

6 Attracting and Developing Skills in the Public Service in the Czech Republic

This chapter discusses the framework for public employment and management in the Czech Republic. It focuses principally on the Czech civil service (the central level), with a brief overview of employment issues at the subnational level. The chapter addresses two main areas where the Czech administration may wish to focus its efforts in building workforce capability: aligning branding, career outreach and recruitment efforts; and ensuring effective career development opportunities, especially for senior leaders. Building the evidence base through more use of data can help develop better policies in both areas.

Introduction

The Czech public administration's priorities are framed by the public administration reform programme, the Client-Oriented Public Administration 2030 (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2020^[1]). The 2022 Policy Statement of the Government also sets a high level of ambition for public sector reform, including greater pay flexibility for in-demand skills, more openness to external recruitment for senior-level positions and a reduction in the number of civil servants (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022^[2]).

Civil servants at the central level and employees of territorial self-governing units (municipalities and regions) at the subnational level are key to implementing the provisions of this programme. The spirit of this programme reflects a broad trend across the OECD to improve service design and delivery to meet evolving citizen expectations. The Czech administration must also anticipate and respond to broader challenges that affect many other public administrations across the OECD, like managing the transition to a digital government. In the context of the Czech reform agenda, a particularly relevant example for the Czech Republic is the difficulty attracting and retaining in-demand skills in the context of tightening labour markets and increased competition for talent, both locally and internationally.

This chapter analyses the ability of the Czech administration to attract and recruit the skills it needs to deliver on its ambitious reform agenda. For example, the 2022 European Semester country report for the Czech Republic notes that the administration faces particular challenges attracting young civil servants: it ranks in the bottom half of European Union (EU) administrations for the share of public servants under 39 years old (European Commission, 2022^[3]). But improving attraction and recruitment is only one side of the coin. Once hired, the administration must ensure that staff have access to effective career development opportunities. In this regard, it is encouraging that the public administration reform agenda places emphasis on enhancing the quality of learning and development in the state administration.

One of the central challenges involved in these two areas – attraction/recruitment and career development – is drawing on workforce data to design and adapt human resources (HR) strategies accordingly. However, the Czech administration is at a relatively early stage of maturity in terms of being able to draw on sophisticated data sets to produce evidence-informed workforce insights, as underlined in Chapter 3. Building capability both in terms of IT tools and the ability of HR officers to work with data will be a core part of future strategies to target key skills and ensure the effective career development of high-performing public servants.

One of the specificities of the Czech Republic is that it was the last EU member state to introduce separate legislation governing the management and functioning of the civil service, which it did in 2015. The Civil Service Act thus established the principles and basic values of the civil service relatively recently. The purpose of this chapter is to relate the provisions of the Civil Service Act and recent amendments focusing on attracting senior civil servants to human resource management practices in the areas of attraction/recruitment and career development. The goal is to draw on international examples of good practice to assist the Ministry of the Interior in developing a more strategic approach to filling skills gaps and building a public workforce capable of meeting the public reform agenda's objectives.

Preparing the Czech administration to meet future challenges

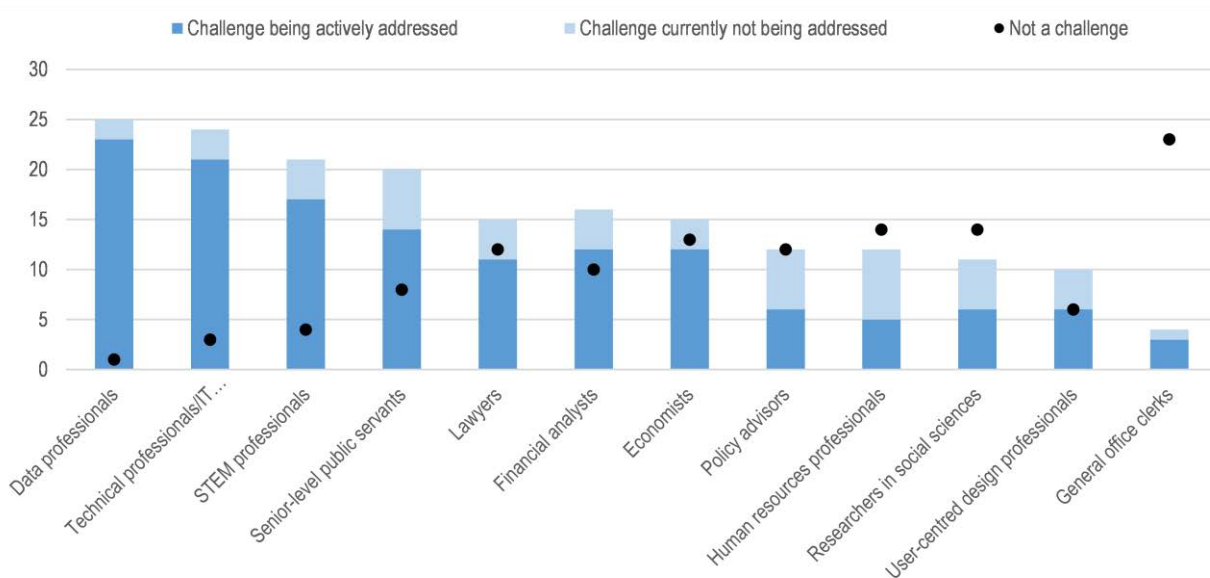
Across the OECD, a number of broad trends are affecting how the public service builds its capability to meet future challenges. Complex policy challenges, like improving green infrastructure investment, for example, call for a whole-of-government approach marshalling a variety of skill sets, stakeholders and competing priorities. This is a challenge that goes far beyond the remit of a single ministry. Dealing with this challenge calls for a public workforce with a mix of technical and specialist knowledge across a variety of climate and environmental domains, as well as public servants with a broad range of professional competences. Population ageing, too, has important implications for the Czech public sector workforce. A study carried out by the Ministry of the Interior in 2020 found that up to one in three current public

administration employees are expected to retire in the next ten years (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2020^[4]).

This example illustrates the dual challenge for public administrations: first, attracting candidates with an increasingly specialised skill set to government. As shown in Figure 6.1, across the OECD, most public administrations report difficulties in hiring data professionals; ICT specialists; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) professionals; and senior-level public servants. These are all areas where there is increasing competition from other employers. In the ICT sector, for example, governments may find it difficult to compete on salary to hire skilled digital workers. In others, such as the data sector, the speed of technical evolution is rapid, with new possibilities for applying machine learning, artificial intelligence and big data in government. This places a premium on recruitment processes to attract candidates with these types of skills and on effective career development pathways to be able to retain and apply these types of skills.

Figure 6.1. Attraction challenges in the public sector, 2020

Number of OECD countries, n=33



Notes: STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. N varies depending on the option, as some options were unknown by some OECD countries. Original survey question: "Does the central/federal administration experience particular challenges in attracting any of the following groups of applicants/skills?"

Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 2.

Against this background, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transformation of public services. The widespread use of new digital tools, greater flexibility in using remote and hybrid working, and increased staff mobility were features of many administrations. Public sector recruitment also got shaken up: often criticised for long and overly bureaucratic processes, many administrations turned to online and digital recruitment to hire new staff during the pandemic. For example, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade used Skype to recruit new staff to set up a call centre to manage an emergency loan programme for small and medium-sized enterprises.

As the Czech Republic and most OECD administrations emerge cautiously from the most acute stage of the pandemic, now is a good time to reflect on how recruitment and career development can be further strengthened in the Czech Republic. In this regard, the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public

Service Leadership and Capability is a normative framework designed to guide public administrations in building high-performing public services. It sets out 14 principles across 3 pillars seen as the building blocks of a high-performing public service.

Figure 6.2. OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability

I. Values-Driven Culture and Leadership	II. Skilled and Effective Public Servants	III. Responsive and adaptive employment systems
1. Defined values 2. Capable leadership 3. Inclusive and safe 4. Proactive and innovative	5. Right skilled and competencies 6. Attractive employer 7. Merit-based 8. Learning culture 9. Performance-oriented	10. System stewardship 11. Strategic approach 12. Mobile & adaptive 13. Appropriate terms and conditions 14. Employee voice

Source: OECD (2019^[6]).

Building on this Recommendation, the OECD Working Party on Public Employment and Management has examined the changes underway across the civil service in OECD countries to operationalise the principles of the Recommendation. Through mapping emerging practices, OECD research suggests that public services should consider three inter-related aspects:

1. **Forward-looking:** Public service employers need to be better at planning for the future to ensure that recruitment systems can adapt to change and can attract and select new and emerging skill sets. This requires ensuring that public employment systems' job classifications can adequately incorporate emerging jobs and respond with appropriate remuneration packages and a compelling employer value proposition.
2. **Flexible:** Public services need to be flexible and able to adapt to respond to unforeseen change. This implies readiness to reallocate skills to emerging challenges and pull together multidisciplinary teams across ministries and agencies. Pay systems, therefore, need to strike a careful balance between specificity for skills and talent and harmony across organisations to enable mobility and agility.
3. **Fulfilling:** The diversity of the public service workforce will continue to grow to incorporate more skills and backgrounds than it has traditionally done so in the past. With a diversity of people comes the need for a diversity of employment models and individualisation of people management. This suggests the need to think about pay systems that recognise and reward motivation and achievements without crowding out the intrinsic motivation of public employees.

These three aspects are well reflected in the Czech public administration's reform agenda. The agenda sets an ambitious medium- to long-term vision for the future (e.g. the greater use of big data for improving service delivery) and positions varied learning and development opportunities as a key part of building skills, particularly relating to analytical capability. Finally, the agenda emphasises increased engagement

with citizens to improve perceptions of the public service and include diverse opinions in policy design and service delivery.

In this context, the central challenge for the Czech administration will be identifying the margin for manoeuvre within the framework of the Civil Service Act to adjust policies and procedures for attracting/recruiting talent and ensuring effective career development. Although the Ministry of the Interior has formal responsibility for managing the civil service, this challenge goes beyond the remit of one single department or even ministry: success will depend on engaging senior leaders across the civil service as part of the process of change and providing evidence-informed advice to build on anecdotal diagnoses of talent and capability gaps.

Size and shape of public employment in the Czech Republic

Central level

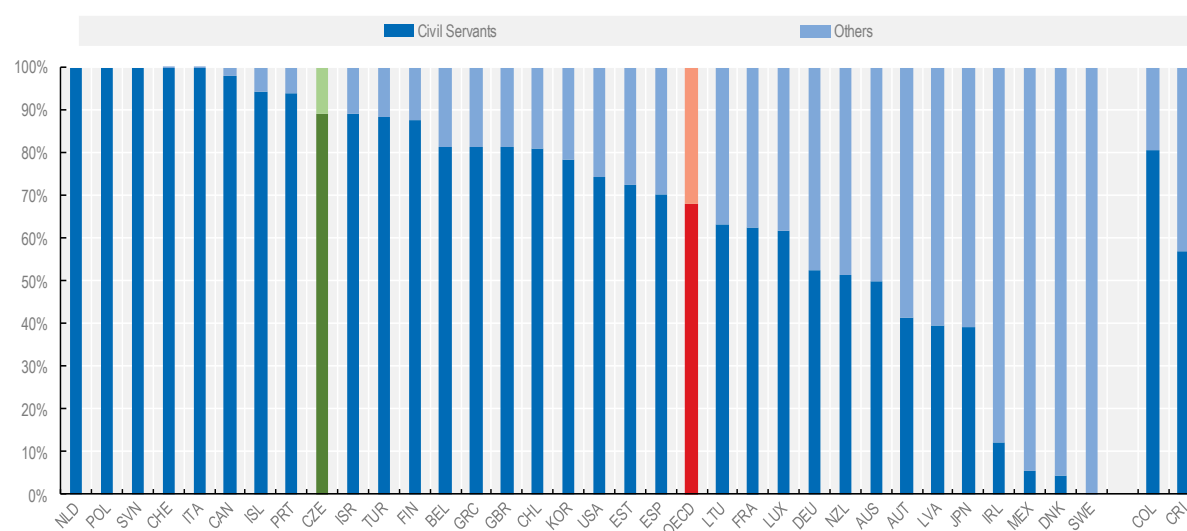
The Czech civil service (central level) has a workforce of nearly 62 000 staff (OECD, 2020^[7]). Around 14% of these are classified as senior civil servants. Women account for about one in three senior civil servants.¹

Public servants in the Czech Republic are broadly divided into two categories. At the central level, the vast majority are governed by Act No. 234/2014 Coll., which entered fully into force on 1 January 2015. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for its implementation. The Civil Service Act applies to the centre of government, i.e. the body or group of bodies that provide direct support and advice to heads of government and the Council of Ministers, or Cabinet (OECD, 2018^[8]). This includes the Government Office, 14 line ministries, 204 service offices (agencies subordinated to line ministries) and 16 central administrative offices (like the Czech Statistical Office, the State Administration of Land Surveying and Cadastre, etc.). The act has been amended several times, most recently in November 2022. The focus of the amendments, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, are to:

- simplify and speed up recruitment, mainly by opening it up to external candidates from the beginning of the recruitment process rather than only if no suitable internal candidates are found
- improve access to and mobility within the senior leadership cadre by introducing term limits for some senior-level positions.

In terms of contractual modalities, most contracts are classified as “service contracts”, i.e. open-ended civil service contracts. Figure 6.3 shows that most employees in the Czech administration at the central level are civil servants. A minority of positions are classified as “work positions”, such as clerical or administrative positions. This balance of positions is reviewed on a yearly basis. A consolidated proposal for the “systemisation” of posts (i.e. the balance of civil servants governed by the act and contractual staff governed by the Labour Code) is prepared each year by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance based on individual proposals by line ministries and service offices.

Figure 6.3. Civil servants and other employees in central administrations, 2018



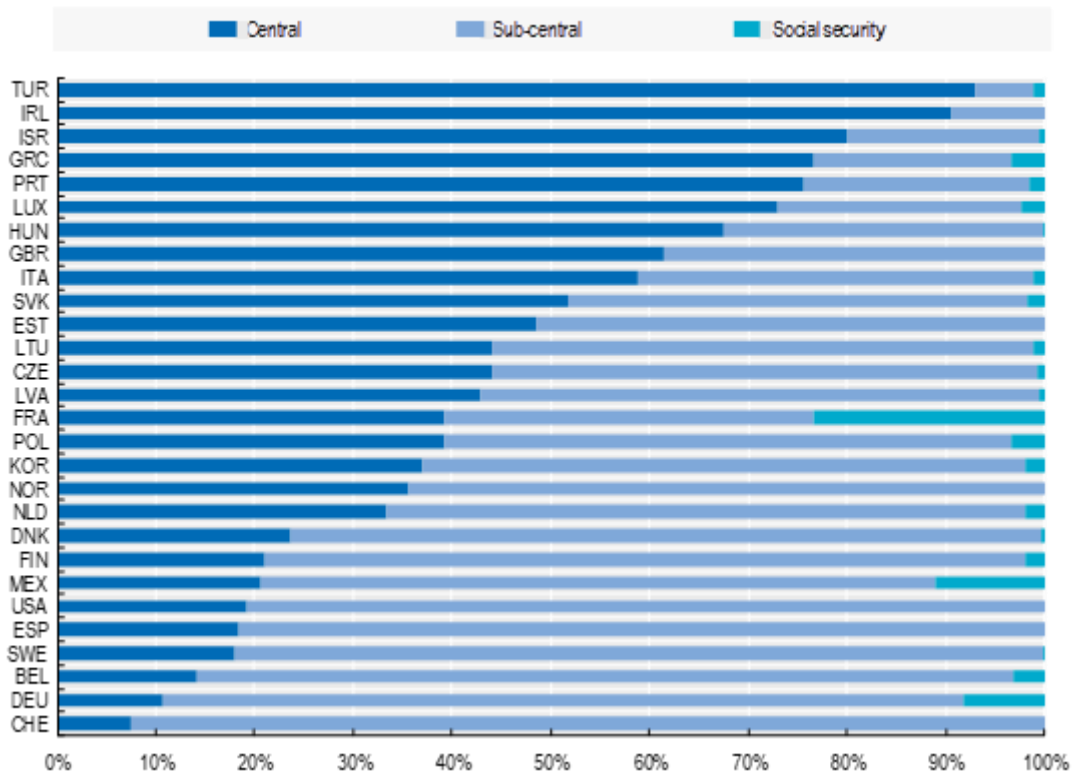
Notes: Data for Denmark, Israel, Japan, Mexico and New Zealand refer to 2019. Data for France, Germany, Korea and Poland refer to 2017. Data for Italy, Latvia and the United States refer to 2016. Data for Colombia, Iceland and Turkey refer to 2016. Data for Slovenia refer to 2015. Data on other public employees were not available for Hungary, Norway or the Slovak Republic. For Korea, data for civil servants were compiled by the Ministry of Personnel Management and data for “other public employees” by the Ministry of Employment and Labour. For Portugal, “other public employees” includes executive limited-term managers. Civil servants defined as civil public employees covered under a specific public legal framework or other specific provisions refer to “*tjenstemænd*” in Denmark.

Source: OECD (2019), OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Subnational level

Regarding public employment at the subnational level (i.e. territorial self-governing units), Figure 6.4 shows that just over half (55%) of general government employment is at the subnational level. Employees designated as “officials” are managed under the Act on Officials of Territorial Self-governing Units. Other employees at the subnational level are managed under the Labour Code (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2018^[9]).

Figure 6.4. Distribution of general government employment across levels of government, 2019



Note: Data for Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand and Slovenia are not available.

Source: OECD (2021^[10]).

Although the balance of the Czech administration at the subnational level roughly corresponds to the OECD average, a defining characteristic is the fragmentation of subnational governance compared to other administrations. Specifically, the Czech Republic has over 6 000 municipalities. One in two municipalities has fewer than 500 inhabitants and 90% have less than 2 000. An indication of the scale of the challenges is shown by the findings of an OECD/European Committee of the Regions Survey, which finds that, across Europe, smaller municipalities are hampered by having an inadequate pool of managerial and technical talent and service providers; smaller municipalities face complex transport, planning and infrastructure tasks and do not have the workforce skills to address these tasks effectively (European Committee of the Regions, 2020^[11]). The same survey also indicates that subnational government capacities vary enormously within countries in all countries surveyed and are not consistent with their responsibilities.

Two focus areas to build capability in the Czech civil service

With a tight labour market, as highlighted by the 2023 OECD Economic Survey of the Czech Republic, the Czech administration faces specific challenges due to local labour market dynamics as well as institutional/legislative history and practices. These principally relate to developing effective people management practices in light of the provisions of the Czech Civil Service Act, and the supply and demand of skills in the labour market.

However, building public workforce capability means going beyond a sole focus on ensuring compatibility with legislation: it also requires efforts to implement the Civil Service Act through experimenting with new

work practices and procedures, and consulting with managers and staff on their emerging needs. It also means engaging with public servants and citizens to reinforce civil servants' values and attitudes to the spirit of the act and the Client-oriented Public Administration 2030. Drawing on data collected through the OECD Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, background research, and a fact-finding mission to Prague in April 2022, the following themes emerge as key focus areas for the Czech administration:

- aligning employer branding, recruitment strategies and career outreach
- ensuring effective career development through training and talent management.

Aligning employer branding, recruitment and career outreach

Governments across the OECD need to attract and recruit staff with an increasingly diverse range of skills to keep pace with policy and service delivery challenges. Some of these skill sets are in traditional fields like law or accounting. While the public sector may not be able to match private sector salaries, money is not the only reason administrations struggle to attract talent. In some cases, lawyers or accountants may not be aware of government career opportunities or may not perceive the public sector as an employer of choice. Other challenges are in fast-changing fields, such as STEM or legal services. Finding these candidates is difficult. For example, the European Commission (2021^[12]) has highlighted an insufficient supply of digital experts in the Czech labour market, and unemployment rates in the Czech Republic are the lowest in the EU (European Commission, 2022^[3]). The second challenge is convincing potential candidates to join the public service: in most OECD countries, only a minority of employees would work for the government or the civil service if they had the choice between sectors (Van de Walle, Steijn and Jilke, 2015^[13]).

These considerations are why the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability calls on adherents to attract and retain employees with the skills and competencies required from the labour market, in particular through:

- positioning the public service as an employer of choice by promoting an employer brand which appeals to candidates' values, motivation and pride to contribute to the public good
- determining what attracts and retains skilled employees and using this to inform employment policies, including compensation and non-financial incentives
- providing adequate remuneration and equitable pay, taking into account the level of economic development
- proactively seeking to attract under-represented groups and skill sets (OECD, 2019^[6]).

The Czech Civil Service Act contains provisions for structuring the recruitment process for civil service positions. Article 24 details the process for announcing a vacancy; Article 27 describes the process for selecting candidates for interview; Article 29 stipulates that successful candidates be hired on a one-year contract until they pass the civil service examination. Relatively few candidates fail the exam: 98.8% passed the general part of the exam and 95% passed the second stage, usually an interview. Success means that candidates' civil service employment is changed from a one-year contract to an indefinite term.

The provisions of these and other related articles set the framework for how the administration goes about attracting and recruiting talent. The provisions relating to recruitment leave scope for the administration to adjust the content and format of testing and interviews to emerging needs. This is encouraging because regular review and updating of entry criteria is important for positioning the public service as an employer of choice for relevant skill sets (OECD, 2021^[14]). For example, countries like France, Italy and Spain have recently begun reflections on adapting the content of their own entry-level exams for the public sector. In the Czech administration, guidelines on how to update and adapt selection criteria could help make the most of this wide scope. The common thread across the OECD is a recalibration of assessment procedures

to focus not only on knowledge of legislation or policy, but on the ability to reason critically, learn and problem-solve as well. Regarding the civil service examination in the Czech administration, for example, the scope of the questions (set by the hiring authority) seems to prioritise rote learning of technical material. This approach to examination is time- and resource-intensive, with little discernible impact on improving the capability of public servants.

The point is that while managers in the Czech administration must comply with the provisions of the act to recruit, many areas are *not* included in the act that nevertheless have a considerable impact on recruitment success. So while HR strategy needs to take compliance into account, getting the structural and operational details right matters too. These include the development of an attractive employer brand or value proposition, proactive outreach to engage with candidates rather than just waiting for them to apply, and developing strategies to retain and develop talent.

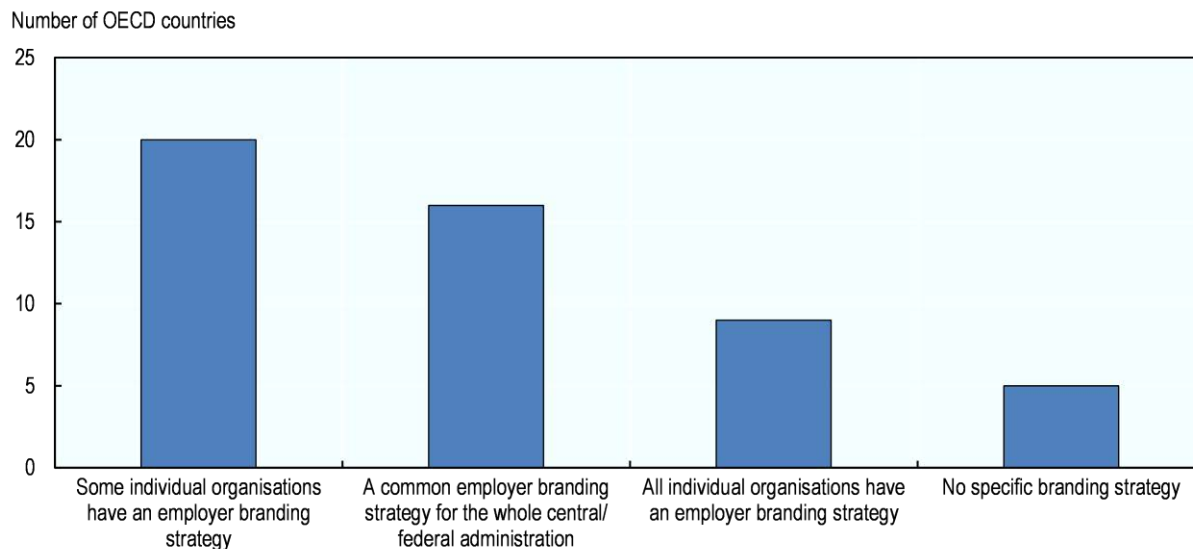
The Czech administration has ad hoc employer branding initiatives

An employer brand is a variety of communication mechanisms used to convey a set of messages to prospective candidates. It is the package of psychological, economical and functional benefits that potential employees (should) associate with employment with a particular company designed to improve the development of a positive image of the potential employer among likely candidates (Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010^[15]). Employer brands are important because they help identify organisations as potential employers, and help differentiate the organisation from other organisations looking to hire the same talent. For the public sector, a long-standing assumption has been that these types of communication strategies should be targeted at candidates with high degrees of public service motivation (PSM) because those candidates are more likely to apply for public sector jobs (Ritz and Waldner, 2011^[16]). PSM theory holds that unique motives are found among public servants that are different from those of their private sector counterparts – particularly altruistic and pro-social motives – and that public sector organisations should target candidates likely to display high degrees of PSM in order to improve recruitment and organisational fit (Perry, Hondeghem and Wise, 2010^[17]). Recent studies have nuanced this claim somewhat, pointing, for example, to the fact that not every public sector job needs a candidate brimming with PSM. Moreover, the public sector is not the only employer that offers candidates a chance to contribute to society – the “tech4good” sector, social impact start-ups, not-for-profit organisations, international organisations and even parts of the private sector (e.g. environment, social and corporate governance divisions) emphasise their pro-social attributes when targeting prospective recruits. This means that in a crowded marketplace, an employer brand is a vital part of the recruiting toolkit in order to attract candidates.

Building on these aspects of attractiveness, there has been a growing recognition of employer branding strategies in the public services of OECD countries. In 2016, 14 member countries had no employer branding strategies or action plans in place, whereas just 5 countries in 2020 – including the Czech Republic – indicated that this was still the case (Figure 6.5). For the others, employer branding is mostly left to individual organisations or is part of an administration-wide strategy.

Figure 6.5. Employer branding strategies, 2020

Number of OECD countries, n=34



Note: Original survey question: “Which of the following employer branding strategies exist in the central/federal administration?”.
Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 2.

Recent academic research points to a variety of gaps in how the public sector positions itself as an employer of choice. For the Czech administration – and employers across the EU and the OECD – improving employer branding strategies should be a core part of recruiting more and better talent.

A strong employer brand is an important part of convincing prospective candidates to apply. This may be particularly true when recruiting young candidates, who usually apply to many places at the same time. Coherent and well-used employer brands that promote public service values may also contribute to a better fit between a person and an organisation by clearly signalling the values the job and organisation espouse and improving candidate self-selection (Kim, 2012^[18]).

Effective employer branding builds on insights into what attracts skilled candidates. Public sector recruiters can survey existing staff as well as prospective candidates (e.g. groups of university students who will soon be entering the job market) to identify aspects of work in the public sector that matter to them – in particular, highlighting a “culture of excellence” where success is celebrated and used to inform the employer brand. Systematically identifying these aspects and integrating them into advertising and recruitment campaigns can help increase employer-candidate fit and improve an employer brand (OECD, 2021^[14]).

Some non-government platforms or organisations in OECD countries work on providing an external viewpoint for government ministries or agencies to improve their employer brand and the diversity of the candidate pool. Profil Public, a French organisation focused on employer branding for the public sector, publicises a series of videos with public servants to better explain the realities of public jobs; *Welcometothejungle*, a French recruitment platform originally focused on the start-up sector, now advertises vacancies for the French Ministry of the Interior and France’s external intelligence service through a slick user interface; and the Volcker Alliance in the United States helps link government organisations with universities to improve their image and likelihood of prospective applications.

A good employer branding strategy for an organisation seeking to attract young graduates should ideally have a social media component to maximise reach. Moreover, with many prospective candidates browsing

job offers via apps (e.g. Indeed, LinkedIn), a good employer branding strategy should be smartphone and tablet-compatible. France, for example, recently launched a comprehensive public sector branding strategy to broaden the appeal of the public sector among new and more diverse candidates, and its centralised recruitment portal is available as an app. Ireland’s current employer branding strategy (Box 6.1) is the result of years of consultation, development, evaluation and iteration.

Box 6.1. Selected employer branding strategies in OECD public administrations

France: Since 2020, a cross-departmental project was launched with human resources experts and two dedicated surveys to define the attractiveness arguments to be used by the branding strategy. The branding project has three target audiences listed in order of priority: 1) future candidates for civil service positions; 2) the general public (i.e. information and awareness-raising campaigns not focused solely on recruitment); and 3) current public servants (i.e. to promote opportunities for mobility).

Ireland: Publicjobs.ie is the centralised provider of recruitment, assessment and selection services across the Irish civil and public service. Finding, attracting and engaging proactively with the most suitable candidates to generate quality pipelines of diverse candidates for opportunities across the Irish civil and public service has become essential to fulfilling the current and future hiring needs of its diverse range of client organisations. Publicjobs.ie focuses on identifying the appropriate strategies, techniques and processes to attract and engage candidates and convert them into applicants for various career opportunities across the Irish public service. This includes everything from employer branding models and strategies to planning and executing campaigns, or measuring their return on investment and impact on hiring objectives.

Switzerland: The Swiss federal administration has developed an employer branding strategy focused on identifying the administration as a prospective employer and, moreover, sets it apart from other competitors for talent. The strategy explicitly recognises that fact-based communication is not enough, and treats branding the public sector as if it were a consumer brand. The strategy centres on an “umbrella” brand outlining the brand benefit, attributes, tonalities and iconography. The administration is developing guidelines to operationalise the strategy, including on corporate language and phrasing for job advertisements.

Source: Based on information provided to the OECD by national civil servants.

There is scope to streamline and modernise recruitment processes

Better employer branding is designed to attract more candidates, more relevant candidates and more diverse candidates. Convincing the right candidates to apply for jobs through employer branding is just the first step. Research suggests that even good recruitment processes alone are not enough to persuade candidates to accept job offers (Feldman, Bearden and Hardesty, 2006^[19]). This raises the risk of good candidates dropping out of the recruitment process if they perceive it as too long or burdensome. And if the recruitment process does not enable managers to assess relevant skills and competences, there is a risk of a poor match between the organisation’s needs and the candidate’s abilities and motivation. As such, the ability of public administrations to fill skills gaps is partially related to how proactively they recruit, as well as to the variety of tools they have at their disposal to do that.

The structure of the Czech civil service recruitment process is well established in the Civil Service Act. Job vacancies are posted on line on the Czech government recruitment portal (“Civil Service Information

System”) as well as on the website of the ministry or agency hiring (Art. 24). Commercial recruitment portals, such as jobs.cz, can also be used, though sometimes only after two unsuccessful recruitment procedures.

Recruitment is decentralised and position-based: each ministry or agency recruits its own staff for specific roles (Art. 24). However, in case of more suitable candidates, the organisation cannot place them on a reserve list for future vacant posts, as is done for example in some national administrations (e.g. panels in Ireland) or the EU institutions, which makes the recruitment administratively complicated. Salary can be adjusted for hard-to-fill posts: 5% of each ministry’s or agency’s wage bill can be used for this, but practice suggests that this rarely happens systematically due to tight budgets: the 5% still has to come from a ministry’s own budget.

Job vacancies contain basic information such as the conditions and requirements of the post (Art. 25). Candidates submit a paper-based application including physical copies of documents to prove their compliance with the minimum requirements, such as a clean criminal record or foreign language skills if required by the post (Art. 26). Online submission of these documents is possible via electronic “data boxes” (*datová schránka*) or by e-mail with a recognised electronic signature. Many candidates do not have these types of data boxes, and many still submit paper applications. From 1 January 2023 onwards, all applicants who meet the minimum requirements are invited for an interview, except when there are more than five qualified candidates. In that case, the hiring authority may carry out a written test (known as the “first round”) and interview at least the top three candidates in the “second round” (Art. 27).

Selection panels are comprised of three members consisting of the hiring manager and two panellists appointed by the top civil servant in a ministry or agency (Art. 27); they are usually employees of the hiring department and from the personnel department. The panel ranks candidates and hiring managers can choose from among the top three (Art. 28). Successful candidates are offered a temporary 12-month contract until they pass the civil service examination (usually for external candidates) or an open-ended contract if they have already passed this examination (most internal candidates). The civil service examination consists of a general written test and an oral interview (Art. 35). The examination is discussed further below. Batch recruitment, i.e. of similar skill sets, is possible but rarely used. HR units in line ministries are involved in preparing the documentation, usually someone from HR is the secretary of the selection panel and helps organise the recruitment (documentation, communication with applicants, etc.).

In this context, better recruitment starts with a few questions. First, administrations need a good idea of what types of skills and skill mixes they are likely to need in their future labour force. The Czech public administration reform strategy identifies a few gaps in this regard, such as improving analytical skills and data-driven decision-making (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2020^[1]). Taking this as an example, the main issue for the Czech administration is whether current recruitment and selection processes are fit-for-purpose to attract and assess these types of skill sets. For example, do candidates with strong quantitative and analytical skills gravitate toward the government as a potential employer? If so, do they know where to look for jobs? And what message does a predominantly paper-based application process send to young digital talents who are used to smooth user interfaces and a minimum of paperwork? The Czech administration is not the only one facing these types of challenges. Box 6.2 outlines the e-recruitment project developed by the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance.

Box 6.2. Moving recruitment on line in the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance

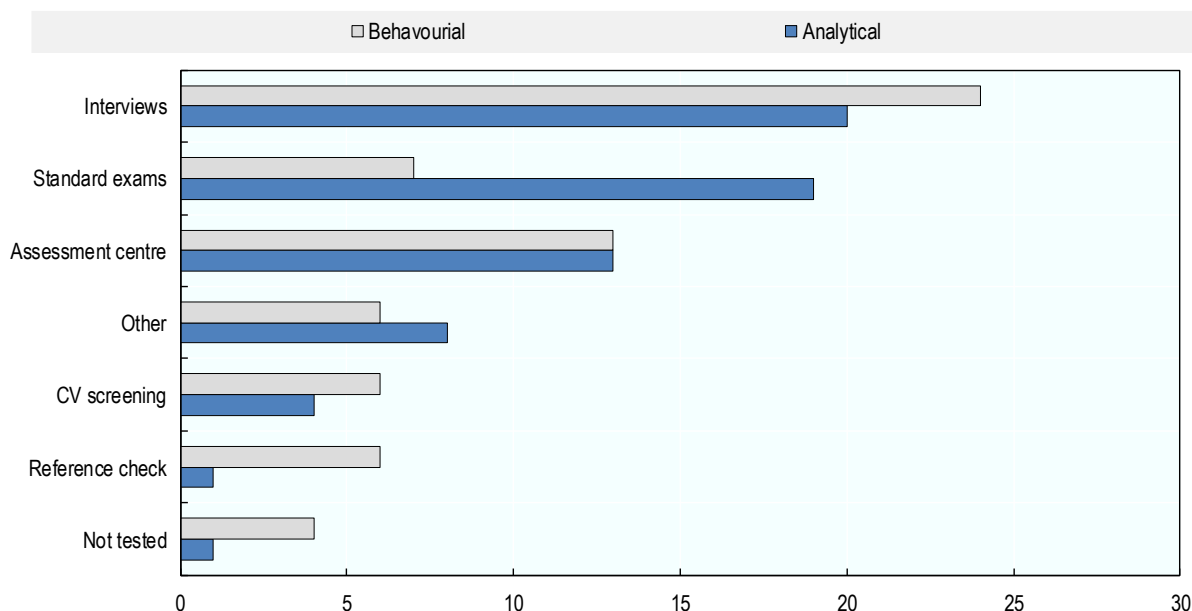
The Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance (FPSF) began a project in 2019 to develop greater online recruitment capability. The project accelerated rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was intended to broaden the reach of the FPSF and make it easier for recruiters to assess different types of hard-to-reach skill sets. In April 2020, the FPSF began a pilot exercise of the e-recruitment tool for internal mobility. As a first step, this included the roll-out of virtual interviews conducted via Skype for Business (later Microsoft Teams). The entire process was rolled out paperless and on line. Similar to face-to-face interviews, the interviews were conducted by recruiters and the hiring manager. To allow the recruiters to assess the candidates in this virtual format, recruiters received training on digital interview techniques and non-verbal communication. During the second phase of the pilot, online interviews were further rolled out and applied to all vacancies/functions where technical skills were to be evaluated. In most cases, technical skills are evaluated during the interviews, although at times the candidate has to complete a technical test sent via encrypted e-mail and within an allotted time. The handbook for candidates was improved to better reflect common issues and a helpline was set up for candidates. To mitigate the risk of discriminating against some candidates, decentralised job partners offer training to help candidates for the online interviews. In the final pilot phase, CV screening to assess candidates' motivation and digital assessments consisting of an exercise for a mock presentation and/or a role-play exercise were introduced.

Going beyond the interview process, the FPSF also launched a digital job fair as part of the e-recruitment pilot. Using social media helped create a high awareness of vacant positions and brand the FPSF as an attractive employer. The FPSF held Facebook live events and webinar teams with over 7 700 views and reached more than 25 000 people. Conscious of the challenge to integrate new recruits into the public service during the COVID-19 pandemic, the FPSF redesigned the on-boarding model. While before the pandemic a physical welcome day would have been organised, the new model foresaw a virtual welcome day and e-training. Furthermore, the importance of the manager for integrating new recruits into the team and public service was highlighted and an on-boarding toolkit developed with managers receiving a checklist prior to any new employee arriving.

Source: Based on material provided by the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance to the OECD. A full case study is available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/public-sector-leadership-implementation/pem-flexible/Flexible-Belgium-case-study-ecruitment.pdf>.

Second, administrations should consider whether they are testing candidates for the right things. Public sector recruitment systems have been around for a long time, and in many administrations they differ notably from the private sector by placing greater weight on equality of treatment and standardisation of process than on job-specific assessment methodologies. As such, many are structured to assess factors such as educational experience and legal knowledge. Figure 6.6 highlights that countries are putting an emphasis on testing analytical and behavioural competences through a variety of means as a way to assess how candidates are likely to perform in real-life situations.

Figure 6.6. Testing for analytical and behavioural competences, 2020

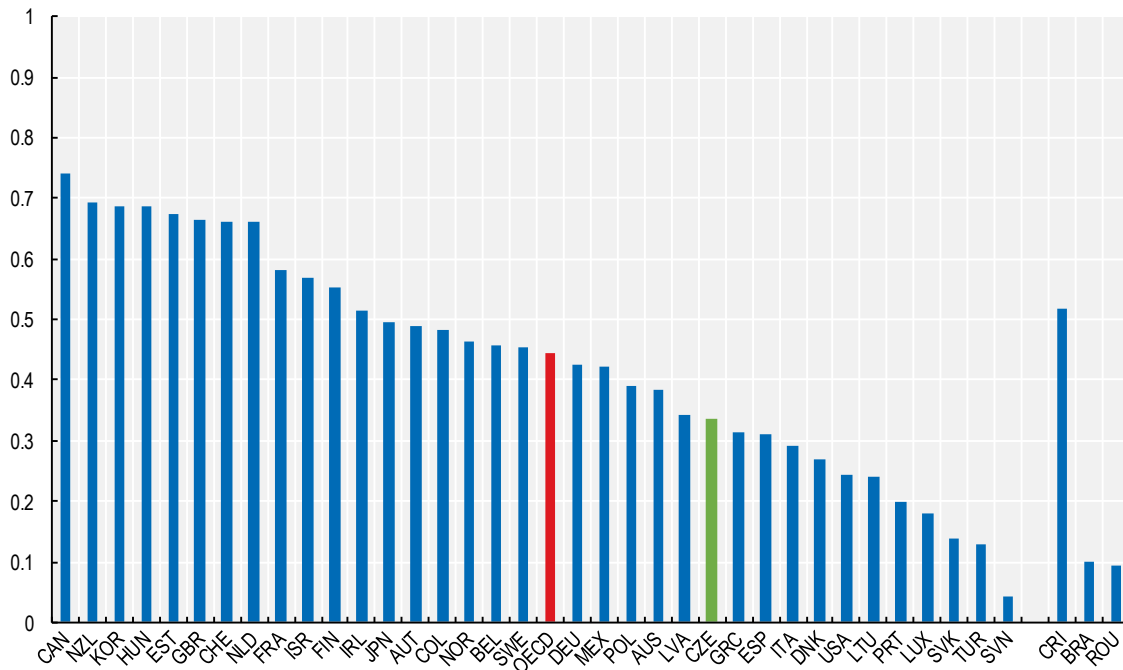


Notes: Original survey question: "How are the following criteria tested for applicants to the civil service?"; Number of OECD countries, n=32.
Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 3.

These results are particularly relevant to the Czech administration, which aims to improve analytical capacity across the government. However, assessing analytical and behavioural competences is not as obvious as assessing theoretical knowledge and education. In most administrations, core competences are clearly established in competency frameworks. These frameworks list which competences are relevant for different functions and for different hierarchical levels. However, hiring managers may find it difficult to assess these competences in hypothetical situations like interviews. In many cases in the public sector, most recruitment is carried out mainly by line managers who are not highly trained in recruitment techniques. This is also the case in the Czech administration. However, sometimes members of HR departments can join, as is the case in the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, it can prove tricky to design questions and scoring systems to evaluate candidate judgement and likely behaviour in specific scenarios. This points to the need for using more than one data source in assessing candidates, and for targeted support to line managers in assessing behavioural competences. This may be particularly relevant for high-impact or senior positions, where psychologists and trained recruiters can complement the line manager's insights (OECD, 2021^[14]).

Building on this discussion of attraction and assessment, part of upgrading the recruitment function in the Czech administration may lie in a greater use of proactive recruitment practices. Figure 6.7 is a composite indicator that measures the use of proactive recruitment practices. The data do not measure relative attractiveness from one administration to another. Rather, countries that score well on this indicator – like Canada, New Zealand and Korea – use a wide variety of methods to proactively reach out to candidates to promote the public service as a good place to work, and to convince them to apply. The Czech Republic scores a little below the OECD average in terms of the use of proactive recruitment practices. For example, the leading administration (Canada) uses nine different tools (such as recruitment quotas, targets and head-hunting) to attract under-represented groups. The Czech administration only uses one: adjusting the recruitment process for people with disabilities. The indicator does not measure the effectiveness of these tools, but more tools suggest a greater ability overall to identify and target specific skill sets.

Figure 6.7. Pilot index: Use of proactive recruitment practices, 2020



Note: Data for Chile and Iceland are not available.

Source: OECD (2020^[5]).

The framework for recruitment in the Czech administration also points to a potentially under-used HR function. Most HR units are not directly involved in the core aspects of recruitment, like developing communication activities to reach candidates, designing selection/testing processes, or running interviews (though in the Ministry of Finance, for example, a member of the HR department is usually on the recruitment panel). Instead, their most common tasks include administering payroll, ensuring compliance with the legislative aspects of recruitment and managing staff files, such as requests for annual leave or updates to family situations. These are important areas, but they are also areas where digitalisation and HR software are likely to alter or even eliminate some roles in the future. The longer term question is whether there is scope for these decentralised HR units to play more strategic roles in attraction and recruitment, potentially with support from a centralised HR function to provide targeted support on a wider scale across the Czech administration. In high-performing public administrations, HR units play a range of roles, such as piloting new selection methodologies or working more closely with business units to understand their needs and anticipate skills gaps. In the Czech administration, for example, the current structure for recruitment means that managers with little or no training in human resource management conduct interviews and testing. In the future, HR units could play a greater role in ensuring modern and effective selection techniques, sitting on selection panels, and coaching non-HR specialists on a variety of selection and behavioural techniques.

Focus on recruitment of senior managers

One of the areas that crystallises these challenges is the need to recruit senior public servants. Senior-level public servants have significant responsibilities for managing complex organisations. Working in many cases at the political-executive interface, they must manage and transform vast public organisations, motivate and inspire their workforces, and be trusted partners to citizens and an ever-growing list of

partners and stakeholders. A recent OECD report identifies four specific ways that public sector leadership may be expected to change (Gerson, 2020^[20]):

1. The goal of public service leadership will increasingly be to solve public policy challenges in innovative ways, supported by digital technology. This suggests the need for new capabilities (i.e. skills, behaviours, perspectives, knowledge, mindsets, etc.) within the senior civil service. It implies organisational structures and processes capable of facilitating that change. And it means working in partnerships through an innovation-ready workforce across formal organisational boundaries.
2. Public service leaders will lead increasingly diverse organisations with employees from various backgrounds on various contracts and in various physical locations, flowing more fluidly in and out of organisations. This raises challenges to develop shared public values and an inclusive organisational culture.
3. Public leadership will become increasingly data-driven, with large sets of workforce and performance data driving insights and informing management responses, especially in an environment with the automation of many tasks. This suggests an increased opportunity for evidence-informed decision-making and the need to invest in skills to support and, sometimes, challenge it.
4. A fourth leadership challenge will come from the need to be more involved than ever in workforce and organisational development. Leaders will play a central role in establishing learning cultures so that existing employees are provided with opportunities to learn as they go. Leaders will also play an increasingly visible role as organisational ambassadors, front and centre in the war for talent, articulating the value proposition of the public sector employer and attracting needed skill sets to the public service.

In this context, preparing to meet the challenges of the Czech reform agenda means examining the framework for how senior civil servants in the Czech administration are recruited. An amendment to the Civil Service Act that entered into force on 1 January 2023 introduced a term limit of five years for positions of director of a department, director general of a section (a newly introduced position replacing Deputy Minister for Management of a section) and head of a service authority (unless in a special act stipulated otherwise). This does not change the civil service relationship/contract – if a civil servant holds an open-ended contract, this will not be affected by the term. Civil servants may apply for the same position again once their term expires; if they are unsuccessful, the HR director of their ministry or agency is obliged to look for a suitable position within the administration. The civil servant can also apply for other positions on their own initiative.

Until recently, recruitment to senior leadership positions in the Czech administration primarily focused on the internal talent pool, although the amendment aims to provide more access for external candidates. Prior to 1 January 2023, recruitment to senior civil service positions was opened first to internal candidates (the “first round”). Articles 52-58 of the act stipulated the eligibility criteria for the senior-level positions mentioned above. These usually included several years of work experience in the civil service, an international organisation or European institution, or a state or regional body. External candidates without professional experience in these types of bodies could only apply if no suitable internal candidate was found, i.e. the “second round”.

On the one hand, this approach can be seen as a vote of confidence in the internal talent pool, one that recognised that the business of government usually takes years to learn on-the-job. It also recognised the value of broad professional networks and effective working relationships built up through years of experience across the government. On the other hand, this approach excluded practically all candidates from the private sector from competing for senior-level positions on equal footing with internal candidates in the first round of selection.

With the entry into force in January 2023 of the new amendment, the requirement to already have specific experience in public bodies was removed, while retaining and strengthening other professional requirements, such as relevant professional and managerial experience. This is the case for most senior-level positions in the Irish civil service, for example, where candidates from outside the public sector can compete alongside internal candidates if they meet the eligibility criteria (Box 6.3). In Ireland, a broadly consistent pattern over the last eight years has been that although a greater number of applications tends to come from outside the civil service, the success rate for civil servants securing recommendations for appointment is far greater than for outsiders (TLAC, 2022^[21]). In other words, this suggests from a Czech perspective that further opening up to external candidates does not necessarily have to penalise or block internal candidates' career advancement. Pushing the door a bit wider open can help bring in much-needed skills, corporate expertise and managerial experience while still providing a clear career development trajectory for internal candidates.

Box 6.3. Ireland's Top-Level Appointments Committee

The Top-Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) is a non-statutory committee established by the Irish government in 1984. It oversees a competitive process for nominating candidates to be appointed to some, though not all, of the most senior positions in the civil service, at the level of assistant secretary, deputy secretary and secretary general.

In 2012, the TLAC was restructured by the then-Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to further ensure its independence and transparency. It now comprises nine external members, one of whom acts as chair, and seven members of secretary general grade from within the civil service, thus maintaining a majority of non-civil servants. Recommendations for appointment are made by in-depth assessments by interview panels following a shortlisting of eligible applications. The actual appointments are made by ministers and the government.

During this period, the proportion of candidates from the civil service, public service and private sector recommended for appointment has been tracked and reported on. During the period 2012-19, the proportion of candidates recommended for appointment who came directly from the private sector varied from a high of 21% to a low of 5%. It is noteworthy that in 2021, for the second year in a row, no candidate from the private sector was recommended for appointment by the TLAC, although 30% of eligible candidates came from that sector. This had not occurred at all between 2012 and 2019. Although a greater number of eligible applicants in 2021 came from outside the civil service (27% from the wider public service and 30% from the private sector), the success rate for civil servants securing a recommendation is far greater than for candidates outside the civil service. The TLAC notes in its most recent report that the overall standard of candidates presenting for interview during 2021 was impressive, as it has been in previous years. It is also worth noting that while no recommendations for appointment during 2021 favoured candidates coming directly from the wider public service, the TLAC noted that a number of those recommended or called to final interview would have had private sector experience before joining the service.

The TLAC acknowledges the challenge of identifying the optimal mix of backgrounds in the upper echelons of the civil service. A greater variety of career backgrounds and experience should serve to broaden the service's capacities. But it is also necessary to have continuity, strong corporate memory and specialised knowledge.

Source: Based on information provided to the OECD by an Irish peer reviewer. Background information from TLAC (2022^[21]).

Recruitment of officials in self-governing territorial units

The provisions in the Act on Local Self-governing Units regarding recruitment are less detailed than for employment at the central level. Recruitment in self-governing territorial units is carried out through a “public call” and a “tender” process. The public call refers to general positions in self-governing territorial units; the tender process is for the appointment of the head of an authority or a senior official. It only covers staff hired on an open-ended contract that work in a number of places, such as a regional authority, the City Hall of Prague, a municipal authority of a municipality with extended competence or an authorised municipal authority. Section 8 of the Act on Officials of Territorial Self-governing Units describes the evaluation process for tenders, which is a tender committee with three members. The Committee shortlists candidates for interview at the end of the process and provides basic applicant data and information on the successful candidate to other candidates if they ask for it.

Ensuring effective learning and development systems

Improving attraction and recruitment systems is one part of building a future-ready Czech administration. The skills and competencies required at work, and particularly in the public service, are changing rapidly as the role of the public servant continues to evolve. Digitalisation means that public services need a new set of technological capabilities, such as the ability to work with big data, as identified in the Czech public administration reform agenda (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2020^[1]). In parallel, there is a shift towards valuing not just technical knowledge but a broader range of competencies, behaviours and socio-emotional skills. Moreover, most Czech civil servants have open-ended contracts and stay in the Czech administration for most or all of their careers – though the provisions of the act may change this. This means that while they might have been hired based on a particular skill set or capability, the pace of change means that continual investment in learning is necessary – as is the case, for example, in digital skills (see Box 6.4).

This increased need for high-level cognitive and complex social-interaction competencies is leading to new learning and training needs. These competencies contribute to aspects of effective leadership, crisis and change management, innovation, and more. They are also capabilities that are being called upon in a variety of positions, making acquiring them essential for organisational and workforce resilience, flexibility, and mobility. This is why fit-for-purpose learning systems and strategies that enable public servants to upgrade their skills, and acquire new ones, are essential for keeping up with challenges, mitigating skill depreciation, and addressing capacity and competency gaps.

Box 6.4. Developing specialist and transversal skills in the UK Civil Service

Digital capabilities increasingly underpin much of how government functions (see Chapter 5). The UK Civil Service has developed a capability framework in this regard to provide clarity on specific functions in this rapidly evolving field. The purpose is to describe different job roles in this field and provide details on the skills needed to work at each role level. The framework is designed to help civil servants:

- learn about what different roles do in government
- understand what skills are needed by professionals in particular jobs
- identify skills that need development to help career progression
- assess skills in preparation for performance reviews
- create effective job adverts
- carry out human resources and workforce planning.

In addition to this technical knowledge, the UK Civil Service has developed a transversal learning curriculum focusing on five core elements applicable to all civil servants:

- Strand 1: Foundations of public administration
- Strand 2: Working in government
- Strand 3: Leading and managing
- Strand 4: Specialist skills
- Strand 5: Domain knowledge.

Source: UK Central Digital and Data Office (2022^[22]).

This chapter has examined attraction and recruitment systems in the Czech administration. The other side of the coin is putting in place effective learning and development opportunities for public servants to help them learn as they go. Learning and developing opportunities are a powerful magnet for talent: studies suggest that organisations that highlight development opportunities are more likely to attract young candidates in particular (see, for example, Gallup (2016^[23])). And with policy challenges becoming even more complex, recruitment and selection systems will need to increasingly focus on identifying candidates who are eager and able to learn and develop new skills.

This is why the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability calls on administrations to move away from a narrow focus on “training” toward a broader and more inclusive learning culture. Core parts of building this culture include:

- identifying employee development as a core management task of every public manager and encouraging the use of employees’ full skill sets
- encouraging and incentivising employees to proactively engage in continuous self-development and learning, and providing them with quality opportunities to do so
- valuing different learning approaches and contexts, linked to the type of skill set and ambition or capacity of the learner.

Article 107 of the Civil Service Act specifies four types of learning: entry-level training, life-long training, training for senior civil servants and language learning. Entry-level training is primarily geared toward preparing new civil servants to pass the mandatory civil service examination and learning the organisation’s internal procedures. Life-long training is the responsibility of individual “service” or

“appointing” authorities. Basic requirements and further guidance on the contents and processes related to particular types of learning are set commonly for all service authorities by the Framework Rules for Learning in Service Authorities No. 4/2019 issued by the Deputy Minister for Civil Service. Nevertheless, there is no common learning and development strategy or plan across service authorities. A large part of this training is dedicated to new legislation, cybersecurity, anti-corruption measures, etc. Senior civil servants are supposed to receive training in areas such as leadership and human resources management, conflict resolution, and other soft skills, with individual service authorities responsible for defining content and format based on their needs. Language learning is mainly restricted to posts with a proven need for knowledge of a foreign language.

Training is decentralised: each ministry or agency is responsible for conducting a needs analysis and establishing an annual training plan. The role of the Ministry of the Interior is limited to administrative co-ordination, issuing recommendations on training and providing the overall framework for service authorities to carry out training. It mostly does not carry out training itself, apart from some modules related to the Civil Service Act. The act also specifies that the scope and content of training should depend especially on the outcome of individual civil servant’s performance appraisal as well as on proposals from their superiors beyond the performance appraisal.

In this context, the question for the Czech administration is the extent to which the current training structure and offering (i.e. format and content) contribute to building a high-performing public service. One of the key issues in the Czech administration is that training initiatives are not guided by or aligned with any central strategy. Most individual service authorities carry out their own training initiatives on an ad hoc basis based on a needs analysis that, in any case, is not standardised across other service agencies. This potentially leaves the door open to duplication of effort or sub-standard provision of training in transversal areas where a centralised or joined-up training offer could generate economies of scale. It also reduces the opportunity for training to be used as a way for civil servants to build professional networks across government, e.g. through in-person training events open to staff from different service authorities or using common language and formats. While individual service authorities may indeed have specific training needs not reflected in other authorities, there are a number of core competences that public servants across the OECD are increasingly being asked to develop (OECD, 2017^[24]):

- **Policy advice and analysis:** Civil servants work with elected officials to help develop policy. However, new technologies, the increasing role of data, a growing body of policy-relevant research and a diversity of citizen perspectives demand new skills for effective and timely policy advice.
- **Service delivery and citizen engagement:** Civil servants work directly with citizens and users of government services. New skills are required for civil servants to effectively engage citizens, crowdsource ideas and co-create better services.
- **Commissioning and contracting:** Not all public services are delivered directly by public servants. Governments across the OECD are increasingly engaging third parties to deliver services. This requires skills in designing, overseeing and managing contractual arrangements and procurement processes with other organisations.
- **Managing networks:** Civil servants and governments are required to work across organisational boundaries to address complex challenges. This demands skills to convene, collaborate and develop shared understanding through communication, trust and mutual commitment.

Alongside these areas, citizens around the world demand and expect local services. This dichotomy between global challenges like combating climate change and local services is reflected in the expectations of public administrations. However, it is clear that strengthening citizens’ trust in public institutions requires public officials to be able to respond to global challenges while keeping in mind the local dimension of their missions (OECD, 2022^[25]).

These global competencies are multidimensional and must enable public officials to understand the interactions between local and global policy issues, to appreciate different perspectives and worldviews,

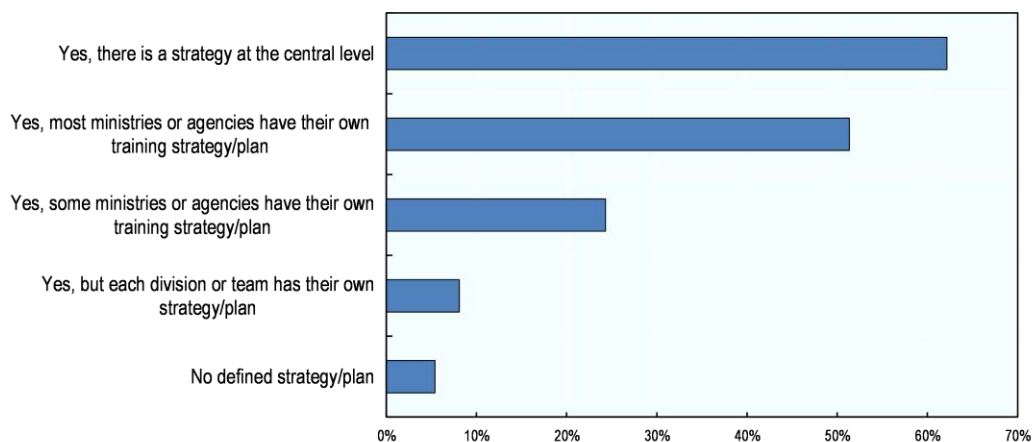
to interact successfully with others, and to take responsible action for sustainability and collective well-being. The question is, therefore, how to integrate these competencies into public functions across different fields of public policy expertise. These types of competences are more difficult to learn passively in a classroom. However, they can be developed through innovative training methodologies and work practices, such as scenario-based training or coaching/mentoring.

Training initiatives are fragmented

As shown in Figure 6.8, most OECD administrations (59%) have a centralised learning and development strategy. In just under half, most ministries or agencies have their own training strategy or plan. Learning and development strategies are not just catalogues of training courses done well, they set a common vision for what types of competences, mindsets and skill mixes are seen as important to the way the public service will be called upon to work in the future. They set out a range of options for staff to improve their skills in a variety of areas depending on their functional area and level of hierarchy. Like competency frameworks – as learning and development strategies are often aligned with competency frameworks – learning and development strategies help managers and staff across the government understand what is expected of them in terms of learning. They often include tools, guidelines and instructions on how to access different learning resources. The Government Skills and Curriculum Unit in the UK Civil Service, for example, recently published a strategy for creating a new curriculum for all civil servants (UK Civil Service, 2021^[26]).

The Czech administration does not have a comprehensive competency framework. The Framework Rules for Learning No. 4/2019, however, include some general competencies and areas for focusing training (e.g. in the case of senior civil servants). Certain service authorities have their own competency models.

Figure 6.8. Learning and development strategies for central/federal public servants



Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 5.

In relation to the organisational body that carries out learning and development across the central/federal administration, OECD data show that ministries and agencies conduct and arrange their own training in more than three-quarters (27 out of 37) of OECD countries. Of those 27 countries, the vast majority (22) have either a dedicated central training ministry or agency, a national school of government, or both.

Although there are provisions related to training in the act and the brief reference to ambitions for training in the public administration reform agenda, there is no centralised learning strategy for the civil service to operationalise those ambitions. The result is that each service authority in the Czech administration is responsible for conducting a needs analysis, developing its own learning and development strategy, and

implementing and evaluating the results. As there is no centralised learning and development strategy, there is a risk that, over time, this structure may lead to duplication of effort or sub-provision of necessary training. It could also lead to the fragmentation of budgetary resources that could potentially be used more effectively to target transversal competences across the civil service and generate economies of scale, especially through the use of online learning modules. This dynamic is also reflected in how service authorities procure training services from external training providers. Most service authorities use some form of external training for which most have signed framework agreements with external training providers to cover multi-year periods. There is likely a degree of duplication in the types of training being provided. Interviewees also noted that procurement of external training tended to be caught up in red tape: class size above a certain number is subject to more stringent procurement rules, potentially creating a disincentive to large-scale and transversal needs.

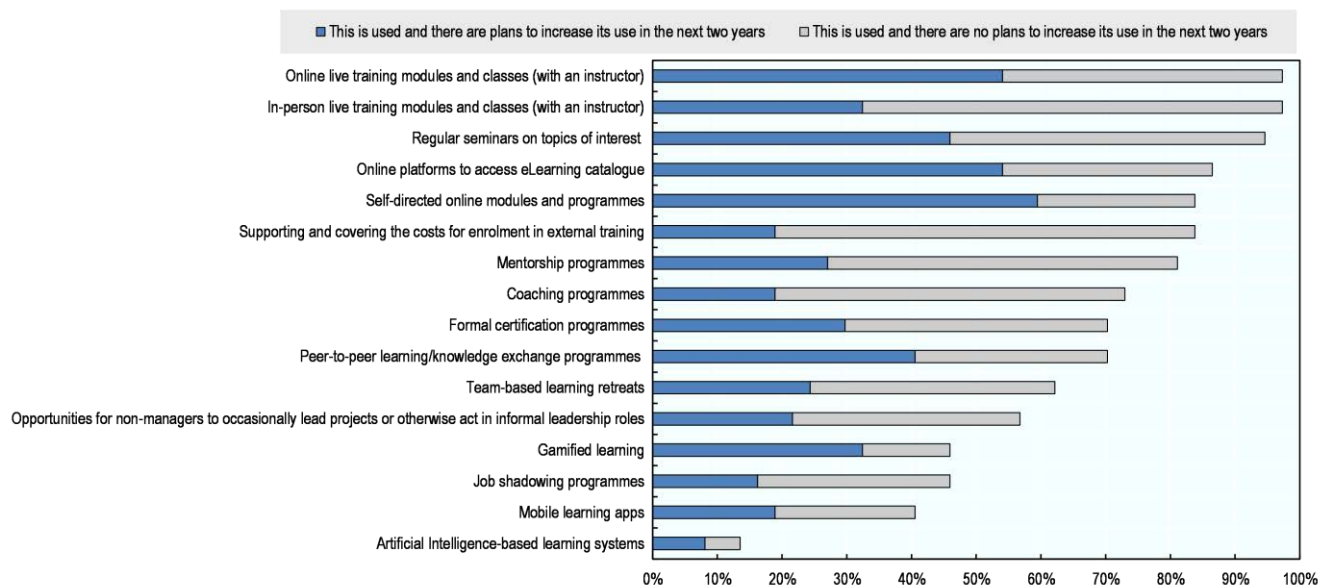
Learning tools and responsibilities could be broadened

People learn in lots of different ways. Some may thrive in formal learning environments, such as instructor-led or classroom-based courses. Others may prefer a self-directed curriculum or choosing what they want to learn. This is an important aspect, as some public services see training as either a “perk” or benefit, or else as something that can only happen if there is a direct and explicit link between the official’s job and the training being provided.

Still others may learn more informally, such as through on-the-job tasks or mentoring. Providing a variety of opportunities to learn, and reaching the greatest number of staff, therefore, becomes vital. Other needs also influence learning outcomes. For example, workers who have childcare or similar caring responsibilities may not be able to participate in training at certain times of the day, or in training that requires travel. Not all employees will feel comfortable in mentorship or leadership roles, and these may not be the best choice of development techniques for all positions. The underlying point is that effective development strategies take into account the diverse learning styles and needs of the workforce, and can flexibly adapt to provide opportunities that realistically provide the best outcomes.

Figure 6.9 outlines a variety of learning tools used across the OECD. “Live” training modules, either online or in-person, are the most-used tools, closely followed by regular seminars on topics of interest. Looking at the chart in terms of plans to increase the use of tools (the dark blue bar), self-directed online modules rank the highest. In other words, while most public administrations still place a lot of emphasis on instructor-led training, many (62%) plan to increase the use of programmes for staff to take more control of their own learning journeys. This is an important point because some public administrations adopt a relatively strict approach in that learning has to be formally requested by staff members and approved by superiors based on a direct link between the learning and the staff member’s job description. In some cases, this makes sense. For example, a civil servant working on taxation might legitimately need to attend a seminar on new legislation on multilateral tax developments, but an official working on social policy for children probably does not. In most cases, however, providing a set of common learning modules on an on-demand basis for staff sends a message that learning is not something to be “requested” – it is an activity that is a core part of everyone’s job.

Figure 6.9. Use of learning tools



Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 4.

Managers in the Czech administration are required to identify the learning needs of their subordinates. As noted above, identifying employee development as a core management task of every public manager forms part of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability. However, identifying learning needs is a difficult business. It involves examining emerging trends likely to affect the public service in the long term (like the many impacts of digitalisation) and drawing on an intimate knowledge of individual staff members' abilities and development ambitions, as well as broader team and organisational needs. Managers should certainly be involved in identifying and articulating learning needs, but the bigger question is what level of support can they draw on from HR units and specialised learning and development officers more readily equipped to link business needs with the most appropriate learning tool.

Scope to review the structure of training and the role of the Ministry of the Interior

Service authorities in the Czech administration are responsible for training. However, these efforts are fragmented in the absence of a central training strategy. While they may indeed address capacity gaps, they likely do not serve to improve the overall capacity of the administration in line with a higher level strategic agenda, such as the public administration reform agenda. This is partly related to the provisions of the act – the Ministry of the Interior has a co-ordination mandate for training, but in practice, this is not seen as extending to the realisation of learning. In parallel, service authorities have traditionally been reluctant to “give up” control of training competence, in part because of sunk costs involved in contracts signed with external training providers for learning programme design and delivery, but also because of perceptions that their specific training needs may not be covered under a central strategy.

The Czech public administration reform agenda is ambitious, and delivering on that ambition requires skilled public servants. In this context, a potential pathway for reforming learning and development lies in examining three things: first, what transversal competences are needed across government; second, how can these be set out in a strategy to provide clear and common expectations across government; and third, who is best placed to deliver these learning opportunities. As described in Box 6.5, the Irish public service has gone through a similar reflection and has moved from a fully decentralised learning structure to a mix of central learning in core areas supported by department-specific learning where necessary.

Box 6.5. Developing a centralised learning and development system in the Irish public service

OneLearning, the centralised Learning and Development Centre for the Civil Service, is based in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. OneLearning was established in 2017 under “The Civil Service Renewal Plan October 2014” (Action 9). This was formal recognition of the importance of the role of learning and development in supporting all civil servants to continue to develop essential skills for their current and future roles in a culture of continuously improving the quality of service to the citizen.

OneLearning has centralised the administration of learning and development courses common to 44 civil service bodies, providing standardised high-quality training to approximately 42 500 civil servants nationwide. This has a significant positive impact on the civil service. The implementation of the civil service-wide learning management system (LMS) has made the administration of learning and development more effective across government, greatly enhancing the ability of civil service bodies to provide high-quality learning and development to staff and making training more accessible to all.

Prior to the establishment of OneLearning, 44 civil service bodies delivered their learning and development programmes independently. There were no synergies or consistency, with civil service bodies doing their own procurement. This resulted in major inefficiencies and duplication across the civil service. It did not deliver value for money for the citizen or the civil service. In addition, there was no consistency of access to training for civil servants across the government.

The establishment of OneLearning and the implementation of the LMS has achieved the following significant efficiencies and cost savings for the civil service:

- self-enrolment for learners – eliminating manual administration of course sessions previously done by managers and training units
- central procurement of learning and development solutions – eliminating civil service bodies doing their own procurement, previously done by all 44 civil service bodies leading to major inefficiencies and duplication across the civil service
- introduction of the first single standardised Joint Controller Agreement for data protection in the civil service – leading to efficiencies and good practice in data protection
- central administration of all OneLearning courses on the LMS – forecasting, scheduling and post-course administration previously done manually by civil service bodies for their own organisation
- LMS reporting capability in informing training needs analysis across the civil service.

Source: Based on input provided to the OECD by the Irish Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Learning and development in self-governing territorial units

Objective 4 of the Czech public administration reform agenda relates to learning and development. This objective focuses on improving the knowledge and skills of local self-government officials as well as elected representatives of self-governing units. One of the main drivers of this appears to be the need to prevent “conduct that could be assessed as illegal” (Czech Ministry of the Interior, 2020^[1]), which is designed to be achieved through training that is more tailored to the needs of officials than in the past. Regarding the education of elected representatives of self-governing units, this issue is covered by the Client-Oriented Public Administration 2030.

One of the particularities of the structure of learning and development in local self-governments is that the Ministry of the Interior has formal responsibility for this even though it is not the employer of local self-government officials. Its principal role is to define minimum standards of the special trainings and to prepare the structure of the entry-level exam taken by all newcomers at sub-national level as set out in the forthcoming amendment to the Act on Officials of Territorial self-governing units. In the future, officials will have to pass a general entrance exam, as well as a separate exam ('special professional competence exam') to be taken within 18 months of taking up duty in order to exercise delegated powers. Training is largely focused on the administrative aspects of officials' tasks. Aside from some ad-hoc initiatives, broader competences – 'soft skills' – are not currently a sustained focus of most learning content. Senior officials are required to take mandatory training focusing on management and human resource issues within two years of their appointment.

A forthcoming amendment to the Act on Officials of Territorial Self-governing Units proposes changes to the training system designed to improve access to training by simplification of the accreditation system for training programs, and through tighter quality controls on a reduced number of accredited training institutions.

Building the evidence base for better human resources policies

This chapter has discussed the challenge of attracting, recruiting and developing public servants in the Czech Republic. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to better performance in these areas is using data to challenge or validate anecdotal insights, and to inform the development of data-driven HR planning. In this context, many OECD administrations increasingly frame data as a vital asset to organisational management and innovation (OECD, 2019^[27]).

The importance of data in HR planning is recognised in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability. While there is some overlap in how administrations use terms such as "HR analytics", "people analytics" and "workforce analytics", the important point is that administrations should work toward capitalising on the data they already have and explore ways to gather new and more relevant data. The Recommendation urges adherents to develop a long-term, strategic and systematic approach to people management based on evidence and inclusive planning that:

- is informed by an evidence-based assessment of the skills needed and the skills available to meet current and future core business requirements, using HR and workforce data for strategic and predictive analytics, while taking all the necessary steps to ensure data privacy
- sets strategic direction and priorities with input from relevant stakeholders, in particular public servants and/or their representatives, and the management accountable for implementation
- considers all relevant aspects of people management and ensures alignment with the government's strategic planning processes, including budget and performance management
- includes appropriate indicators to monitor progress, evaluates the impact of HR policies and processes, and informs decision-making (OECD, 2019^[6]).

Potential for the use of data to help develop recruitment and learning and development strategies in the public sector is considerable. For example, it would be interesting to know more about the professional background of high-performing recruits across government to identify potential patterns in terms of previous employers or specific learning and development activities undertaken. However, at a minimum, this would require data extraction from recruitment platforms (perhaps even paper files) and performance management systems, assuming that these systems are either standardised across government or interoperable. It would also require advanced data analytical capability to be able to generate meaningful insights.

However, the public sector is awash with personnel data, but these data are often not structured in ways that enable strategic analytics. Some of these gaps may be due to a lack of interoperability in HR systems across ministries or levels of government, or they may simply reflect a lack of capability to extract valuable information from large data sets and present those insights convincingly to leadership. A more exhaustive list is presented by Fernandez and Gallardo-Gallardo (2021^[28]) in Box 6.6.

Box 6.6. Barriers to human resources analytics and adoption

Data and models

- Lack of data integration and sharing
- Insufficient data and metrics
- Lack of standards for data and metrics
- Low-quality human resources data

Software and technology

- Absence of human resources analytics software for human resources professionals
- System incompatibilities prevent merging data from different units

People

- Lack of knowledge, skills and competences in analytics
- Lack of strategic business view
- Lack of storytelling skills

Management

- Keeping human resource analytics only in the human resources department
- Underestimate the impact of culture
- Replace management discussion by human resource analytics
- Focus on interesting problems instead of business problems

Source: Fernandez, V. and E. Gallardo-Gallardo (2021), "Tackling the HR digitalization challenge: Key factors and barriers to HR analytics adoption", *Competitiveness Review*, Vol. 31/1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/CR-12-2019-0163>.

Using data to answer questions like this can also help reveal hidden biases. For example, excessive concentrations of new recruits from a relatively small number of elite universities may hint at challenges in developing a diverse public workforce that reflects the society it serves. This insight could inform career outreach strategies to universities outside this circle. Box 6.7 highlights two examples from the Public Service Commission of New South Wales to illustrate the potential of data to inform workforce strategies.

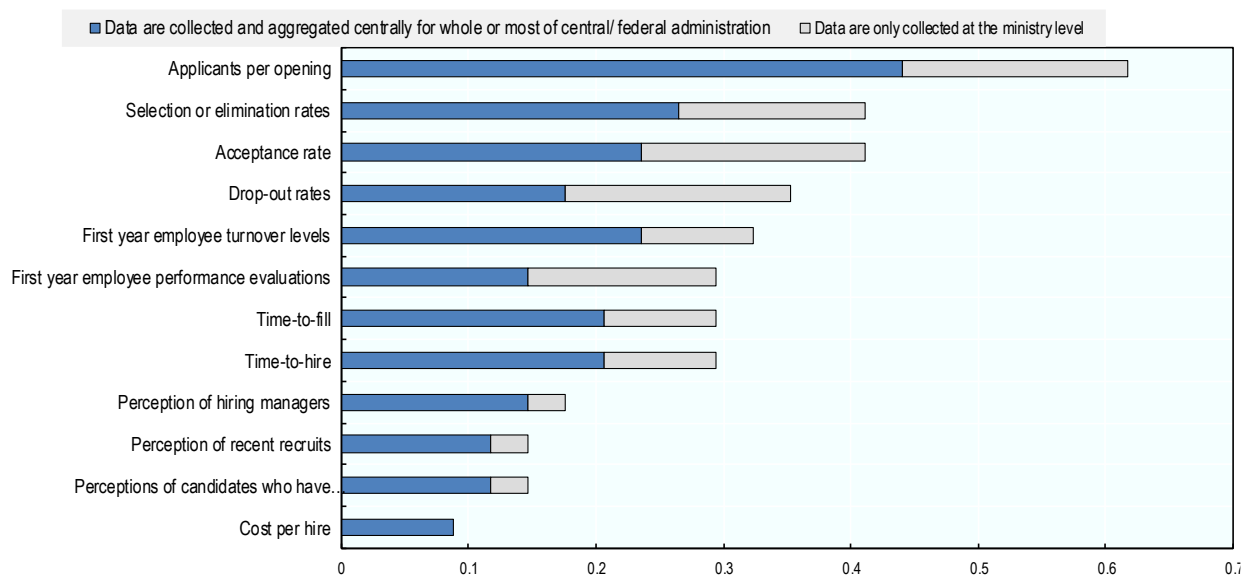
Box 6.7. Predictive analytics to meet diversity targets in New South Wales (Australia)

In order to monitor agencies' expected trajectories in meeting diversity targets, the Public Service Commission in New South Wales (Australia) has developed a model that predicted – based on current recruitment and separation behaviour across the public sector – what the proportion of women in senior leadership roles would be. This was then extended to each cluster and became the starting point to demonstrate that unless a framework of high-impact, whole-of-government initiatives were in place, there would be little movement in the rate. Thanks to this predictive model, the Public Service Commission arrived at the view that to achieve 50% of women in senior roles by 2025, the public sector needed six out of every ten appointments to senior roles to be women, rising from the baseline of four out of ten. Current data have shown this rate is now at 5.5 out of 10 (OECD, 2019^[27]).

A separate study used data analytics to investigate how diversity and inclusion practices affected unscheduled absences in the workplace. The study found that agencies where employees felt more included at work had lower rates of unscheduled absence than those agencies where employees felt less included (New South Wales Public Service Commission, 2018^[29]).

So what does this mean for the Czech administration in light of its goals to improve recruitment and better structure learning and development opportunities? The first step is to map what HR data already exist and at what level. Figure 6.10, for example, shows that relatively few OECD administrations collect centralised data on important metrics such as time-to-fill (i.e. the time it takes to hire someone to fill a need) and time-to-hire (i.e. the time it takes from the moment the candidate applies to accepting the job offer) – yet these are both areas where more systematic data collection could help improve recruitment processes.

Figure 6.10. Data collection to assess the speed and quality of recruitment processes



Note: n=34.

Source: OECD (2020^[5]), Module 3.

Potential areas for new data collection are broad, and include information about recruitment, training and learning, mobility, turnover, and worker demographics to ensure diversity. Employee surveys can be used to generate important insights about employees' perceptions and staff's overall motivation and engagement level. These data can feed indicators of workforce productivity and well-being, and can be compared across organisations, functions and/or types of employees to build awareness of specific workforce challenges. An increasing number of countries are implementing these tools and working alongside the OECD to develop and harmonise them for international comparison.

Equipping HR departments with the advanced data literacy and analytical capability needed to collect raw data and turn it into meaningful insights is an ongoing challenge to address. HR departments need to be able to recruit and train data-literate candidates who can understand the types of operational and strategic challenges faced by line ministries, staff across the public service and senior leadership. Data must first be collected in an informed, well-designed and comprehensive way to ensure it is accurate, robust and reliable before it can be analysed for meaningful results. Both of these steps require expertise. Making the most of the data may also mean investing in modern analytical and visualisation tools, as well as upskilling the HR workforce to integrate data into optimising organisational structures and processes.

For the Czech civil service, exploring the greater use of data in HR planning should be seen in the context of a wider reflection of the role and scope of the HR function in government. This chapter has focused mainly on two issues: recruitment and selection, and learning and development. Both are areas where data can play a vital role in improving effectiveness and efficiency. Recruiting more and better candidates, and developing varied and engaging learning opportunities can help operationalise much of the ambition reflected in the Czech public administration reform agenda. This requires co-operation across government and depends on a willingness to identify the margin for manoeuvre within the constraints of the Civil Service Act. Reducing the administrative burden on both the candidate and recruiter side, and thinking more strategically about learning, are two good places to start. The following recommendations offer suggestions for concrete steps to achieve both these aims.

Recommendations

Improve employer branding

Employer branding is an important part of positioning the public sector firmly in the minds of prospective candidates and of building an integrated civil service culture. The Czech administration could explore this through a number of actions, including:

- Developing an employer branding strategy for the Czech administration, reflecting on the balance of central guidelines or tools and empowering individual organisations to tailor branding strategies to their own needs.
- Consulting widely on the development of an employer branding strategy, e.g. through tools like staff surveys, focus groups, interviews and expert advice, to understand how the Czech administration is positioned in the minds of prospective candidates.
- Celebrating the values and achievements of the civil service, e.g. by communication campaigns explaining the work of civil servants to the wider public.
- Developing a more joined-up approach to social media use, e.g. centralised use of tools such as LinkedIn/Facebook and guidance to staff in using these types of tools to promote the work of the civil service.
- Gathering data to understand the reach and effectiveness of employer branding.

Modernise and streamline the recruitment process

Recruitment processes in the Czech administration are strictly governed by relevant legal provisions to ensure, among other things, fairness and transparency. This should not prevent the administration from reflecting on ways to make the recruitment process less burdensome for candidates and recruiters alike, and on strengthening its focus on up-to-date assessment and selection techniques to ensure the administration can attract the skills it needs. This could be achieved through actions such as:

- Gradually phasing out paper-based requirements for recruitment applications.
- Reviewing job descriptions to make them more engaging and accessible to outside audiences.
- Reviewing competence and skill requirements to ensure that recruitment and selection processes are able to test for future-oriented competences.
- Continuing and strengthening efforts to increase recruitment from outside the civil service at all levels to acquire skills and competencies that cannot be easily located or developed within the civil service while still promoting career development opportunities for the existing civil servant cohort.
- Building excellence in HR capacity at the central level and in HR units to carry out a variety of selection and assessment processes.
- Exploring the possibility of using “panel” or “batch” recruitment to recruit more than one candidate for specific cross-government roles, such as economists or analysts where analytical ability is essential.
- Developing a strategy for career outreach to prospective candidates, e.g. through university career fairs and local job employment fairs.

Reflect on the management of senior leaders

The senior leadership group in the Czech administration is defined as the top three grades. Increasing the ability of the administration to recruit senior civil servants involves reflecting on the management of this specific group as well as their unique development and career needs. This could be achieved through actions such as:

- Clearly defining in-demand skill sets that prove challenging to develop internally, and strengthening the use of external recruitment (i.e. from outside the civil service) to complement the existing senior management cohort with these skills.
- Identifying learning content and formats specifically targeted at the senior leadership group in the Czech administration with a view to building a cohesive management culture.
- Developing a “near-miss” engagement strategy, i.e. developing a pool of candidates not selected for civil service vacancies at the senior level but who performed strongly and could be encouraged to reapply.

Develop a centralised learning and development strategy for the civil service

Learning and development are a core part of achieving the goals of the public administration reform agenda. An overall strategy for learning and development would help improve learning outcomes. This could be achieved through aspects such as:

- Carrying out more in-depth and qualitative needs analysis across a variety of ministries and using the results to identify core skills and capability gaps.
- Developing a competency framework for the Czech administration and using it to help develop a learning strategy.
- Using the strategy to broaden the scope of learning opportunities, e.g. through piloting mobility programmes and developing governance arrangements for these.

- Reflecting on current institutional arrangements for learning and development provision, especially on what aspects of learning could be provided centrally (i.e. horizontally) across the Czech administration.
- Reducing duplication of training modules and sharpening quality control of the content.
- Emphasising the link between learning and career development.
- Reviewing the role of managers in developing learning and development plans for their staff: move away from top-down assignment of learning objectives toward empowering staff to take their learning needs into their own hands, e.g. through access to online learning.

Gather and use human resources data more effectively

The use of data and indicators emerged as a horizontal issue across the thematic areas explored in this chapter. The Czech administration could develop a more strategic view of data collection and analysis through actions such as:

- Quantifying recruitment challenges, e.g. through measuring data such as time-to-fill, vacant posts or turnover rate. Where these or similar data exist, the focus should be on presenting these data to relevant decision-makers so that policies and processes can be adapted as necessary.
- Upskilling HR departments and managers in the use of data sets to inform management.
- Investing in the ability to analyse and work with complex data sets: this may require acquiring specialist tools and/or expertise.
- Establishing a common vision for data-informed policy development relating to attraction and recruitment, as well as learning and development.

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Note

¹ Senior managers are defined as D1 and D2 managers, alternatively referred to as “senior civil servants” or “top managers”. The word “senior” denotes rank, and is not a reference to age or seniority in terms of career length or tenure. The D1 and D2 managers for which data are presented are adapted from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) developed by the International Labour Organization.



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