

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMPETENCY MODEL IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract: *The article presents summarized results of a survey of the New Civil Service Competency Model which has been implemented in the Republic of Lithuania since 2013. The survey focuses on the implementation process. The study was intended to determine the responsibilities of the state and municipal and other organizations while implementing the Model as well as the purposefulness of its development. The benefit of the Model implementation for the entire public administration system, on the one hand, and an individual institution, on the other, was granted by thorough analysis of relevant scientific literature including the investigation of proper national and institutional (municipal) documents. The purpose was to find out whether separate institutions must be involved in the Model implementation and what factual measures they had to be responsible for. The results of the survey showed that separate institutions were actively involved in the personnel recruitment and training processes through implementing the Civil Service Competency Model (hereinafter CSCM, the Model), and the organizations were undergoing structural changes aiming at HR management improvement. The following directions of the institutional process improvement were suggested by the study: to increase the wider perception of the Model opportunities; to activate its use and application in such processes as personnel planning, assessment and other.*

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JEL Classification: *O15, H11.*

Introduction

Human resource development is becoming the key factor in modernizing public administration. According to management theorists (Amstrong, 2008; Barney, 2007), meeting the public needs and challenges arising from globalization, and the ability to integrate them competently into the current reforms, without increasing bureaucracy, depends on the ability to plan, adopt, and execute decisions made by public bodies and public sector staff. This strategy aspirationally reflected by EU guidelines is included in the 2008-2012, 2012-2016 Government programs of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - LR), and it is integrated into the main strategic documents of LR.

Currently Lithuania is in the implementation process of the new state Civil Service Competency Model. The Lithuanian human resource restructuring process was initialized by the Civil Service Department. Since the very start it has been actively supported by researchers. In 2008 the restructuring process was formalized in the political programs as well as the National, and LR Government documents. Subsequently, CSCM was created by prudently utilizing the EU funds and by learning from the experience of other states (Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland and others). Its creation initiated the following activities: creation of the virtual instruments required for the Model's implementation,

making the perspective project implementation schemes and coordinating structures, preparation of the interim solution evaluation methods and others.

1 Statement of a problem

This Model attracted the majority of public attention due to the General Competencies Assessment Test required to be taken while attempting to become a civil servant as well as evaluating the competence of specialists in managing positions.

Works on the CSCM implementation issues that have been published since 2014, serve as evidence that measures taken in the centralized recruitment to the public service positions have been actualized quite successfully. What concerns the CSCM implementation in other contexts (such as planning the need for staff, performance assessment, and the like) that are referred to by Lithuanian scientists (Rekašienė, Sudnickas, 2014:590-600), there is a lack of research. It is also unclear how successful separate institutions, including municipalities, are in integrating the CSCM into their activities.

At present, the LR Civil Service is comprised of 597 institutions, with a total of 58,041 office positions (see Table 1), some of which are vacant, e.g., there are 91% of occupied positions in the Seimas Office and institutions accountable to it; 93.5% of all the positions are occupied in Ministries, and 92% in the institutions accountable to them. Municipality institutions have confirmed 14,456.05 office positions, of which 13,304.47 (or 92%) are filled.

Since 2016 the number of positions in the public service sector has been reduced, and a part of the vacant positions will be either optimized or eliminated. The other part of the positions lack competent applicants, and only about 65 % of contenders pass the General Competencies Assessment Test which has been organized by LR since the middle of 2013 (see. Table 2).

The change of executive managers is influenced by the examination of management and leadership skills; 69% have passed the examination successfully.

Tab. 1: The civil service in numbers in the Republic of Lithuania

Civil service institutions in Lithuania	Total number of positions in state and municipal institutions /occupied office posts	Working in municipal institutions and offices	
		Civil servants	Career civil servants and institution managers
597	58.041/53.573	6.747	6.551

Source: Civil Service in Numbers. Data of 31-08-2016. Online statistics of the Civil Service Department: <http://statistika.vtd.lt/index.html>

Tab. 2: Results of the centrally used Civil Service Competency Model Test for applicant selection in 2013-2016.

Applicants for civil service from 30-06-2013 to 31-08-2016	
Applicant selection	Numbers
Applications submitted (figures). With a certificate of higher education - 95 %; with a master degree among them - 50%. By age the majority is: 18-30 (47%) and 31-40 (~30 %)	17.484
Passed document verification (figures)	15.474
Individuals whose general skills and, if required, management skills, have been assessed positively (figures)	11.620
Individuals who have taken and passed the General Skills Test (%)	65
Individuals whose management skills were examined and who have passed the Test (%)	69
Individuals whose knowledge of foreign languages in Speaking was assessed at B1-B2 levels and who have passed the Test in English/German/French (%)	62 / 61 / 66

Source: Civil Service in Numbers. Online statistics of the Civil Service Department: <http://statistika.vtd.lt/index.html>

The study presented in this article was carried out having assessed the lack of research on the CSCM use in other human resources management fields at the central level, and in some cases, at the individual organizational level, and that there is no deeper situational analysis of the Model implementation in different organizations, including municipal governance and other institutions. **The aim** of this research was to define responsibilities of the state and municipal institutions and organizations in implementing the CSCM and to provide purposefulness of the institutional development of the Model.

2 Research methodology

The scientific literature was invoked in order to: 1) summarize the scientific insights on the expected benefits of CSCM for public service in general and an individual organization; 2) prove the wide applicability of the CSCM chosen in Lithuania with respect to the central level as well as the organizational level; 3) generalize the first year experience of the CSCM implementation process in Lithuania and foresee its purposeful continuity on the institutional level.

Analysis of legal acts was invoked in order to clarify the following: 1) institutional opportunities to apply the CSCM and institutional responsibilities (national legislation); 2) separate municipal involvement in the process of CSCM implementation and its formalization in local legislation. The choice of Mažeikiai Municipality for the document investigation was due to the facts that a) this municipality is typical and b) its administration activities have been assessed as well-functioning in the recent years, by the external evaluators. Such documents as legal regulations prepared by the Municipality and approved

by the Municipal Council or the Director's of Administration orders, and activity reports, and other activity records have been analyzed during the research.

3 Implementation of the State Employees Competency Model at the central and institutional levels

3.1 Lithuanian Civil Service Competency Model

Lithuanian researchers and politicians, in agreement with foreign public management theorists, define the word competence with reference to the ability to complete certain tasks, with individual behaviour that is related to personal experience, wisdom and moral compass. According to Rekašienė and Sudnickas (2015:590-600), essential personal competencies provide an ability to predict an individual's behaviour in the workplace while performing civil service duties, and this can be measured while applying specific criteria and standards. Thus, following this logic, the competence model can be defined as skills, knowledge, experience, behaviour, and other personal characteristic sets which are required to guarantee the effectiveness of activities for a specific working position, or belonging to a related group of working positions.

The creation of a CSCM in LR was primarily determined by the following factors:

1. Membership in the EU and the desire to take over the EU Member States' good practices in civil service management (Minkevičius, Smalskys, 2008; Rekašienė, Sudnickas, 2014).
2. The requirements for civil service competency is claimed by the citizens of LR.
3. The experience already gained by modernizing other management processes in civil service by the Civil Service Department, such as strategic management, work quality management, e-management development, and others.
4. We've got valuable experience in applying the Competency Model in Lithuanian business enterprises and government institutions (e.g. the National Audit Office etc.); it has already existed over a decade.
5. Lithuanian community of researchers and scientists is mature and growing, constantly analyzing the civil service improvement issues and actively discussing them with politicians and society.

After reviewing the works of the scientists who wrote about the progress of the civil service competency models and their implementation with the purpose of better human resource management in the organizations, it can be concluded that these insights emphasize the benefits to both the state and an individual organization.

The Competency Model in Civil Service:

- increases the attractiveness of civil service in the labor market helping the transition to a higher career flexibility, due to cultural changes within institutions;
- it makes the civil service more efficient (Rekašienė, Sudnickas, 2014), visible to the public;
- the continuous application of the competence model makes the civil service more transparent, coherent, and professional (Valstybės tarnybos aktualijos, 2015);

- it is becoming the basis of the human resources management in civil service, because it enables the authorities to set the required competences in order to achieve their goals (Rekašienė, Sudnickas, 2014);
- it helps not only to implement changes in the human resource management model, but also to realize the foreseen changes on the cultural level of state institutions; while defining the competences, transitioning appears - from only performing their own functions, operating the procedures, to a broader view and realization that the function should create value for the public and the institution (Meyer-Sahling, Nakrošis, 2009:7-15);
- it becomes the basis for objective assessment of training and educational needs; evaluation of civil servants' activities results allow us to observe an employee's improvement, and assess whether one's individual competences meet the requirements set by the Competency Model (Šiugždinienė, 2008);
- it enables to associate the evaluation of the civil servants' performance and motivation with specific activities results at work, thus, liberalizing civil servants' employment and dismissal from the civil service (Nakrošis, 2011:65-98);
- its results contribute to accomplishing good public management policy;
- it helps to perceive the perspective of the personnel quality and competence needs on the state level, etc.

The analysis of the above presented scientific arguments about the CSCM benefits (making the public service more efficient, more transparent, more attractive; enabling the organization to change, leading it to competence-based management, and the like) shows that the institutions which decide to apply the Model widely, would have an instrument that helps fundamentally improve all human resource management process in the organization.

While initializing the modernization of civil service management and aiming at creating the most fitting competence model for Lithuania, the experience of foreign nations, starting with the European countries that apply competence models in their practice, was analyzed. According to Gražulis and Markuckienė who studied the implementation of the Model (Gražulis, Markuckienė, 2013:142-151), the CSCM created and being implemented in Lithuania is similar to the one used in the Netherlands, and in some respects, to the one used in Belgium: it is **partially centralized** (decentralized models are used in large countries, such as the United Kingdom or Sweden), and like a key element sums up the entirety of the human resource management system, i.e. it is used in all human resource management processes, and general competencies are also actualized in it. The model chosen and adopted in Lithuania is partially centralized. It is partially centralized in some human resource management processes, and functioning alongside with the fully centralized measures, provides decentralized stages of process implementation, thus responsibility for the employees' competence is taken by separate institutions as well. The contenders who have passed the centralized General Skills Test organized by the Civil Service Department (document verification, general skills test at www.testavimas.vtd.lt, the results are valid for 36 months) participate in the next selection stage in the institution that has published the contest (the decentralized phase), where the main focus is put on the applicant's specific and professional competences (Konkursų į valstybės tarnautojų pareigas..., 2016).

The Civil Service Department (<http://www.vtd.lt>), responsible for coordinating the implementation of CSCM in Lithuania, in 2009 launched a project "Analysis

of Competences Necessary in Civil Service and the Catalogue of Civil Service Positions' Description" supported by EU in accordance with the implementation measure VP-4.1-VRM-01-V of the 4th Priority "Strengthening of the Administrative Capacities and Increase of Public Administration Effectiveness" of the Programme "Human Resource Development Action Programme for 2007-2013". The project started with the based Model concept (Concept of Public Service Improvement, 2010), afterwards, working together with JSC "Human Studies Centre" and JSC "Ernst & Young Baltic" the Model was developed; it was followed by the development of methodology necessary to implement the change (Valstybės tarnautojų kompetencijų modelis..., 2014).

Lithuanian CSCM consists of three groups of competencies:

1. **General Competencies** (competencies required in any field of activity, and therefore, mandatory for all civil servants).
2. **Managerial and Leadership Competencies** (competencies necessary to manage the activities of the institution (department), therefore, they are mandatory for the heads of departments and their deputies).
3. **Specific and Professional Competencies** (competencies required in professional activities. These are defined, taking into account both general and specific areas of activities).

As can be seen from the CSCM presentation, while initiating and developing the Model for Lithuania, focus was put on the versatility of its use. The Model has a part of centralized application in personnel selection, and transparent selection is very important in Lithuanian civil service. The other issues of staff management remain under the jurisdiction of the organization. The Model actualizes the competences required by the challenges of the 21st century, which motivates young and promising employees to apply for work in the public sector, as well as activates qualitative changes in the institutional public management.

Three years have passed implementing the CSCM in Lithuania. This term allows us to see the first results and to submit proposals. Having performed the analysis of speeches pronounced by scientists and public administration politicians referring to centralized implementation of staff selection in the last two years, it can be stated that the selection of the employees lacks diversity of competence identification and the diversity of evaluation methods is not wide enough. The tests that assess a person's general skills and the knowledge of laws are not good enough to fully identify the candidate's suitability for an office manager's position.

The academic Lithuanian community sees wider application possibilities of the Model and describes them in the publications:

- If the training of employees were linked to the Competency Model directly, the quality of the activities would be better, and training funds would be used more efficiently, <...> it would be possible to plan both horizontal and vertical career of an employee (Valstybės tarnybos aktualijos, 2015);
- CSCM is developed for the civil service, and it is not recommended to associate it with the civil servants' payment and promotion system, as it requires much broader objective competency assessment opportunities that require significant financial, time and human investment; first of all, the CSCM must be fully implemented in recruitment,

assessment, planning the training and education, and career (Rekašienė, Sudnickas, 2014).

Summarizing the analysis of the scientific literature, we can conclude that the implementation of change in public management, i.e., the CSCM implementation through centralized selection of staff to work in the civil service, organizing staff training in terms of the change management perspective, is currently in the phase of actualization and result evaluation (Hayes, 2010). The wider use of the Model, considering the development of human resources management system in an individual organization, is likely to be still at the planning stage. The growing interest in the Model and the acknowledgement of scientists are the evidence of this; moreover, currently there is no resistance towards the implemented changes in real life.

On the other hand, the involvement of a separate organization into the wider implementation of the Model is not under discussion. Therefore, the following question becomes urgent: are the local authorities and the state required to implement the CSCM more widely?

3.2 Legal regulation of the CSCM implementation at an individual institution

Analysis of the main documents of LR legislation, of the years 2012-2016, relating to the modernization of civil service and regulation of the CSCM implementation, as well as its content, shows that these instruments are common to **all State and Municipal institutions and organizations**. Development of the main tools and measures, and coordination of their implementation takes place centrally, i.e. the process is centralized.

- In accordance with the LR Government Resolution No. 171, 07-02-2012, provisions were adopted of the “Program for the Improvement of Public Administration 2012-2020”. They aimed at improving competencies of the civil servants, the competences which were integrated into the Lithuania’s Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030” approved by the Seimas Resolution No. XI-2015, 15-05-2012. This Strategy presented the full-scale implementation of the CSCM as a factor of public governance progress. LR Government Resolution No.1482, 28-11-2012, “For the Approval of the National Progress Program for Lithuania for the period 2014-2020” states concrete measures, deadlines and responsibilities, in accordance with which CSCM will be implemented and developed in service.
- LR Government Resolutions discussing separate processes of competency-based management, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs Minister’s Orders detailing the reorganization-implementation process, provides concrete functions and responsibilities of the State and Municipal authorities and institutions as implementing bodies (see Table 3).

LR Government Resolution No. 312, 30-03-2016, approved the “2015 Annual Report on LR Government Activities”. Its submission to the Seimas proves that the CSCM has already been implemented in the civil service and management selection processes, and the staff training system; its further development for the year 2016 has also been foreseen.

Tab. 3: Legal regulation coordinating the involvement of State and Municipal institutions in competence-based management

Document	Functions and responsibilities of State and Municipal institutions and offices while implementing the CSCM
Lithuanian Government Resolutions	
Resolution No. 228, 13-03-2013, “For the approval of priority measures implementation in the program for 2012-2016 adopted by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania”	Responsibility for the selection phase of decentralized organization, employee assessment, and staff demand planning processes.
Resolution No. 478, 31-05-2013, “For the description of the competition procedure for a civil servant's position”	The institution provides employment demand within the Public Service Information System; it announces a tender, and cancels it, according to the change in demand; it performs document verification of the tender participants, sets up commissions and performs tenders for the applicants in accordance with the competitions statutory order.
Resolution No. 481, 28-05-2014, “For the approval of civil servants training strategy for the years 2014-2017”	It is responsible for the updating the following Model constituents inside the very institution, such as training needs, training plans, and the assessment of training quality; prevision of the necessary financial resources, and training opportunities through the State and project funding.
<p>Orders issued by the Minister of Interior, Republic of Lithuania: Institutions were encouraged to implement the competence-based human resource management in civil service (until the fourth quarter, 2015); moreover, they were authorized to uptake the projects for civil servants’ qualification development. Dissemination of the information to the staff as candidates for the office positions.</p>	

Source: Author

Content analysis of the National documents of the Republic of Lithuania has shown that the state and municipal institutions and organizations are authorized to implement the CSCM as well as apply it in the processes of planning the need of employees, their selection and evaluation. They are also authorized to participate in the centralized recruitment phase, moreover, they are responsible for the organization of decentralized phase. Authorities of all the public institutions were responsible for the identification of necessary training needs, planning, and reporting for the finances allotted for the training sessions. The Model was outlined to be implemented by the fourth quarter of 2015.

3.3 Integration of the CSCM into legal and administrative environment of an individual municipality

A typical LR municipality has been chosen. Its involvement in the implementation process of the CSCM, formalized in the documentation, should show the course of changes activated by the implementation, as well as it may provide deeper insights for further improvement of the CSCM implementation process. The analysis also gives overview of the documents and sources published in virtual space such as strategic documents, performance reports and legislation regulating work and activities. As it can be seen from the analysis presented below in Table 4, by 2013, the strategic documents adopted by the Region Municipality administration targeted at the usual administrative processes, and the human resource management topics were not relevant. Some reference towards the topics appeared in 2013-2014 documents, but it was not a priority. Human resource development focused on specific and professional skills. The results of 2015 show a significant change: process management was computerized and connected to the whole, therefore, processes were

optimized; employees participated in trainings and acquired new competencies, including performance management.

Tab. 4: Manifestation of competency-based management in Municipal legislation

Document	Implementation of Competency Model or the competence-based management aspect
Strategic documents adopted by Mažeikiai Region Municipality (MRM)	
Strategic action plan of Mažeikiai Municipality for 2013-2015	Competency-based management is not manifested .
Long-term strategic development plan of Mažeikiai Municipality for 2014-2020	The CSCM is projected . There are some measures planned in the 2nd Priority “High Social Well-being” meant for the intended purpose “High quality of Regional management and public services”; such measures are planned as specialized training for administrative staff and politicians, and optimization of the administration process. Legal and Personnel Administration Offices of MRM Administration take the responsibility.
Strategic action plan of Mažeikiai Municipality for 2015-2017	The CSCM is projected . The information system consolidating and managing all the administrative and township management processes is going to be installed. All the institutions take the responsibility. It is intended to develop the employees’ qualification using the EU support.
Strategic action plan of Mažeikiai Municipality for 2016-2018	It is implemented through the improvement of employees' competencies . The situational analysis shows that in 2015 a computerized process control system was installed, and over 100 employees were trained to work with documents and service management system, and 70 learnt to work with the computerized financial management and accounting system, and 85 started working with the project management subsystem. Most of the administrative staff are trained to work with the optimized planning and management Model. Some EU support funds (2 projects) and Mažeikiai Municipality funds have been used for this.
MRM: top management reports on the implementation of activities	
2015 Annual activities report given by the Mayor of Mažeikiai Municipality	The target aspect is not manifested , but the fact that the Mayor’s report, where he specifically articulates his activities and his contribution to the achieved results, is publicly available on the Internet, proves that the CSCM is already functioning, and it is acknowledged that the managers’ activities must be transparent and visible.
2015 Annual activities report of Mažeikiai Municipality Council	The target aspect is not manifested among the priority issues of the meetings, but the approval of the carried out qualification training sessions for the municipal administration employees and the process optimization procedures shows a favorable environment for the implementation of the Competency Model.
2015 Annual activities report given by the Director of Administration of Mažeikiai Municipality	The target aspect is manifested as the report contains a whole chapter devoted for civil service and the modernization process of its performance. Competency Model issues are not mentioned directly, however, its implementation is projected.
Operational regulation of the department responsible for personnel management	
Department Regulations for Personnel Administration	The target aspect is manifested . CSCM is not mentioned, but all the functions to be implemented by this Department correspond to the key aspects of CSCM implementation, such as planning, selection, information, training, motivating and evaluating the personnel, etc. This new Department was established in 2015.

Source: Author

Content analysis of Mažeikiai Municipality documents is presented in Table 4 (search for the evidence in the CSCM formalization concepts, such as **is not manifested, is projected, is implemented** and **model deployment areas**). It showed that the largest

changes in the Municipal administration took place due to the Model implementation in 2015. Strategic plans and reports represent active involvement in the planning of trainings, and funding them by attracting money from the EU support. Contents of the trainings show the advanced use of technologies in management processes. In 2015 restructuring was completed in Mažeikiai Municipality, i.e. the functions of human resources management as well as legal regulation functions were separated and two new Departments – Personnel Administration Department and Legal Department – were established. The change was initiated by the State new policy of civil service modernization.

On the other hand, the Municipal strategic documents do not provide any measures that would contribute to the improvement of the staff planning, and the processes of the staff competency assessment, focusing on the results and reasoning, and the staff motivation are not actualized either. So far, there is no emphasis towards the strengthening of leadership competencies in the Municipal action plans.

4 Discussion and conclusions

Results of this study prove that we can start talking about the third year of the CSCM implementation in Lithuania pointing out the successes and foreseeing the purposefulness of the process improvement.

The CSCM has received the approval of Lithuanian politicians, civil servants and the academic community, and it has answered the purposes meant in the phase of its creation:

1. The Model is used in the selection of employees; it is used while planning and optimizing the demand of office positions, and assessing the competencies of the employees who wish to stay in the occupied position; it is also used in planning the training centrally. National documents and statistics serve as evidence of the going on process.
2. The academic community joined the Model implementation in the initial phase and has been actively engaged in the public administration theme since the very start. Currently the academic community goes on further development of the Model focusing on its benefits for the Lithuanian society, and the public management of individual organizations as well as the public sector governance; the community initiates public debates in the Department of Public Service Portal for the perspectives of the Model improvement.
3. Having enabled the state and local authorities to plan the necessary training, the initiative of Municipalities increased emphasizing the municipal involvement in the improvement of competencies needed to manage modern processes.
4. The institutions adjust their human resource management systems in accordance with the recommendations of the CSCM.

The survey results point out the problems of the CSCM implementation; on the other hand, they show the improvement opportunities and purposefulness of the Model on the institutional level:

1. It is likely that the authorities lack resources and qualification to carry out deeper research of the personnel needs, to carry out the staff competency assessment and the results-oriented activities assessment periodically. For the more profound analysis of these assumptions, research should be performed in several organizations.

2. The analysis of the Municipality documents shows that the strategy documents do not contain the CSCM concept at all, and there is no vision of the complex integration of the Model. Training sessions in the management of human resources, and methodical help provided by the Civil Service Department and/or the academic community would accelerate the progress of the CSCM implementation.

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