

**PRACTICAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION PROCESS OF PUBLIC OFFICERS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

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Abstract. *The development of a modern public administration is conditioned by a series of economic constraints on the public sector, by the need to increase the quality and efficiency of public services. Thus, in this context, an effort is necessary to change the organization, to adapt and respond to the needs of citizens, through the new public management, which includes the orientation towards the formation of a culture of performance of the sector. public, characterized by efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of public services. Therefore, there is a clear need to assess the performance of civil service personnel, which is supposed to deliver quality public services.*

Keywords: *performance, evaluation process, performance management, public services, civil servant, public administration*

Introduction

The evaluation of staff performance is a necessity for all entities, considering that in the existing competition conditions it is not possible to have staff with inadequate training, with poor results at work that can affect the results of the entire organization, especially in the public sector (Pitariu, 2006). At the same time, there is a need for an evaluation of the performances as correct and as truthful as possible in order to be able to know exactly the quality of the human resources available to the public institution. Thus, the performance evaluation is carried out in order to determine the way and the extent to which the employee fulfills the tasks and responsibilities of the position, compared to the established standards and the communication of the results to the employees (Gheorghiu, Țepordei, 2010). Therefore, the evaluation procedure of civil servants aims to improve organizational performance by assessing individual professional performances and developing the professional and personal skills necessary for civil servants (Cojocaru, 2014). In another vein, the evaluation of civil servants appeared as a necessity in the improvement of the internal management system within the public authority, which allows for better planning, coordination and organization of the activity of the civil servant, subdivision/public authority. This means that the evaluation is necessary both for the leader and for the evaluated civil servant.

On the one hand, evaluation gives the civil servant the opportunity to judge how well he has met his objectives, or at least how well his management believes he has fulfilled

the role assigned to him within the subdivision (Ionescu, 2011). On the other hand, the evaluation provides the management with information about the results obtained by each civil servant. In this way, the information collected during the evaluation can be used by the management of the public authority to identify the factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the institutional objectives, the efficiency of the distribution of resources in the subdivisions of the institution or in the specific work processes. Following the analysis of the information, management can intervene to eliminate gaps, redistribute resources or make work processes more efficient, implicitly improving the results of the institution in general. The scientific novelty of the research consists in the theoretical-applicative analysis of the impact of evaluating the performances of civil servants on the administration process in the Republic of Moldova. The analysis of the practical aspects, regarding the impact of the evaluation of the performances of the civil servants on the national administration process, allowed the elaboration of the institutional performance indicators.

The need to evaluate the performance of civil servants

An important aspect of human resources management is the performance management system applied within the public authority, including the organizational performance evaluation system, because through evaluation we can better understand how individual results were obtained, at the level of subdivision and public authority, what were the barriers and what is the optimal way to overcome them (Gheorghiuța, Levința, 2011). One of the roles of each subdivision or public authority leader is to ensure effective management of subordinate personnel to achieve optimal results at all levels (individual, subdivision, public authority). Thus, the head of the subdivision/public authority, in order to ensure and maintain an increased performance of the staff, applies managerial techniques and tools to maintain a positive motivational work climate and continuous professional development. One of the key functions of management is performance management and performance evaluation, with application both at the organizational level and at the individual level (Nica, 2012). These two key processes cannot be separated from each other, as performance management is both a predecessor and a successor of performance evaluation. The traditional level at which performance management is used in organizations is the individual level, dedicated to improving the performance of employees in an organizational context. At the individual level, performance management is an integrated system used to constantly improve the performance of all employees (Nicolescu, 2004). This involves the definition of objectives and evaluation criteria, the evaluation of performance in relation to these standards, the active coordination of all levels of performance and the maximization of the learning and development process (Ghid, 2010). Table 1 provides the most essential differences between performance management and performance appraisal.

Table 1. Differences between performance management and performance evaluation

Performance management	Performance evaluation
Performance management is a complex and integral process through which performance is managed at all levels in order to ensure optimal performance	Performance evaluation is integrated into performance management

Performance management is a continuous process. The performance of subordinate employees is one of the basic tasks of leaders/ managers	The performance evaluation takes place in a certain period of time, usually annually
The purpose of performance management is to optimize organizational processes and ensure optimal performance	The purpose of the performance evaluation is to assess the quality and quantity of the results obtained and to identify the skills necessary for the civil servant to perform better at work

Source: developed by the author

The performance of civil servants is influenced by several factors. The factors that directly influence performance are:

- *effort* - performance at work is the direct result of the civil servant's effort, influenced by his abilities and the perception (understanding) of his tasks and objectives. Therefore, performance can be seen as being closely related to the effort made by the civil servant, his abilities, the perception of the place and role of his position within the public authority (Pitariu, 1994). Effort, which results from motivation, refers to the amount of energy (physical and/or mental) used by an employee to perform a task;
- *professional skills* are the personal characteristics of the civil servant used to perform the tasks. They do not change much in a short period of time, but can be developed under the influence of training activities and the accumulation of experiences;
- *the perception (understanding)* of his role in the public authority refers to the direction in which the civil servant believes he should channel his efforts at work;
- *the personality traits (temperament and character)* of the civil servant can influence work productivity through the attitude shown towards work, the level of responsibility and his spirit of activism and initiative. In order to reach an acceptable level of performance, these factors, described above, must exceed an acceptable level.

There are also factors that indirectly influence the performance of civil servants, which are not under their control, but which can affect their performance level. Some of the most commonly encountered obstacles to performance are (Platon, 2007):

- working conditions (temperature, brightness, noise);
- work overload;
- inappropriate promotion and salary policies;
- lack of cooperation at the workplace (conflicts between employees, faulty communication);
- the management and supervision style of the direct manager.

The evaluation procedure of civil servants aims to improve organizational performance by assessing individual professional performances and developing the professional and personal skills necessary for civil servants. Thus, the evaluation of the professional performances of civil servants contributes to (Popovici, Popovici, 2019):

- the direct correlation between the activity of the civil servant and the priorities/ objectives of the subdivision and/or public authority of which he is a part;
- the objective and impartial assessment of the performances of civil servants by comparing the results obtained with the established objectives;
- ensuring a performance management system and continuous improvement of performance by coordinating and monitoring performances at individual, subdivision and public authority level;

- ensuring a financial and non-financial motivation system for civil servants who have demonstrated high performance in their professional activity;
- identifying the professional development needs of civil servants;
- identification of risks, barriers and gaps in the fulfillment of established objectives in order to intervene at the right time;
- identifying the gaps and problems in the resources made available to the civil servant, as well as their redistribution to improve his performance.

Individual performance is closely related to group performance (subdivision) and organizational performance (public authority), thus, the quantity and quality of individual results obtained influence the level of performance of the subdivision to which the civil servant belongs and the performance of the public authority (Profiroiu, Profiroiu, 2007).

The assessment is required for:

- making managerial decisions (promotion, transfer, professional development, etc.);
- employees' knowledge of how their strengths and weaknesses are perceived;
- establishing the individual and group contribution to achieving the objectives of the public authority;
- elaboration of decisions to reward the submitted activity;
- identifying training needs at the level of each civil servant and subdivision within the public authority;
- ensuring a feedback/reaction response, provided periodically, by the manager and the evaluated civil servant.

Table 2 lists the most important advantages and disadvantages of the performance appraisal process.

Table 2. Advantages and disadvantages of the performance evaluation process

Advantages/ Benefits	Disadvantages/ Difficulties
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provides valuable information about employees and the exact nature of their tasks; 2. often provides information on the hitherto unknown competences and abilities of the evaluated civil servant; 3. provides important information regarding the training needs of the assessed civil servant; 4. improves communication relations between managers and subordinates; work issues are discussed; the employee knows exactly what is expected of him, understands his role as seen by his superior; 5. ensures the correct and consistent application of promotion and salary policies in the public authority; 6. increases the performance of civil servants through objective appreciation and encouragement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the use of resources and time are more expensive than the effects of the evaluation (at the beginning of the implementation of the procedure); 2. if the procedure is not applied correctly and objectively, it may have negative effects on the motivation of performing civil servants; 3. the lack of an organizational performance evaluation system at the institution and subdivision level may create some difficulties regarding the correct and objective assessment of individual performance.

Source: developed by the author

The information collected during the evaluation can be used by the management of the public authority to identify the factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the institutional objectives, the efficiency of the distribution of resources in the subdivisions of the institution or in specific work processes (Profiroiu, 2002).

Following the analysis of the information, management can intervene to eliminate gaps, redistribute resources or make work processes more efficient, implicitly improving the results of the institution in general.

The evaluation of the civil servant is carried out in accordance with the following basic principles:

a) objectivity - the factors involved in the evaluation process will make decisions impartially based on arguments and concrete facts, so as to reproduce as accurately as possible the merits, performances, as well as the deficiencies and non-achievements recorded in the activity of the evaluated;

b) continuous cooperation and communication - ensuring a cooperative environment and maintaining open and permanent communication relationships between all factors involved in the evaluation process;

c) respect for dignity - ensuring an environment in which the dignity of every civil servant is respected and a climate free from any manifestation and form of harassment, exploitation, humiliation, contempt, threat or intimidation.

These basic principles are very important to ensure a cooperative and open environment between the evaluator and the evaluated civil servant. Failure to comply with these principles by the factors involved in the evaluation process can lead to the appearance of negative effects and the inefficiency of the implementation of the evaluation process in general.

The main objective of the evaluation of civil servants is to identify the results and problems related to the institution's performance. There is a very close connection between the individual performance of civil servants and the performance of the institution, so that these two processes cannot be treated separately. The performance of civil servants implicitly influences the achievement of strategic objectives at the institution level.

Leaders of public authorities use the information collected in the evaluation process of civil servants to (Pîrvan, 2020): adjust work processes within the public authority; distribution of tasks to civil servants who have the necessary capacities for their effective implementation; redistribution of resources based on needs and priorities; intervention with training activities regarding increasing the capacity of civil servants for new or difficult processes/tasks, etc.

The relationship between individual performance and institutional performance

Management by objectives represents the management model promoted and applied in the public service in the Republic of Moldova. The model of management by objectives represents one of the planning and control systems with the widest use in organizations both in the public and private sectors. Management by objectives consists in setting objectives at all levels (organization, subdivision, civil servant), planning the activity to achieve them; it is a process of self-control and a periodic review system, followed by a performance evaluation.

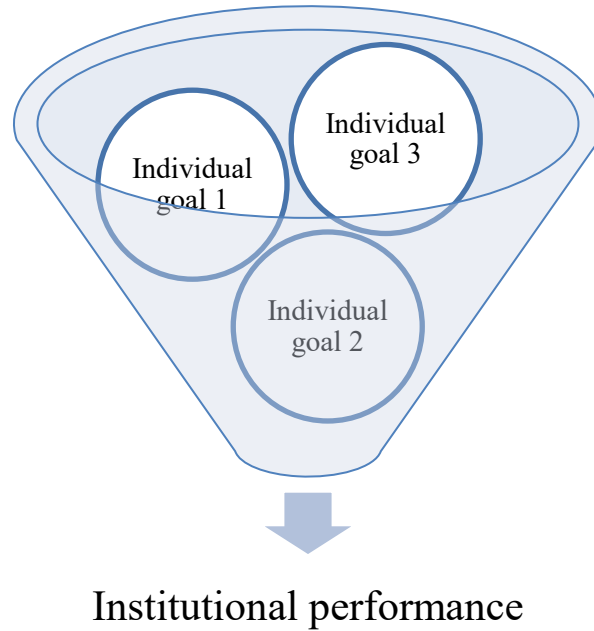


Figure 1. Institutional performance in the public sector
(Source: elaborated by the author)

A condition in the effective application of management by objectives is the active involvement of all employees in setting objectives. Also, if there is a feedback system, performance improves obviously (Savca, 2011).

Management by objectives is based on the following principles:

- formulating cascade objectives;
- establishing specific objectives for each employee;
- participatory decision-making;
- concrete terms of achievement;
- evaluation and feedback system

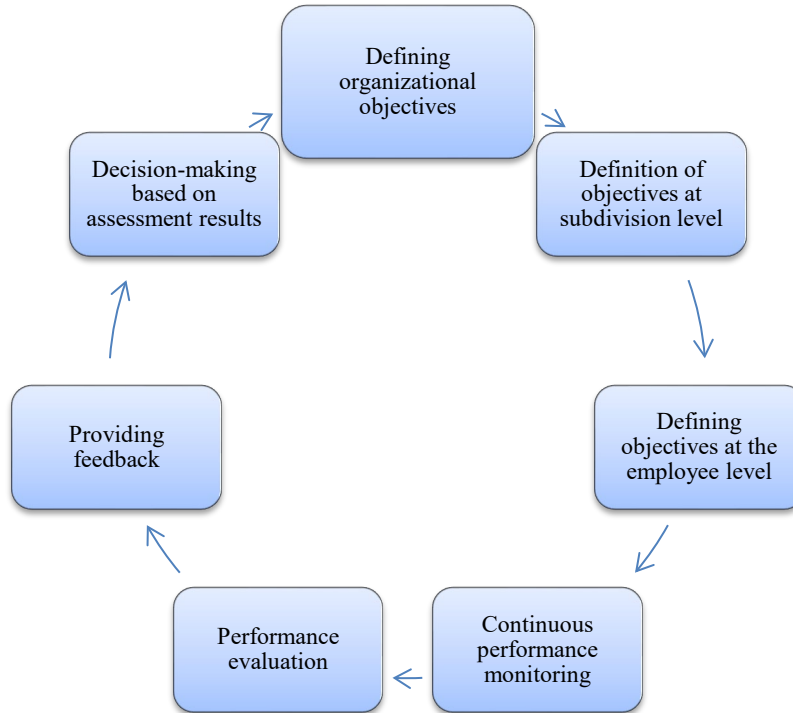


Figure 2. The model of management by objectives in the public sector of the Republic of Moldova
(Source: developed by the author)

Normally, there must be a "General Objective" - "Special Objective" connection between the strategic objectives of the public authority and the objectives of the civil servants in this authority. This connection is expressed by the fact that the achievement of individual objectives influences the achievement of institutional objectives. The set of individual objectives achieved is included in the performance obtained by the subdivisions, and the performance of the subdivisions in the institutional performance (figure 3).

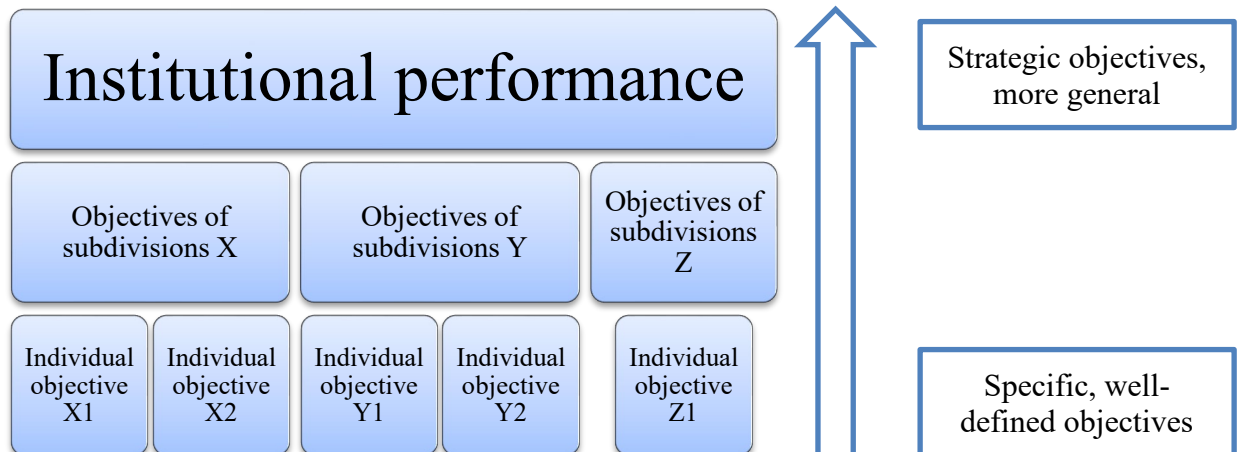


Figure 3. The relationship between the institution's objectives, subdivision level objectives and individual objectives
(Source: developed by the author)

The link between individual objectives and institutional objectives is defined in human resource management studies as "cascading objectives". Through this process, it is possible for the strategic objectives, established at the public authority level, to derive into specific objectives for the subdivisions of the institution, and the latter to derive into even more specific and concrete objectives for the civil servants in the subdivision. The objectives at the institutional level are established in several strategic documents (Sandor, Raboca, 2004). In the ministries, the most important document for establishing institutional objectives is the Strategic Development Program (SDP), previously called the Institutional Development Plan - IDP and the annual activity plans of the public authority. In other public authorities - the social-economic development strategies of the locality/district and the annual activity plans of the public authority are the main sources for the formulation of institutional objectives. The most important role in this process belongs to the head of the institution. He must actively participate in the establishment of the objectives at the institution level and then in the establishment of the objectives for each individual subdivision. It is recommended that, before the evaluation period, the head of the public authority and the heads of subdivisions establish, in a participatory manner (in the form of a discussion with all the factors involved), the objectives for the next year both at the level of the institution and at the level of subdivisions, based on the above-mentioned documents. This procedure will facilitate the task of the evaluators to establish the individual objectives for subordinate civil servants, in the same way, in a participatory manner.

As with the top-down goal-setting process, the evaluation of results at the institution level must be linked to the evaluation of each civil servant. Normally the evaluation of the institution's performance/ achievements must anticipate the individual evaluation. Thus, the results highlighted at the institution level can be distributed at the level of each subdivision and civil servant, depending on their contribution. The advantages of this system are the following:

- there is clarity regarding the results obtained by the institution;
- the leaders highlighted the subdivisions that achieved their objectives at a higher level;
- the results of the subdivisions will be reflected in the evaluation of the heads of subdivisions;
- the heads of subdivisions, as evaluators, in the process of evaluating subordinate civil servants, will focus on the achievements of the subdivision and their own evaluation. Thus, the evaluation of civil servants will be more objective.

It should be noted that the most important role in this process belongs to the head of the institution, because he must lead the process of evaluating the institutional results and objectively evaluate the heads of the subdivisions. If the evaluation at this level is objective, then there is a good chance that the entire evaluation process at the institution level will be objective. The evaluation of the results at the institution level, first of all, is done through annual activity reports, discussed within the institution. These activity reports, as well as the results obtained, must be the basis of the evaluation of the subdivisions and, secondly, the basis of the evaluation of civil servants. The SDPs contain objectives and performance indicators at the institution level. A correct and objective evaluation of the degree of achievement of the objectives in the SDP would be the first step for an objective evaluation of the management and execution civil servants (Şaptefrăți, Golban, 2007).

It must be taken into account that there are certain situations when the institutional objectives are not achieved for objective reasons that cannot be attributed to the civil servants meant to contribute to their achievement.

Institutional objectives are influenced by several factors originating from:

- politics - for example, the political situation in the country in a certain period does not allow the making of decisions and the approval of normative acts;
- economic - for example, during the years 2009-2010, many Government projects, major investments and structural reforms were stopped due to the global economic crisis, which led to the redistribution of public finances to priority branches for the Government;
- international – for example, projects involving the participation of several countries are influenced by the contribution of each one.

In the evaluation process of civil servants, these external factors of an objective nature, which influenced the non-achievement of the respective objectives, must be taken into account. In these situations, the evaluators must evaluate the promptness and effort made by the civil servant and not the final result. In order to reduce the negative effects of the situations in question, it is recommended to monitor the achievement of institutional and individual objectives. As a result, the objectives can be revised and/ or the efforts of civil servants redirected towards the achievement of other objectives.

Conclusions

Concluding the mentioned, it is appreciated that the evaluation of civil servants appeared as a necessity in the improvement of the internal management system within the public authority, which allows better planning, coordination and organization of the activity of the civil servant, subdivision/public authority. In the Republic of Moldova, in general, and within the administrative system, in particular, the evaluation of professional development activities is carried out through different methods and tools, including reports, questionnaires, tests and interviews. The important scientific problem is the scientific foundation of the impact of evaluating the performances of civil servants on the public administration process in the Republic of Moldova, which led to the identification of the modalities of optimizing the performance evaluation in order to make the public administration process more efficient.

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