

## **Capacity building of local and regional government in Eastern Partnership countries**

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*The topicality* of building the capacity of local and regional authorities<sup>1</sup> in the Eastern Partnership is primarily determined by the need to ensure sustainable development of its countries and their neighbours, since currently the condition of any area is considerably dependent not only on the domestic environment but also on the international landscape. Furthermore, ongoing social and economic changes along with political and other changes in the Eastern Partnership countries and beyond require continuous strengthening of the role of the local and regional administration, which would meet upcoming challenges. Accordingly, new governmental and joint policies of the countries are to be ensured in this respect. It is not by accident that one of the main CORLEAP objectives and priorities in 2018-2019 is the support for building the administrative potential at the local and regional levels.

### ***The analysis of the current situation regarding programmes for building the capacity of local and regional authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries***

First of all, it should be noted that the growth of this potential can be ensured through:

- training and further professional development programmes for public and municipal civil servants at public administration academies in these countries, national and regional centres/schools training public and other categories of servants;
- programmes and training courses on public administration at the EU level, including:
  - at the Eastern Partnership Academy of Public Administration (EPAPA);
  - training activities carried out by EU partner countries and their respective structures for administrative education and capacity building, notably in the context of twinnings and direct exchanges at local, regional or national level.
  - programmes and training courses run by political foundations from the EU Member States;
- programmes and training courses supported by international donors;
- programmes and training courses supported by civil society organisations of the countries and their territories.
- training courses and university programmes in public administration run by international educational structures in countries outside the region, where civil servants from Eastern Partnership countries can

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<sup>1</sup> *The capacity of local and regional authorities* is the total of the interrelated variety of legal, information, economic, intellectual-creative and other resources, tools and opportunities that may be used to achieve the goals of countries and their territories' development.

participate at preferential rates or under full scholarships, may also make an important contribution to building capacity for the region.

Based on the data of the study commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions<sup>2</sup>, it is possible to summarise Eastern Partnership organisations and the programmes for training public servants of local and regional levels (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Organisations and programmes for training public servants of local and regional authorities**

<b>Country</b>	<b>National specialised higher educational institutions</b>	<b>National organisations/programmes – for short-term programmes, including training courses</b>	<b>International organisations, programmes and projects</b> (*summarised from open source data)
Armenia	Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia	Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF) (finances training programmes only)	Erasmus +, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), US Agency for International Development (USAID), Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Development Programme (UNDP), The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), The Council of Europe
Azerbaijan	The academy of public administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Governmental programmes (for regional and local development)	US Agency for International Development (USAID), Twinning (EU)
Belarus	The Academy of Public Administration under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus	Management and Public Administration School – for young people who may become civil servants (funded by SIDA)	VNG International programme (Netherlands), SIDA
Georgia	Georgian Institute of Public Affairs	Civil Service Bureau, foundations and non-governmental organisations (mainly training new civil servants)	ERASMUS +, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UNDP, UK Department for International Development (DFID)

<sup>2</sup> "Capacity building of local and regional public administration in Eastern Partnership countries", 2019, p. 77 [Electronic resource] – Retrieved from <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Capacity%20building%20of%20LRA%20in%20EaP.pdf>

Moldova	Public Administration Academy	Governmental programmes for capacity building of the authorities under decentralisation	Most programmes are supported by the European Union
Ukraine	National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine	Ukrainian Administration School of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service (founded in 2019)	European Union (4 programmes, including U-LEAD), US Agency for International Development (USAID), UNDP, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada, Swiss-Ukrainian project "Support for Decentralisation in Ukraine", European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Overall, in 2019 there are 16 large-scale ongoing programmes and projects in capacity building of local and regional authorities.

As Table 1 shows, in all the analysed countries there are specialised governmental higher educational institutions that provide staff training for governmental and municipal service, issue diplomas of higher education, and ensure further professional development, including issuing certificates.

In Belarus and Ukraine national level organisations have been established to hold training courses and short-term educational programmes. In Belarus the School of Young Managers in Public Administration (SYMPA) is focused on young people (aged 25-40) engaged in different areas: business, public organisations and political life<sup>3</sup>. In turn, the Ukrainian Administration School<sup>4</sup> was established at the central governmental agency, which ensures building and implementation of state civil service policy.

It should also be stated that in Ukraine, over 100 universities currently have a licence to issue master's degrees in public administration. This proves that public administration qualifications are in demand from public servants and society as a whole.

Regarding the international support of the countries, in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine there are more educational programmes and projects than in other Eastern Partnership countries. They are often implemented with the involvement of local non-governmental organisations that have proven their organisational capacity.

Therefore, the situation for the capacity building of local and regional authorities differs depending on the country.

<sup>3</sup> School of Young Managers in Public Administration (SYMPA) – Retrieved from <http://sympa-by.eu/ru/school/about.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian administration school – Retrieved from: <http://www.centre-kiiev.kiev.ua/info/about.shtml>

To make decisions at the supranational level, as well as at the national level, on the provision of support to a country, it is important to take into account the strategic focus of its development, level of decentralisation, and governmental powers, the need to build specific competencies for the local and regional civil servants, as well as the country's socio-economic, political and institutional situation.

Looking at the general performance of the countries and their institutions (Table 2), for example, according to the global competitiveness index, Georgia enjoys the best institutional situation, while the worst is in Ukraine which shows a need for consistent international support.

**Table 2**  
**Positions of Eastern Partnership countries in the Global Competitiveness Index 2018<sup>5</sup>**

Country	Position in the rating of 140 countries		
	Total index	Institutional efficiency	Corruption level
Azerbaijan	69	58	102
Armenia	79	67	91
Belarus	was not studied		
Georgia	66	40	41
Moldova	88	84	102
Ukraine	83	110	109

Using the data of Table 2, it is also possible to assert that the corruption level significantly inhibits the development of governmental authorities as a whole. Thus, educational anti-corruption programmes must be a priority and it is vital to develop a new methodology of communication with people to change their behaviour.

According to the above-mentioned study commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions<sup>6</sup>, it is possible to single out a number of *existing obstacles to building the capacity of local and regional authorities in Eastern Partnership countries* that should be considered when developing the respective programmes:

#### Armenia

- a high number of small communities;
- low level of local authorities' autonomy;
- low representation of women in local authorities;
- low salary of civil servants at the local and regional levels;
- the decision of Armenia to quit the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU, which has narrowed the opportunities to attract EU funds.

<sup>5</sup> The Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 2018 Rankings – Retrieved from <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2018.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Capacity building of local and regional public administration in Eastern Partnership countries" 2019, p. 77 [Electronic resource] – Retrieved from <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Capacity%20building%20of%20LRA%20in%20EaP.pdf>

### **Azerbaijan**

- no distinction between the powers of central and local governmental authorities;
- low level of trust in local authorities;
- lack of well-established cooperation with international organisations, which is determined by the authorities' lack of trust in them.

### **Belarus**

- low level of communication of local authorities with citizens;
- strong hierarchy of power and insufficient autonomy of local government.

### **Georgia**

- lack of consistent training system for public servants at the local level;
- most programmes are implemented in the capital, there are not enough of them to meet the needs of the public servants of the local authorities.

### **Moldova**

- lack of basic competencies among public servants for their core activities in the context of decentralisation;
- insufficient completion of training programmes specified by the legislation in force.

### **Ukraine**

- training programmes of state-funded educational institutions have not been harmonised with the new powers of the local and regional authorities granted under the decentralisation reform;
- lack of a system to determine the needs of public servants at the local and regional levels.

The above-mentioned obstacles do not fully show the pre-conditions for capacity building of local and regional authorities in the countries under consideration. For this purpose, deeper research is needed, but the above mentioned most topical problems highlight the challenges faced when developing policies in the field of public administration and public service.

The analysis also enabled us to discover **some issues which are common to all the Eastern Partnership countries**, including:

- high level of corruption (in Georgia this index is significantly lower);
- inefficient staff recruitment systems, appointments that do not take into account the level of qualifications (except Ukraine and Georgia, where after the reforms the appointments are open to the public);
- insufficient use of digital technologies for education and in offering public services;
- insufficient knowledge of English or other languages by public servants, which would ensure access to international support and cooperation programmes;
- insufficient participation of civil society in public affairs management and government control.

When developing programmes related to the capacity building of local and regional authorities **it is very important to analyse and consider the needs of their staff and of the authorities and to forecast which skills will be in demand in the future.**

According to the survey conducted in Ukraine on the competency needs of public servants of local authorities<sup>7</sup>, the main point was the development of "hard" skills, without which the local authorities cannot exercise their powers: strategic planning, project management (project approach to all management processes), tools for interaction with various stakeholders, legal literacy, financial management of administrative services, communal property management, energy efficiency and energy management, utilities provision, investment and other fund raising for local development, application of electronic governance and e-democracy in administration, human resources management, healthcare management, educational management and cultural management. There has also been a significant rise in the needs of local authorities' staff for the development of "soft" skills, which are not directly related to a specific profession but are of crucial importance to ensure a motivated work force and thus good public administration: leadership, change management, teamwork, communication skills, ethics, self-development, and resilience.

Regarding the competencies needed for public servants in the near future, in line with global trends, we suggest that these will be related to the use of digital technologies, transparency and oriented towards service provision to citizens, introduction of innovative management, critical thinking and creativity and efficient behaviour (empathy as a competence and the ability to settle conflicts, having a healthy lifestyle and continuous education, interacting in hierarchical systems, etc.).

## Conclusions

1. The above-mentioned obstacles and issues of capacity building for local and regional authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries should be considered when developing relevant programmes. At the same time, common problems of the Partnership countries testify to their global nature and the need for a multilevel solution – from the supranational to the local levels. In this context, it is important to forecast competency needs for local and regional authorities. For this purpose, it is necessary to conduct in depth research involving leading experts in the field.
2. The introduction of new programmes for capacity building of local and regional authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries will allow not only to solve specific problems, but is also a pre-condition for sustainable cooperation among regions and countries of the Eastern Partnership and the EU. It will also help to reduce discrepancies in social and economic development and promote significant general principles and methods of sound public administration.
3. The need to involve representatives of civil society in the processes of public administration entails the need to train also this category of stakeholders, in addition to governmental and municipal public servants. However, currently their training is mainly funded at their own expense, by public organisations or international donors. This issue could be addressed for instance by using distance learning technology. Online courses with subtitles for those who do not speak English would make it possible to train representatives of all Eastern Partnership countries and representatives of all local and regional development entities – authorities, educational and research institutions, public organisations, etc.
4. Capacity building for local and regional authorities depends on the provision of the proper conditions in terms of the legal, information, economic and intellectual-creative environment. Therefore, this issue needs to be addressed holistically: it is necessary to adopt respective strategies, programmes and other

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<sup>7</sup> The survey of educational needs of the representatives of local authorities in Ukraine: analytical expert's report on the Programme of the Council of Europe "Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine", April 2019 [Electronic resource] – Retrieved from [https://nads.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/tna\\_ukraine-2018-2019-final-report\\_ukr.pdf](https://nads.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/tna_ukraine-2018-2019-final-report_ukr.pdf). p.7.

documents, identify the institutional basis for implementing them, build information and other required infrastructure and identify stimuli for teachers and students in achieving results in education, etc.

## **Recommendations**

### ***To the European Committee of the Regions:***

- Develop in cooperation with the European Commission the Capacity Building Programme for local and regional governance in the Eastern Partnership countries, which would offer systematic steps to be taken in this respect.
- Request the European Commission to create an electronic educational platform under the Eastern Partnership for online trainings to ensure access to new knowledge related to local and regional governance and good public administration for a wider audience from different areas.
- Further advocate for the establishment of an EaP Academy for Public Administration with permanent headquarters to be located in one of the EaP countries.
- Develop and introduce innovative ideas of informing Eastern Partnership citizens of the importance of their participation in the management of public affairs, government control, as well as ethical and diligent behaviour and preventing corruption.
- Develop a list of competencies public servants will be required to have in the future, and build long-term policies on training public servants accordingly.

### ***To Governments of Eastern Partnership member states:***

- Identify the activities for eliminating barriers, indicated in the documents in this report, that so far impede the proper implementation of existing strategies for public administration and public service development in these countries through targeted research at national level.
- Develop a competency framework for public servants of local and regional development authorities, as well as suggestions for building these competencies.
- Ensure the ability of higher education institutions specialised in training governmental and municipal public servants to build the required capacities; initiate and encourage the update of educational public service programmes according to the needs of public administration and the country's development strategy.
- Initiate the use of digital technologies for training and provision of public services.
- Provide conditions for learning English for public servants who are involved in policy development and establishing international cooperation, as well as for the top administrative staff of the local and regional authorities.

### ***To local authorities:***

- Organise the development, local budget financing and implementation of the programmes for training not only public servants but also members of local and regional councils, since training this category of persons is not covered by state budget resources. Raise external funds for this purpose, notably in partnership with local authorities from other EaP/EU countries.
- Organise study visits for public servants and members of local councils to other municipalities, regions and countries.
- Consider the competencies of municipal servants when building the strategies of local and regional development, ensure their improvement according to the strategic objectives.
- Publish all official decisions taken by local authorities in a manner which is easily accessible for citizens.

- Introduce digital technologies to improve working conditions in local governmental bodies, establish efficient relations with the public and provide them with higher quality municipal services.

***General recommendations:***

- Develop the system of sharing knowledge and practices to build capacity at all levels,.
  - Engage research, educational and other organisations, establish multilevel interaction to build institutional capacity.
  - Launch clear and transparent procedures of enrolling participants for study visits and exchange programmes.
  - Build cooperation networks with civil society organisations at local and regional level to increase overall citizens' engagement and to promote good governance.
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