

REPORT

**On the Results of Monitoring and Sociological Polls Conducted
under the “Support to the Civil Society Observation of the Civil
Service System as an Anti-Corruption Measure” Program**

Yerevan 2007



*Your complimentary
use period has ended.
Thank you for using
PDF Complete.*

[*Click Here to upgrade to
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features*](#)



Your complimentary use period has ended.
Thank you for using PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION4

1. FINDINGS OF THE MONITORING.....6

2. CORRUPTION RISKS14

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS17

When corruption is spread in the public administration system, public resources are used for the benefit of a narrow circle of the chosen people. Therefore, the fight against corruption must start right from the public administration system. The establishment of a modern system of competition and attestation in public service will contribute the fight against corruption. The system will help evaluate how well civil servants are aware of their functional responsibilities and how much knowledge and skills for carrying out these responsibilities do they possess. The system will show whether civil servants have the required moral/psychological qualities. The involvement of civil society is important for the establishment of a public administration system with an effective and functional civil service in the Republic of Armenia, which would demonstrate itself also in the issue of appointment and promotion of civil servants.

Considering the issue of increasing the role of NGOs in improving the effectiveness of the RA public administration system, the need to prevent corruption in the civil service system and to raise the existing problems, a sociological study was conducted among civil servants taking part in the competition and attestation processes. The study was conducted in the context of public monitoring of these processes, and standardized questionnaires were used. Parallel to that, a group of observers, representing the NGOs conducting the observation mission during the competition and attestation processes, was also questioned.

The monitoring and the related study were conducted in three time periods, which had to do, among other things, with observing the effect of an important event like parliamentary elections on the civil service system. During the first period (from 16.03.2007 to 04.05.2007), 36 competitions and 14 attestations in various state agencies were observed and 151 respondents were interviewed (73 and 78, respectively). The second and the third periods of the monitoring covered the time after the parliamentary

2007). 144 respondents (41 and 103 respondents taking
stations, respectively) were interviewed.
of respondents was 295 (114 and 181 respondents
taking part in 67 competitions and 53 attestations, respectively). 56.5% of
respondents were male, 43.5% - female. In terms of professions, 31.9% of
respondents were economists, 9.6% - lawyers, 15.8% - engineers, 6.2% - specialists in
the humanities. 8.8% of respondents were doctors by training, 4.2% - teachers, 3.5%
- historians, etc. Only 1.2% of respondents were programmers - a profession that is
very important in a modern administration system.

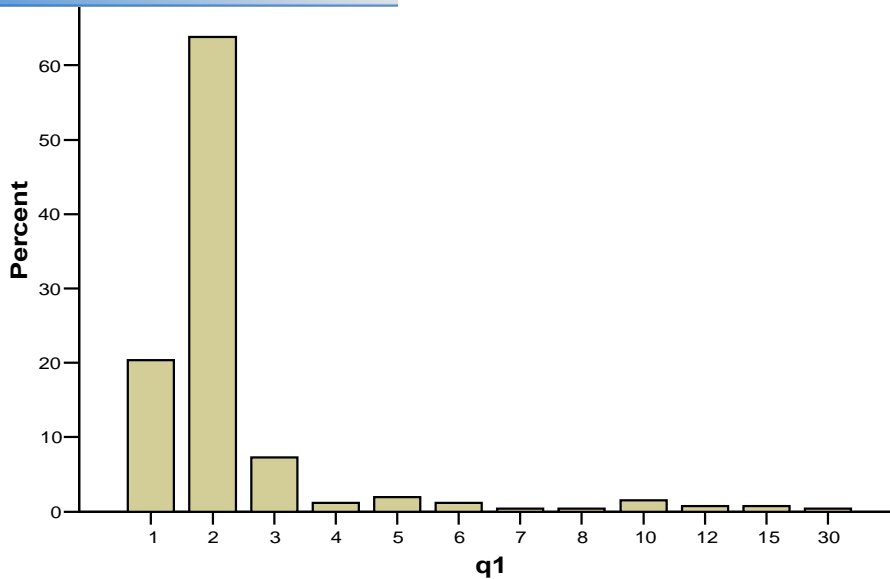
Graph A shows that 8.5% of respondents have participated in the aforementioned
testing processes more than five times.

Graph A. Participation in Competition/Attestation Processes

(Column 1 ó participating for the first time, Column 2 ó second time, Column 3 ó third time and so
on, up until 30th time).

q1

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)



1. FINDINGS OF THE MONITORING

The results of a sociological poll conducted as part of the monitoring of the civil service competition and attestation processes demonstrate that, in general, not everything is properly done in the civil service competition and attestation processes. 17% of respondents thought the civil service competition and attestation system was bad (3.1% thought it was very bad), while 38.1% of respondents gave the system a mediocre assessment. Moreover, 45.8% of respondents said there was nothing negative in the competition and attestation system, 5.8% found the question difficult to respond to, while 48.8% expressed some dissatisfaction, in one way or another. When asked to name the most negative aspect of the competition and attestation system, about 20% of the respondent in the latter group mentioned the non-professionalism of the commission, 11% mentioned rudeness¹, 30% mentioned manifestations of favoritism (such as prompting, etc.), and 26.5% noted the lack of public control.

¹ When civil servants are treated rudely, they must have the right to receive moral support. They must be protected from violations of the norms of ethics towards them and their dignity, and must be able to complain to an appropriate commission, if they have appropriate evidence. 58.3% of respondents think the



PDF Complete

Your complimentary use period has ended. Thank you for using PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

of all the respondents did not think that the presence of 3.1% of respondents noted that observers did not have decision's decisions, hence the suggestion to include NGO representatives in commissions.

2% of the respondent, who were unhappy with the competition and attestation system, said that the most negative characteristic of the system was the fact that the questions used during interviews were worded wrongly, because a civil servant rarely (if ever) deals with such issues in his or her work.

The effectiveness of public administration is functional, which means that it depends on the professional skills of its servants. Therefore, what needs to be assessed is the level of knowledge of one's functional responsibilities and the skills required for carrying out these duties, as well as the appropriate moral/psychological characteristics of the person in question, i.e. his or her administrative/management skills. However, the existing questionnaires evaluate only the mechanical memory of candidates or civil servants. In reality, with the existing questionnaires used for competition and attestation it is impossible to evaluate the participant's knowledge and skills that are required for performing that particular civil servant's functions. In addition, sometimes the skills evaluated by these questionnaires have nothing to do with the responsibilities defined by that particular position's description (for example, financial management skills in the case when the job description does not include any financial matters). In this regard, participants of attestation justly noted that almost the same questionnaire is used when attestation is conducted for the second time. What is the point? Isn't it true that the functional purpose of the competition and attestation processes is to provide the civil service system with knowledgeable and skillful personnel? These processes must serve to ensure that the people who enter the civil service or the civil servants who pass attestation perform their duties effectively.

complaints should be considered by the Civil Service Council, while 13.9% would prefer to give that function to independent observers.

The monitoring have noted that the existing questionnaire mechanical memory. With such questionnaires, it is the participants' knowledge and skills that are required to perform their civil service duties successfully. **According to the observers, "questions for leadership (senior) positions were quite simple, they did not correspond to the position, which made it easy for the participants to answer them"** Attestation with such questionnaires (especially if it is done more than once) is simply pointless and constitutes a waste of public resources.

It is not by chance that the participants were unhappy with the quality of tests requiring memorization of individual articles of various laws and norms. *"Almost all the participants complained about the quality of tests and questions. The latter require simply memorization of individual articles of various laws and norms,"* one of the observers noted.

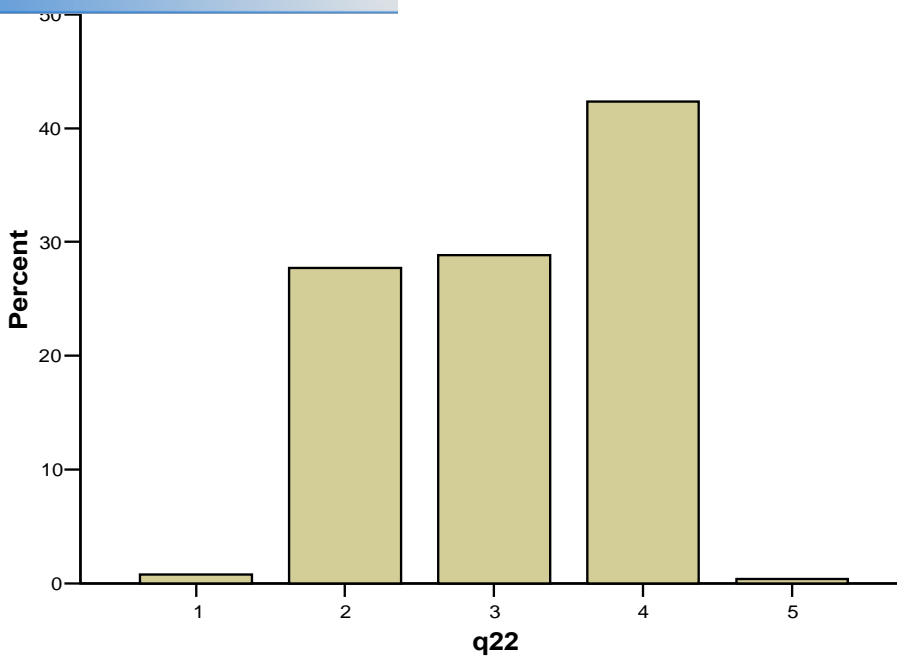
If the existing questionnaires check only the mechanical memory, then the experienced participants find themselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the younger participants, because memorization becomes more difficult with age. As Graph B shows, 42.3% of the participants were between 46 and 60 years old. There are almost no participants younger than 25 years old, and only 27.7% of the participants fall in the 26-35 years old age group. Thus, issues of bringing young people into the system also require urgent solution.

Graph B. Distribution of Competition and Attestation Participants by Age Groups (in percents)

(Column 1 – Under 25 years old, Column 2 – 26-35 years old, Column 3 – 36-45 years old, Column 4 – 46-60 years old)

q22

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)



While recognizing the fact that the legislation has clear requirements for the number of years of professional experience and understanding the meaning and the logic of such requirements, it is still possible to introduce logically some more flexible requirements like in other well-developed civil service systems. For example, the concept of “managerial experience in state bodies only” can be replaced by the idea of “managerial experience” in general. In another example, “quick promotion” schemes can be introduced for certain sub-groups of these positions, allowing successful university graduates (for example) to be “introduced” in the managerial levels of the civil service. The only purpose of such innovations must be to move the picture presented in Graph B towards a “younger managerial” system. However, as a conclusion to this proposal, it is necessary to mention that its introduction would have to depend on what is the vision of the RA civil service – a question that is still open.

It turns out that many civil servants win the competition process easily, but often lack the required professional knowledge and skills. However, the effectiveness of public



Your complimentary use period has ended.
Thank you for using PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

Professional skills of civil servants, and the competition and
at civil servants, who have passed attestation, perform

As a result, we often find situations where commissions show bias towards certain participants, or prompt some people. *“There was one participant in one of the competitions conducted in March this year. During the interview, the commission chairman tried to prompt the right answers to that participant. The questions were very simple, such as: “what are civil service positions?” The participant found it difficult to answer that question and said: “chief”, then after prompting changed his answer to “top.” The participant did not even mention the other positions. Then he/she was declared a winner”* (from an observer’s report). Observers have noted that *“during attestations, participants are declared winners regardless of whether their answers are good or bad, and attestations for higher positions are nothing but a formality.”* Moreover, observers have noticed that *“during some competitions, there are manifestations of biasness on the part of members of the state agency involved and representatives of the Civil Service Council.”*

Observers have also noted some other worrying cases. For example: *“Once, we saw an interesting and telling case. Before the beginning of the actual exam, all the participants had to take a computer literacy test. Since a “certain” participant was unable to pass the “Rubicon”, all the other participants also “failed” the test. The commission stated that no one has the required computer knowledge and, therefore, declared the exam failed.”*

The observers have also noted that, in some cases, there were problems with the creation of question cards that had to do with inputting non-professional questions into the computer. Another shortcoming on the part of the competition and attestation commissions was that, after the tests were created, the appropriate pages (question cards) were not sealed, but rather folded.

are more lenient, and all the participants are declared
clear later on, in the state agency in question.² In the
leads to stagnation in the civil service system and does
not contribute to the development of human resources and improvement of civil servants' knowledge and skills. During the survey, a suggestion was made to have the respondents provide written answers to written questions. 26.5% of respondents (31.7% of competition participants) said that all the participants must be present during the interview, which indicates that there is a certain level of mistrust towards the commission.³ However, since the number of people who shared that opinion in the first stage of the study was 31.1%, one can note a certain decrease in the level of mistrust, which is a positive trend. Another positive thing is that 79.2% of respondents are fully satisfied with the working environment during the competitions and attestation. It is noteworthy that 10.6% of competition participants were unaware of what legal acts were going to be covered during the interview. People complained that the interview questions and answers were acquired through other means. They were uncertain whether the answers must repeat verbatim the appropriate passages in laws and bylaws. In this regard, clarification of rules for selection of public officials and further improvements in legislation are important for renewal of the public service system and prevention of corruption.

The participants were unhappy with the noisy environment that creates tension and stress. This was noted by observers as well: *"The conditions of the exam room can be considered as a shortcoming. The room is divided in two parts, where two exams take place at the same time. The noise from one room makes it difficult for participants in another room to focus."* In some cases, observers have noted that commission members use their cell phones in the rooms, which is a violation of appropriate rules. It is unacceptable that comments were made from one room to another, or there were

² It must be noted that the relevance of the party affiliation factor has been ruled out as a result of a correlation analysis. The summarized answers of respondents interviewed before the election did not depend on their party affiliation.

³ Most of the observers also think that everyone must be present, so that the participants are able to compare the results and be sure that the interviews were objective.

part of commission members. According to 1.8% of the of the survey, the commissions have been biased (there first stage).⁴

Observers have also noted other types of violations. They report that *“the boxes were not sealed for the most part, and everyone knew the score given by the commission before it went into the box (in other words, they knew the number of people who voted for or against)”*. They were cases when commission members were much too eager to contribute to civil servants’ attestation. For example, an observer noted that *“during attestation for the President’s Office staff, the participants checked their tests out loud and no one interfered.”*

In the first stage of monitoring, in many cases (52.4%), sample test answers were not posted, contrary to the rules. The participants tried to find out from each other whether or not they had answered their questions properly. This situation did not improve in the second stage (51.8%). However, it was assumed that these technical issues would be dealt with and corrected once the Civil Service Council was informed of the results of the first stage of the monitoring.

If we look at the answers by competition participants, then we would see a higher level of dissatisfaction. 28.8% of respondents said there was nothing negative in the process. 63.4% noted the following negative points: rudeness of commission members (5.8%), lack of professionalism in the commissions (12.5%), manifestations of favoritism (23.1%), lack of public control (18.3%).

The difference in answers has to do with the fact that for 61.5% percent of competition participants it was not the first competition they had taken part in⁵, whereas 45.4% of them had been declared winners, but had not been appointed to the positions they had sought. 65.2% of these people thought the reason for not getting appointed was

⁴ This indicates that no significant steps to improve the work of commissions have been taken between the first and the second stages of the monitoring.

⁵ 3.5% of the respondents have participated in competition and attestation processes ten and more time.

man/woman.ö Naturally, this hidden dissatisfaction was
ers.
vealed other issues of concern as well. The answers to
this question indicate that gender differences are also taken into consideration when
appointing to a position. 50% of people, who were declared winners but were not
appointed, were women. This is in the case when only 43.5% of our respondents who
participated in competitions were women.⁶ In other words, men are somewhat preferred
for appointments to positions. This is why, among other reasons, appointments should not
take place without appropriate oversight.

It can be stated that *regulation and clarity of competitions become futile if their
logical conclusion – appointment to a civil service position – is marred by uncertainty
and subjectivism.*

It is worth noting that, when asked how important it was to have an influential
sponsor in order to get appointed or promoted, 26.9% of respondents said it was important,
20.4% said it was extremely important, and only 15.4% said it didn't matter at all (only
6.7% of competition participants thought so). Others expressed a variety of opinions in
between. There can be no effective public administration in places where sponsorship and
family/friendship principles are involved in determining the personnel policy. Sponsorship
inevitably leads to the creation and the spread of a bureaucratic circumlocution system. As
a public administration system, bureaucracy works not to resolve the various issues facing
the public, but rather to provide for itself, which strongly contributes to the spread of
corruption. The monitoring and the sociological survey have revealed that a significant
number of civil servants lack the intolerance towards this phenomenon.

**When asked how justified the corruption was, only 39.2% of respondents said
unambiguously that it was never justified. Others tried to justify corruption in one
way or another, whereas 8.5% of respondents clearly stated that corruption was**

⁶ On the other hand, one of the people, who was declared a winner but was not appointed to a position,
thinks that he wasn't appointed, because they were looking for a woman; thus, there was gender
discrimination.

Success becomes a prevalent value, non-institutional power and wealth in the conditions of unorganized opportunities to use these methods increase as the social status grows. This explains the eagerness to enter various state agencies at all costs, which would provide these opportunities; this gives rise to corruption risks. Corruption becomes an important issue, which affects many areas of public service.

Therefore, both the evaluation and appointment systems must be transparent and under public scrutiny, in order to avoid sponsorship/influence by the political force which currently holds the power. According to most of our respondents (46.2%), appointment to civil service positions must be done by the chief of staff of the appropriate state agency in question, *in accordance with certain clearly stated and defined standards*. For example, it has been suggested that the people who win in several competitions be given a priority, which can be an acceptable solution in certain circumstances. It is also logical to have a single winner in every given competition.

2. CORRUPTION RISKS

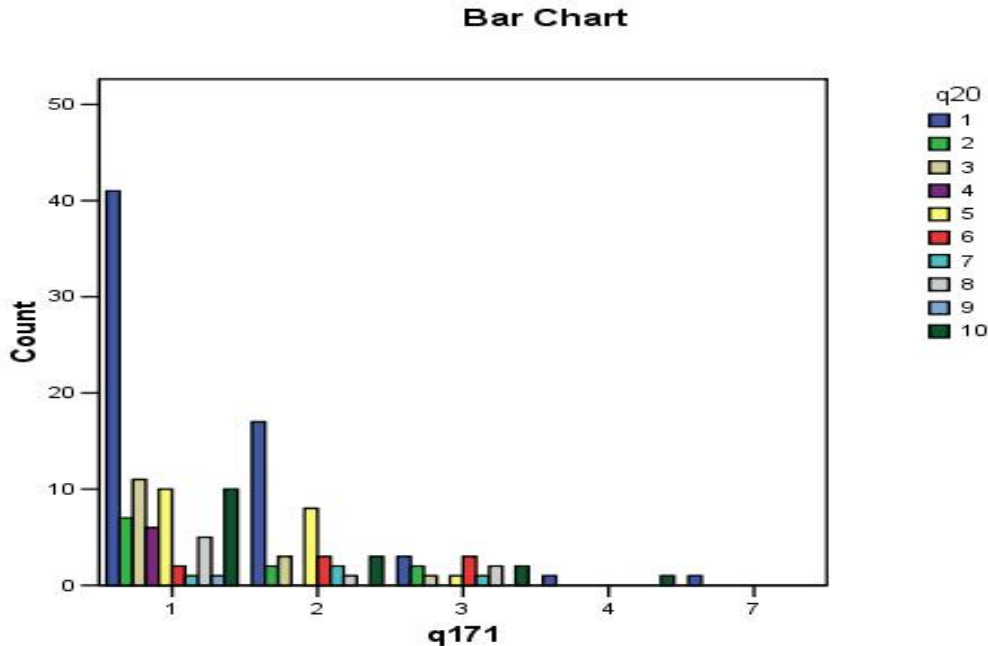
Public control over public servants' activities is important for fighting corruption in the state bureaucratic apparatus. In modern western societies, public service is, in principle, open for public scrutiny. Given this openness, no public servant can find himself/herself outside of control and criticism. The transparency of civil service depends, among other things, on the level of development of civil society institutions and the amount of public participation in state affairs.

The abovementioned data indicate that our respondents attach great importance to the presence of NGO representatives during competitions and attestations. Moreover, 6.7% of the respondents named the presence of NGO representatives at competitions as *the most positive* characteristic of the civil servants' competition and attestation process. 59.2% of respondents thought NGO representatives must be included in competition and

correlation has been discovered, which is clear from a

Graph C. Attitude of Respondents, Who Voted for Including NGO Representatives in Competition and Attestation Commissions, Towards Corruption

(1 ó never justified, 10 ó always justified)



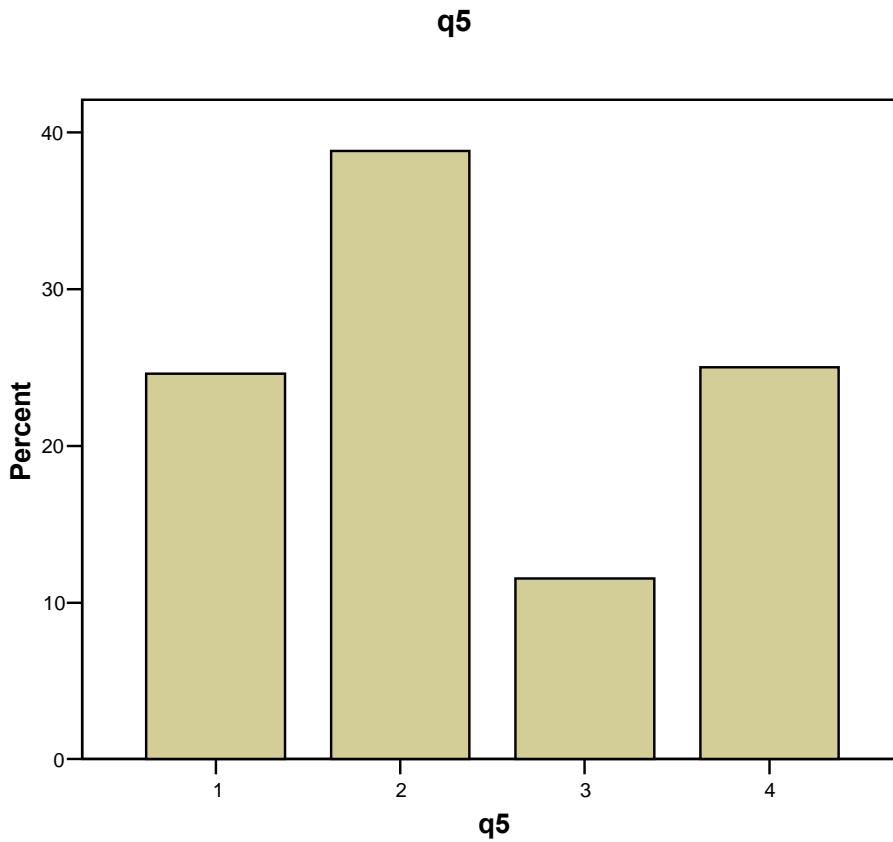
As the graph shows, a significant part of the respondents who attached great role to NGOs (41.8%) thought corruption was never justified. This indicates that the involvement of NGOs is considered a way to reduce the corruption risks. Therefore, the issue of institutionalizing the NGO involvement in the competition and attestation processes must be considered and a concept of such involvement must be developed.

⁷ Civil servants wanted the following people in competition and attestation commissions, in addition to NGO representatives: representatives of the Civil Service Council (83.1%), well-known scientists/academics (10%) and the media (1%). 88% of respondents thought that representatives of the appropriate state agency should also be included in the commissions. 0.5% of respondents thought this function should be given to the RA President’s Oversight Service.

of the civil servants have a positive attitude towards the
 ives, saying that their participation contributed to the
 competition and attestation processes.

Graph D. How Much Does the Participation of NGO Representatives Contribute to the Fairness and Transparency of the Competition and Attestation Processes (in percents)?

(Column 1 ó very much (24.6%), Column 2 ó somewhat (38.8%), Column 3 ó not at all (11.5%) and Column 4 ó difficult to answer (25%))



If we look at the answers of competition participants separately, these respondents are more decided on this question (34.6% said “very much”, 31.7% said “somewhat”, 13.5% said “not at all” and 20.2% found it difficult to answer.

13.8% of respondents noted (citing international experience) that NGOs’ influence on public administration bodies ensure the transparency and fairness of the



PDF Complete
Your complimentary use period has ended.
Thank you for using PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

cess, as well as impartiality and equal protection of
and the commissions become objective in these cases,
e of NGO representatives gives them confidence and

positive energy.

Therefore, it would be right for the appropriate state bodies and the Civil Service Council to support the observation mission carried out by NGOs by creating proper conditions for their operation.

However, observers have complained that sometimes the commissions would forget to introduce the observers. Together with the other shortcomings mentioned above, this was one of the reasons why the observers were unhappy with the working environment during the competitions and attestations in 15.5% of the cases in both stages of the monitoring.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential of a society depends on the potential of its public administration. Armenia is doomed for backwardness because of the limited nature of managerial thinking (strategic, operative, tactical) of various public officials and the lack of managerial culture.

The social scientific thought must realize the deepness of these factors that hinder all the reforms. One of the hindering factors is that managerial knowledge, skills and experience are not being appreciated, talented specialists are not being sought, a public administration ideology, methodology and morals are not being developed, and no appropriate training of personnel takes place.

Since the existing questionnaires for competition and attestation make it practically impossible to evaluate the participants' knowledge and skills that would be required for them to become successful civil servants in their respective areas, it is necessary to develop new questionnaires with the involvement of appropriate specialists from the country's scientific institutions.

Based on the above, we recommend the following:

1. To review the principles of selection of competition and attestation commission members so that the commissions include people from the appropriate state agencies who are going to (or currently do) oversee, direct or coordinate the activities of the civil servant in the contested position.
2. To invite the heads of units from appropriate state agency to be present at the competition, so that they can give their opinion about appointing the winning participant to the position.
3. To review, on a regular basis, the lists of candidates for competition and attestation commission membership in order to make sure that they do not contain anyone who has been subjected to disciplinary sanctions or have been the subject of a negative decision or reprimand by an ethics committee.
4. To organize regular training for candidates for competition and attestation commission membership in order to improve their knowledge and skills as commission members.
5. To introduce concrete penalties for competition and attestation commission members who have violated competition and attestation rules and procedures.
6. To introduce a new provision in the competition and attestation rules to ban communication means (mobile phones?) inside the exam room, not only for participants of competitions and attestations, but also for competition and attestation commission members and observers.
7. To review the questions in questionnaires and question cards to avoid very simply questions, repetitions and questions that are removed from reality.

- s in questionnaires and question cards are reviewed no
- ady guides and to organize trainings together with
personnel divisions and specialists from appropriate agency who are in charge of
preparing the competition and attestation questionnaires and question cards.
10. To ensure that especially the interview question cards contain questions to evaluate the participant's managerial skills, as well as practical problems.
 11. To ensure that all the questions, including the questions in question cards, as well as the lists of legal acts used to prepare the questions, are published in advance, in order to prevent the "temptation" to get the competition and attestation questions and answers in advance; also it is necessary to prevent the publication of answers, including the right answers to tests.
 12. To improve the software used for compiling the tests and question cards in order to make it more controlled.
 13. Tests should be taken in a computerized forms, which will make it possible to evaluate the participants' computer literacy at the same time.
 14. To ensure that competition and attestation procedures are strictly enforced (including the requirement to post sample test answers).
 15. To regulate clearly the cases when computer and other knowledge and skills are to be examined in order to ensure the uniform application of these rules.
 16. To improve the technical and other working conditions for tests taking place concurrently.
 17. To define in the law some concrete criteria for selecting among winning candidates, if a competition yields more than one winner.
 18. To take practical steps to encourage NGO participation as observers, as well as to discuss the prospects of concrete cooperation between the civil service leadership and NGOs.



PDF Complete

Your complimentary use period has ended. Thank you for using PDF Complete.

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

the procedures for NGO participation as observers in the
on processes.

competition for a vacancy must also include information

about remuneration for the contested position.