albania".

It should be noted that all candidates can easily provide the documentation required for the recruitment procedures of the civil service, thus guaranteeing the right of all interested individuals to participate in the online recruitment procedures.

## **9. On-line panel interviews**

The interview and the evaluation of the candidates is performed based on the requirements of CSL no. 152/2013 "On the civil servant" and its bylaws. Regardless of the way the interview is carried out, in person or online, the evaluation commission/panel is composed of three or five individuals depending on the type of recruitment procedure, as required by the CSL.

Before conducting the online interview, the members of the Evaluation Commission are instructed by the representatives of the DoPA on how to conduct this online interview. At least 24 hours before the online interview, a preliminary test is conducted to make sure that the members of the evaluation commission are familiar with the online platform to be used for the interview.

Interviewing online follows the same principles as interviews conducted on work premises. The members of the evaluation commission usually connect through the audio-visual platform 20-30 minutes before the scheduled time of the interview and draft a series of questions which are the same for all candidates, and also determine the scoring value that each of these questions will have.

The candidates are then called by the representative of the DoPA through the "meeting invitation" sent to their e-mail address. After joining the meeting, the candidate makes a preliminary presentation, and then continues to give answers to questions prepared by the commission. This procedure is repeated for all qualified candidates. So far, the DoPA has managed four recruitment procedures implementing the entirely online recruitment procedures and each procedure had between one and four candidates.

All online interviews conducted for recruitment are recorded to give the members of the evaluation commission the opportunity to listen to them again if needed. Each member of the commission evaluates the candidate for each given answer, calculating at the end the final scoring for the interview.

## **10. Implementation of the new procedure in practice**

From the moment when the Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection was approved, allowing for the development of recruitment procedures entirely online, a total of four recruitment procedures have been carried out, using online IT tools. These have been procedures for lateral transfers or promotions. One of these procedures has been finalised with the appointment of a successful candidate, in a position of middle management category (director of directorate). The DoPA has received positive feedback for all four procedures they have conducted so far.

Currently, 17 other recruitment procedures are underway. The DoPA will announce new vacancies and will follow the methodology designed for online recruitment procedures. Priority is given to fill those vacancies that have been identified as important for the implementation of the reforms undertaken by the Government of Albania on the path of integration into the European Union.

## **11. Advantages of online recruitment**

Overall, the online application part of the process already existed and had been functioning for several years. It should also be underlined that even the "back office" is functional, which allows the recruitment staff to work from home. E-testing is working and for interviews, the DoPA has used one of the many videoconferencing platforms, as long as they meet minimum conditions offering easy access and a certain level of security, such as WebEx or Zoom.

The DoPA has identified several advantages of online testing and recruitment:

- It offers increased transparency: fully electronic testing provides real-time written test results for candidates, thus further increasing the transparency and quality of the recruitment process of the civil service and increasing the integrity of this process.
- It is cost-effective, reducing the costs needed for printouts of testing materials, and decreases the costs such as those paid previously by candidates coming from remote areas.
- It is time-efficient: it reduces the time a candidate needs to receive the results of tests – the results can be provided immediately after the e-testing. It is also time-efficient for the recruitment of staff where a shorter evaluation period is required. The development of more and more procedures using this system reduces the time dedicated to a recruitment procedure, thus increasing recruitment capacity.
- It increases participation: e-testing enables candidates who have applied for several positions to be able to take part in online testing even if they are scheduled at the same time, as the candidate can access more than one online test, as such increasing participation in testing.
- It offers easier accommodation – there are no issues with finding an available physical room for the testing and interviews, as in the traditional way a physical room has to be booked well in advance and it might not always be available at the requested date and time; the use of virtual

rooms can be done at any time, as such increasing the timeframe when testing and the interviews can be handled.

- The human connection is not lost – facial expressions and level of engagement can still be assessed when speaking virtually to candidates.

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1. Legal Framework – Law No. 152/2013 on Civil Service

(Specific articles of the Law No. 152/2013 on Civil Service dedicated to classification and recruitment of the Civil Servants).

#### CHAPTER III CLASSIFICATION OF CIVIL SERVICE POSITIONS

##### Article 19 Classification

1. Civil service positions are divided based on the category, class and the nature of the position. The division is made based in the job description for each position.
2. Civil service positions as per the categories are divided in following categories:
  - a) top-level management;
  - b) middle-level management;
  - c) low-level management, and
  - ç) expert/executive (entry level)
3. Each category provided for by paragraph 2 of this article is subdivided in classes.
4. The following are considered civil servants of top-level management category:
  - a) secretaries general;
  - b) directors of departments;
  - c) directors of general directorates; and
  - ç) equivalent positions of the first three types.
5. The following are considered civil servants of medium-level management category:
  - a) directors of directorates; and
  - b) equivalent positions.
6. The following are considered civil servants of low-level management category:
  - a) head of sectors;
  - b) equivalent positions.
7. Specialists are considered civil servants of the expert level.
8. The Expert/Executive positions in the civil service are classified according to the type of position:
  - a) the group of general management positions, including positions that relate to administrative responsibility in all institutions of the civil service and whose exercise requires knowledge of general administration;
  - b) the groups of special management positions, including positions that deal with specific responsibilities in one or more institutions of the civil service and the exercise of which requires special knowledge of a particular profession or similar to.
9. The Council of Ministers approves as follows:
  - a) the classes applicable for each of the categories;
  - b) general job description for each of the categories, classes or groups provided for by this article and the groups of specialized administration;

- c) general job requirements for each of the categories, classes and groups provided for by this article;
- ç) the positions titles part of each category, class and group;
- d) the methodology for the classification of a position to a given category, class or a certain group.

## **CHAPTER IV RECRUITMENT TO THE CIVIL SERVICE**

### **Section 1**

#### **General provisions on the recruitment to the civil service**

#### **Article 20**

1. Recruitment to the civil service is based on the principles of equal opportunities, merit, professional capacity, non-discrimination and is performed through a transparent and fair selection procedure.
2. The selection procedure is based on the assessment of the professional skills of the candidates, through a national concourse, including a written test, an oral test and other appropriate form of verification of skills as well as the assessment of the professional background of the candidates.

#### **Article 21**

##### **General requirements to enter the civil service**

1. The general requirements to enter the civil service are the following:
  - a) Albanian citizenship
  - b) full legal capacity to act,
  - c) proficiency in the Albanian language, written and speaking;
  - ç) appropriate health condition to carry out the respective duties;
  - d) a clean criminal record whereby the aspirant has not been sentenced by a final court decision for a crime or for a criminal contravention committed by intention;
  - dh) not having been dismissed from the civil service as a disciplinary sanction which has not been deleted in accordance with this law;
  - e) fulfilment of the specific criteria related to education, experience and others for the respective category, class, group and position.

#### **Article 22**

##### **Recruitment to the civil service**

1. The recruitment in the civil service is done at the expert-level positions, through an open concur.

2. The concur is organized periodically by the respective responsible unit, for each of the groups provided for by article 19 paragraph 8 of this law.
3. The competition consists in two phases, as follows:
  - a) screening of the fulfilment of the general and special requirements, as published in the announcement;
  - b) evaluation of the candidates.
4. The screening of the interested candidates is made by the responsible unit whilst the evaluation is done by a Permanent Selection Committee constituted for each of the groups provided in paragraph 8 article 19 of this law.
5. The successful candidates, assessed over the minimum threshold of 70% out of the total assessment points, are ranked by the Permanent Selection Committee, in the list of successful candidate (hereinafter referred to as the 'list').
6. The Council of Ministers approves the detailed rules on the establishment, composition and the activity of the permanent selection committees as well as the detailed competition and assessment procedure.

## Article 23

### Appointment in the Civil Service

1. The successful candidates, in accordance with article 21/5 of this law, starting from the best ranked has the right to choose to be appointed in any existent vacant position of the group for which the competition was organized and to any other vacant position of the same group made vacant within the period of the validity of the list, in accordance with the paragraph 3 of this article.
2. The responsible unit appoints the candidates to the position selected in accordance with paragraph 1 of this article.
3. The list of successful candidates, not yet appointed to a position in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article, is valid for a two-year period. If another recruitment procedure is organized in the meantime for the same group all the successful candidates, who are not appointed yet, are re-ranked accordingly.
4. Any appointment to an expert position, contrary to this article, is absolutely invalid.
5. The Council of Ministers approves the detail procedure in accordance with this article.

## Article 24

### Probation period

1. Any person appointed for the first time to civil service shall be subject to a one-year probation period, from the date of the act of appointment.
2. During the probation period, the civil servant is subject to mandatory training programs at ASPA and performs its duties under the coaching by senior civil servants of the same or upper category.
3. At the end of the probation period, the institution where the civil servant is employed shall take one of the following decisions:
  - a) confirm the appointment of the civil servant
  - b) extend the probationary period for once for a period of up to six additional months in case that for justified reason a full appraisal was not possible or
  - c) no confirmation of the civil servant
4. The decision, in accordance with paragraph 3 of this article is based on the results of the individual appraisal and on the results of the exam at the end of the mandatory training program at ASPA.



5. The Council of Ministers determines the obligations of the civil servants during the probation period, as well as the criteria and procedure for the decisions provided for by paragraph 3 of this article.

## Article 25

### Lateral transfer

1. The vacant positions of expert level category, low and mid-level management category are first opened to the existing civil servant of the same category through a lateral transfer procedure.
2. Civil Servants fulfilling the conditions for lateral transfer and the specific criteria required by the vacant position are entitled to apply in accordance with paragraph 1 of this article, if they belong to the same category from the same or another institution.
3. The assessment of the eligible candidates is made by a permanent internal institutional committee through a procedure organized following the principles provided for by art 20/1 of this law  
The representative of the responsible unit is part of the internal committee.
4. At the end of the evaluation the committee may decide to:
  - a) select the best suitable candidates to be appointed in the vacant position;
  - b) conclude the procedure without a selectee in case none of the candidates does not fulfil the specific requirements for the vacant position.
5. The Council of Ministers approves:
  - a) the conditions and the detailed procedure of lateral transfer;
  - b) the rules on the establishment and composition of the internal committee provided for by paragraph 3 of this article.

## Article 26

### Promotion

1. Promotion consists in a competition procedure organized by the responsible unit, for one or several vacant positions, based on the principles provided for by article 20 of this law. If a vacant position of middle or low level management category is not completed in accordance with article 25 of this law, it is filled through the promotion.
2. Civil servants in any institution belonging to a one-level lower category are entitled to apply for promotion in accordance with paragraph 1 of this article, if they fulfil the conditions for promotion and the specific criteria required by the vacant position.
3. If the vacant position is not filled through promotion, a new procedure of lateral transfer or promotion could be organized within three months. In the meantime, the vacant position, if necessary, could be filled through a temporary transfer in the interest of the institution, as provided for by article 48/1, letter "a" of this law.
4. The Council of Ministers approves the conditions and procedural details for the promotion.

**ANNEX 2. Technical guidelines on conducting the online written - test**

**ANNEX 3. Technical guidelines on conducting the online interview**

**ANNEX 4. Instructions for the recruitment committee**