

## **Better public administration through dialogue**

The story of the Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office

in Bosnia and Herzegovina

We are employees of the Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: PARCO), which was established in October 2004, following the recommendation of the Feasibility study for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The establishment of PARCO was a response to the needs of citizens for a more efficient and responsible public administration at all levels of government, capable of assuming obligations in the European integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. PARCO is the driving force of public administration reform in our country, and its most important role is to coordinate reform activities between the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entities (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) and the Brčko District, closely cooperating with the Delegation of the European Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### The mission

PARCO coordinates the public administration reform process in the country, in cooperation with the competent institutions and administration bodies from the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entities and the Brčko District, representatives of the international community and donors and creates conditions for efficient and effective implementation of public administration reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina through: joint work with the representatives of political, operational, supervisory and implementing structures; initiating and directing financial support and technical assistance; implementation of reform measures through projects; promotion of the overall reform process; providing information and opinion regarding the public administration reform process, and supervision and evaluation of the overall progress of public administration reform, with the objective of creating efficient, transparent, cost effective and modern public administration oriented to citizens.

### Our vision

PARCO has an adequate institutional status and developed organizational, personnel and material-technical capacities, expertise and mechanisms which enable monitoring and ensuring sustainability of the achieved results, and further modernization and improvement of public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the principles of the European administrative space and expectations of the citizens, business community and the society as a whole.

Although not in a formal sense, in practice PARCO has a leading role when it comes to innovations in public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of those innovations in the previous period was the implementation of CAF.

### Beginning of the CAF process in PARCO

PARCO in cooperation with its partners, developed the second action plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy (revised Action Plan 1 2010-2014), and in the area of Human Resource Management, it established an activity regarding

the introduction of tools for total quality management in public administration. The activity itself implied the creation of assumptions for the use of one of the TQM tools, which means piloting, but also the promotion of the selected tools.

In cooperation with friends from the Project „Strengthening Public Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina“, which was financed by the Government of Germany and implemented by "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit" (hereinafter: GIZ SPI), the document "Comparative analysis of quality management models in public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina" was prepared in 2013, as well as the Road Map of selected models for QM in public administration. International experts proposed two models, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and ISO 9001.

Since the goal of the PAR Strategy, which is the guiding principle of PARCO, is "the creation of a more transparent, effective and efficient public administration that will provide citizens with quality services, and thus contribute to Bosnia and Herzegovina's path towards the European Union", PARCO decided to be the first to pilot the implementation of the European model for quality management - CAF.

#### Implementation of CAF

During 2015, PARCO made a decision to implement the first cycle of CAF, and a working group composed of different employee structures was formed - from heads of units to executors of various processes within the institution. Training and mentoring throughout the process was provided by experts from the European Institute for Public Administration, that is, from the European CAF Resource Center (EIPA). After all the preparatory actions, such as collecting the documents needed for the self-assessment and sharing information, the self-assessment process was started.

All members of the working group contributed to this process for all 28 sub-criteria. What was characteristic for the first cycle, because it was done for the first time, was that the consensus meetings lasted a very long time, and material evidence was required to be presented for each stated fact. After presenting the Self-Assessment Report to the management of the institution, activities were prioritized, and out of 144 proposed activities, 19 were chosen as Quick Actions and 12 as long-term projects in the form of an Action Plan for improvement. It was published on the Internet, and all employees were made acquainted with it. The methodology used for prioritization was presented by experts from EIPA.

#### The key problem

What was identified as one of the key problems in the work of the institution is internal and external communication with all stakeholders. Here, the establishment of two-way communication with stakeholders is especially highlighted, as well as the survey of user satisfaction (of one part of stakeholders) and the survey of employee satisfaction, which was not carried out in past.

#### What did we do?

As PARCO did not have any experience in examining the satisfaction of users and employees, we asked for help from friends from the GIZ SPI Project, who, in addition to PARCO, cooperated with a large number of other institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. An inter-institutional working group for quality management was formed, whose main tasks were the

exchange of various practices and the promotion of quality management in public administration. With its experience, this working group produced several important documents that will later be the basis for the introduction of tools for quality management in public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The synergy and determination of the members of the working group was crucial for the promotion of these tools not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the region. Some of the documents that resulted from their work are: "Guidelines for the implementation of ISO 9001 in the public administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina", "Guidelines for measuring the satisfaction of public administration users in Bosnia and Herzegovina" and "Guidelines for measuring the satisfaction of employees in the public administration".

It is important to point out that the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina was informed about this entire process, and promotional conferences were organized to promote these results and the promotion of quality management itself.

But let's get back to PARCO and our problems detected by the CAF self-assessment. Since, thanks to the GIZ SPI inter-institutional working group, we received certain knowledge, as well as guidelines for the implementation of user and employee satisfaction surveys, we started to apply it in practice. Namely, a special working group was formed which carried out a survey of user satisfaction in 2018 (first cycle) and in 2021 (second cycle), and also in 2019 an employee satisfaction survey was carried out. All the above research was followed by the analysis of collected data, the development of action plans for improvement, but also transparency. Namely, all user satisfaction surveys were published on the PARCO website, and the improvement plan itself was published. Also, a presentation of the results and improvement plan for the survey of employee satisfaction was organized for all employees. Furthermore, in addition to these activities within PARCO, we redesigned the website so that the focus on users is increased, we developed the Rulebook on internal communication and the Digital Strategy, and we went to social networks as an organization, so that also in this way we were the leader of positive changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the region.

In the beginning of 2020, we conducted the second cycle of self-assessment according to the CAF model within PARCO. Some members of the working group remained the same, some were new, so we spent this cycle completely independently. At the end, a new action plan with specific activities was drawn up. However, we noted very few problems regarding communication with stakeholders and employees within PARCO, which shows that we did the previous activities in the right and systematic way.

How did CAF help us?

Looking back now, we are very grateful to the methodology of the CAF model, because it pointed out problems that we knew existed somewhere, but not exactly where and how to detect them. CAF showed us that in a systematic way. However, what we particularly emphasize is that problems or challenges, as some call it, are not solved ad hoc, but must be approached systematically and thus solved. When we now look at external and internal communication, CAF not only helped us as the change agent, but indirectly it helped other organizations as well. Namely, everything we learned through the implementation of CAF, especially the improvement of communication, we shared with other public administration organizations, and we continue to try to improve public administration in the direction that the user is in the focus and that all processes must be transparent. Additionally, bearing in mind that PARCO is in

charge of coordinating the process of public administration reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is connected through constant cooperation at the operational level with a large number of institutions at all four mentioned administrative levels, and has the opportunity to use the mechanisms of the coordination structure for implementation of the reform of public administration and thus additionally disseminate positive stories. We can also add the role of PARCO in the coordination of the international initiative Partnership for Open Government at the level of the Council of Ministers of BiH and the advantages of networking and positive cooperation that this initiative provides, not only with public administration institutions, but also with civil society organizations.

As a result of our piloting of CAF, today in our country we have more than 20 organizations from different administrative levels that introduced CAF, and one of the organizations received the Effective CAF User label. A large number of institutions conduct user and employee satisfaction surveys. All these processes are included in the strategic documents for the modernization of public administration, and are being systematically implemented. However, our work is not finished, we are just at the beginning, we continue with this story.

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