

## THE CIVIL SERVICE AS A DRIVER OF KAZAKHSTAN'S GROWTH

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### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the analysis of civil service reforms as a key direction in the modernisation of Kazakhstan's public administration system. The purpose of the study is to assess the institutional and socio-economic effects of civil service transformation. The research employs methods of institutional analysis, comparative legal analysis, as well as the analysis of statistical data and international governance quality rankings. The study examines the main directions of civil service reform, including the transition to a service-oriented model, human resource development, the expansion of social guarantees for civil servants, and the introduction of digital tools for personnel management. A comparative analysis of civil service practices in foreign countries is also conducted, and the possibilities for adapting international experience to the conditions of Kazakhstan are assessed. The findings indicate that systemic civil service reforms form a foundation for improving its effectiveness. However, the limited availability of accessible and open quantitative data constrains the forecasting of macroeconomic and fiscal effects.

**Keywords:** *civil service, reform, public administration, effects, state apparatus, public service.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing uncertainty in the global economy, the growing complexity of socio-economic processes within Kazakhstan, and rising public expectations regarding the quality of governance, the civil service is increasingly viewed as a key strategic resource for the country's development. The effectiveness of public authorities at both central and local levels, the professionalism and motivation of civil servants, as well as the level of public trust in state institutions, directly affect sustainable development and the institutional quality of the state. In this regard, civil service reform should be systemic in nature and extend beyond current personnel and administrative changes within the public administration system.

In Kazakhstan, these processes have been formalised in the Concept for the Development of the Civil Service for 2024–2029, approved by Presidential Decree of the Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>4</sup> The Concept defines the transition to a service-oriented, citizen-centred model of public administration, the enhancement of flexibility in human resource mechanisms within public authorities, and the strengthening of social protection for civil servants.

The complexity and depth of the transformation of the civil service model necessitate an assessment of its institutional and socio-economic consequences, including its impact on the effectiveness of the public administration system, fiscal parameters, and the enhancement of Kazakhstan's economic investment attractiveness.

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<sup>4</sup> Presidential Decree No. 602 (17 July 2024).

The purpose of this article is to analyse civil service reform in Kazakhstan from the perspective of assessing its potential as a factor of institutional development and a driver of national growth. Within the framework of the study, the main directions of civil service reform are examined, comparisons with international practices of civil service organisation are made, and the socio-economic effects of the reform process are assessed.

## EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES TO CIVIL SERVICE ORGANISATION

The civil service has traditionally been regarded as a key institution within the public administration system, ensuring the implementation of state functions and the sustainable development of the country. In the classical Weberian model (Table 1), the civil service, as an ideal-typical bureaucratic organisation, is based on the principles of rational-legal legitimacy, hierarchical authority, and decision-making grounded in established and formalised procedures codified in rules and regulations. The organisation of service is based on functions rather than personal relationships, a clear division of responsibilities among civil servants exists, meritocracy in career advancement, and the professionalism of civil servants recruited on the basis of education, experience, and skills are ensured. Efficiency constitutes a central objective of this model, with the primary goal being the maximisation of the effectiveness of the state apparatus (Weber, 2019; Evans and Rauch, 1999).

This approach to the civil service organisation ensured predictability and legal certainty in the activities of public authorities. However, under conditions of increasing complexity of social and economic processes and growing demands for the quality of public service delivery, it has demonstrated limited adaptability. The Weberian model of the civil service was articulated in Max Weber's seminal work *Economy and Society* (Weber, 2019) and served as the foundation for the formation of the modern professional state, contributing stability, predictability, and objectivity to its functioning.

Since the late twentieth century, alternative concepts of the civil service have emerged in the scholarly literature, most notably the New Public Management (NPM) model, which is oriented toward the adoption by the state apparatus of management methods used in the private sector, the enhancement of performance, and the optimisation of costs within the civil service (Hood, 1991; Krasilnikov, Sivintseva and Troitskaya, 2014; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015; Nuranova and Ryskulova, 2019; Maratova, 2022).

Subsequently, the main emphasis shifted toward the concepts of Public Value (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015; United Nations, 2022; OECD, 2019, 2022; World Bank, 2022) and the Service State (*Service State; New Public Service*) (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Within these frameworks, the civil service came to be viewed not only as an administrative state apparatus but also as an instrument for meeting public needs, delivering public services, and building citizens' trust in the state and its institutions. The practical implementation of the service state concept is reflected in contemporary citizen-centric service delivery models, as articulated in policy documents of the United Nations (United Nations, 2022) and the OECD (OECD, 2021b, 2022, 2025a).

Contemporary research emphasises that the effectiveness of the civil service is determined by the quality of institutions and human resource policies, as well as by a focus on citizens' needs rather than the size of the workforce (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015; OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2022). In this context, civil service reforms are increasingly regarded as a factor of economic growth and enhanced national competitiveness (Rodrik, 2008; OECD, 2025a).

**Table 1. Evolution of Approaches to Civil Service Organisation**

No	Approach / Model	Key Characteristics	Role of the Civil Service	Limitations	Countries / Reforms
1	Classical (Weberian) model	Hierarchy, formalised rules and regulations, stability, neutrality, professional competencies	Maintenance of order, enforcement of laws, ensuring stability	Rigid bureaucracy, low flexibility, process-oriented rather than results-oriented	Germany, France (19th–early 20th centuries); establishment of a professional civil service based on rules and regulations
2	Model of Efficient Bureaucracy (New Public Administration, 1960s–1970s)	Emphasis on efficiency, social justice, consideration of public interests, attention to citizens	Ensuring social equity, improving administrative effectiveness	Difficulty in measuring outcomes, risk of bureaucratic overload	United States (1970s reforms), Canada (1970s): focus on social justice and managerial effectiveness
3	New Public Management (1980s–2000s)	Market-based principles: competition, decentralisation, results-based management, economic efficiency	The state as a resource manager; orientation toward efficiency and results	Reduced attention to social justice; risk of commercialisation of public functions	United Kingdom (Thatcher-era reforms), New Zealand (results-oriented management)
4	Service-oriented (citizen-centric, results-oriented) model (Post–New Public Management, 2000s–present)	Citizen-needs orientation, quality of public services, transparency, digitalisation, engagement with society	Civil service as a service to citizens; increasing trust and satisfaction	Requires high competencies and investment in technology; risk of unbalanced reform implementation	Singapore (Smart Nation), Estonia (digital government), United Kingdom (Citizen Service Standards)

*Note: Table compiled by authors based on the synthesis and comparative analysis of the works by Krasilnikov, Sivintseva and Troitskaya (2014), Kachmiarz, Babczuk and Piepiora (2016), Nuranova and Ryskulova (2019), Maratova (2022), as well as conceptual documents of UNESCAP (1997) and the Council of Europe (2008).*

In order to identify common trends and national specificities in the organisation of the civil service, a comparative analysis of civil service models in a number of countries characterised by different levels of institutional development and administrative traditions is presented in Table 2. The table summarises key parameters of national civil service models, including the type of model, the human resource mechanisms applied, and the potential for their adaptation to the conditions of Kazakhstan.

The selection of countries for analysis is based on their representativeness with regard to the approaches implemented in human resource management in the public sector. Singapore's model exemplifies a highly centralised career-based meritocratic system characterised by rigorous selection procedures and strong material incentives. Denmark and Switzerland have

developed decentralised civil service models grounded in a high degree of institutional autonomy and trust in civil servants. Estonia and the United Kingdom employ hybrid and position-based approaches that combine elements of the career model, contractual arrangements, and digital human resource management tools.

*Table 2. Comparison of Civil Service Models in Selected Countries*

Country	Type of Model	Human Resource Mechanisms	Potential for Adaptation in Kazakhstan
Singapore	Career-based, meritocratic, highly centralised	Strict competitive selection, differentiated career tracks, high remuneration, performance-linked pay	<i>Medium</i> : selection and motivation approaches are applicable; budgetary constraints
Denmark	Decentralised, service-oriented	Flexible employment contracts, high agency autonomy, advanced performance evaluation system	<i>High</i> : principles of autonomy and trust can be adapted with appropriate institutional calibration
Estonia	Hybrid, digital-oriented	Flexible career paths, intersectoral mobility, competency-based approach	<i>High</i> : digital and HR solutions align well with current reforms
United Kingdom	Position-based, contractual	Open competition, contract-based system	<i>Medium</i> : managerial tools are applicable with strengthened accountability; enhanced institutional oversight required
Switzerland	Decentralised, consensus-based	Federalism, high cantonal autonomy, employment stability	<i>Low</i> : limited by differences in administrative-territorial structure
Kazakhstan	Transitional, institutionally reforming	Competitive recruitment, elements of a career model, expansion of social guarantees	-

*Note: Table compiled by authors based on data from Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), OECD (2019, 2020, 2021b, 2025b, 2025c), the World Bank (2022), the European Commission (2018), the United Nations (2022), the Government of Singapore (2017), Pesti and Randma-Liiv (2018), and the Concept for the Development of the Civil Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2024–2029.*

The comparative analysis demonstrates that most effective civil service models are based on a combination of transparent recruitment procedures, flexible human resource mechanisms, and institutional accountability. At the same time, the direct transfer of foreign practices is constrained by existing differences in fiscal capacity, established administrative culture, and the level of institutional maturity of the state apparatus. In this context, **Table 2** may serve as an analytical basis for assessing the feasibility and selective adaptation of international experience in the reform of Kazakhstan's civil service.

## HISTORY OF CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN KAZAKHSTAN: RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Since gaining state independence in December 1991, civil service reform in Kazakhstan has followed an evolutionary and phased trajectory, encompassing the formation of a professional state apparatus, the introduction of competitive recruitment for vacant positions, the

separation of political and administrative posts, and the development of systems for the evaluation and training of civil servants (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Weber, 2019; OECD, 2019, 2021b, 2025a). A significant milestone in this process was the institutionalisation of the “A” Corps, aimed at forming a managerial elite and strengthening the senior administrative cadre within the national state apparatus (OECD, 2019, 2021, 2025a).<sup>5</sup>

The structural problems that have accumulated over time – such as a shortage of qualified specialists, high staff turnover, limited flexibility of career mechanisms, and a growing gap between public expectations and the quality of public services – have necessitated the renewal of the legal and institutional framework of the civil service. These challenges are reflected in the Concept for the Development of the Civil Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2024–2029 (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

The relevance of the present study is determined by the fact that, under current conditions, Kazakhstan’s civil service is characterised by the active introduction of digital tools and the modernisation of managerial practices aimed at establishing a service-oriented model and expanding social guarantees for civil servants.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of civil service reform from the perspective of its potential, as an institutional driver for enhancing the effectiveness of the public administration system and the socio-economic development of Kazakhstan. Unlike a purely normative legal analysis, the study focuses on identifying the systemic effects of civil service reform, including its impact on workforce stability, labour productivity in the public sector, and the quality of public service delivery.

To achieve this aim, the article addresses the following objectives:

- Analyse the conceptual foundations of civil service reform;
- Examine international experience in the implementation of service-oriented and citizen-centric civil service models;
- Assess the potential socio-economic consequences of transformations within the civil service system; and
- Identify limitations and risks associated with the insufficiency of quantitative data for forecasting the socio-economic effects of civil service reform.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of the academic literature indicates that issues related to the civil service are widely addressed in the works of both international and domestic scholars. Analytical reports by the World Bank (World Bank, 2020, 2022) and the OECD (OECD, 2019, 2021b, 2025a), as well as documents of international organisations within the United Nations system (United Nations, 2022; UNESCAP, 1997), emphasise a strong and sustained relationship between the quality of public administration, the professionalism of the civil service, and long-term economic growth. The World Bank’s Government Effectiveness indicator and the IMD World Competitiveness Index are widely used as empirical evidence of the link between the quality of public administration and countries’ economic competitiveness (World Bank, 2020, 2022; IMD, 2023).

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<sup>5</sup> And the National Report on the State of the Civil Service in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024.

Studies examining the experience of Singapore, Denmark, Estonia, and other OECD countries emphasise the key role of centralised human resource systems, flexible contractual arrangements, advanced performance evaluation mechanisms, and the digitalisation of personnel management (Government of Singapore, 2017; European Commission, 2018; Pesti and Randma-Liiv, 2018; OECD, 2021, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d). A distinct strand of the literature focuses on issues of social protection, remuneration, and employment conditions of civil servants as factors contributing to the retention of qualified and competent professionals, the development of effective motivation systems, and the reduction of corruption risks in public governance. These findings are supported by both empirical studies and comparative reviews conducted (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2023; OECD, 2021, 2025a).

In the scholarly works of Kazakhstani researchers (Sadykova and Abilmazhinov, 2016; Nuranova and Ryskulova, 2019; Maratova, 2022), the analysis of legal aspects of the civil service and institutional mechanisms of administrative reform traditionally predominates, with comparatively less attention paid to the socio-economic effects of civil service reforms. At the same time, only a limited number of academic studies and reports (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Rodrik, 2008; Aghion and Howitt, 2009; Fadic, Garda and Pisu, 2019; OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022) conceptualise the civil service as an important economic institution that influences labour productivity, the investment climate, and the quality of human capital. This circumstance shapes a distinct research niche and defines the contribution of the present study to the development of an interdisciplinary analysis of Kazakhstan's civil service.

## **METHODS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodological foundation of the study is the institutional approach, which conceptualises the civil service as a system of formal and informal rules that shape the behaviour of civil servants, the nature of state–society interactions, and the effectiveness of the implementation of state functions and the delivery of public services. Within this framework, civil service reform is analysed as a key element of institutional change in the public administration system, with the capacity to influence the country's socio-economic development and the quality of public service provision.

The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The primary method is comparative legal analysis, which is used to compare civil service models in foreign countries with high levels of public administration effectiveness (including Singapore, Denmark, Estonia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and others). This approach makes it possible to identify common trends as well as specific features of the adaptation of international civil service practices to national contexts.

To assess the socio-economic consequences of civil service reform, methods of statistical analysis were employed based on official data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BNS ASPR RK, 2025), as well as international indices and rankings, including the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the IMD World Competitiveness Index, and the E-Government Development Index (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2011; ACSA, 2024; World Bank, 2020, 2022; United Nations, 2022; IMD World Competitiveness Center, 2023; OECD, 2021; UN E-Government Knowledgebase).

The study applied descriptive statistical analysis to indicators characterising the contribution of public administration to gross domestic product (GDP), the structure of employment, labour productivity, and public expenditure.

The study employs content analysis of regulatory legal acts, strategic and programmatic documents, as well as analytical and expert materials at both national and international levels (ACSA, 2024; OECD, 2021, 2022, 2025a; United Nations, 2022; World Bank, 2022).<sup>6</sup> This approach made it possible to systematise the main directions of civil service reform and to identify potential institutional risks associated with the transformation of the public administration system.

A limitation of the study is the lack of accessible quantitative data, including forecasts, which resulted in a predominance of qualitative assessment methods and scenario analysis in the interpretation of the research findings.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings obtained in the course of the study make it possible to consider ongoing civil service reforms not only as an instrument of administrative change, but also as an element of a broader institutional transformation of the public administration system.

From a macroeconomic perspective, the civil service constitutes a measurable and significant segment of the national economy. According to 2024 data, the share of the activity category “public administration and defense; compulsory social security” in Kazakhstan’s GDP structure amounted to 1.9%, while for the first nine months of 2025 it reached 2.1% (Table 3). The gross value added (GVA) of the public sector totaled nearly KZT 2,630.6 billion, of which 72.3% accounted for the remuneration of civil servants (BNS ASPR RK, 2025). This indicates the significance of the public sector as a contributor to employment and income formation of the public sector and underscores that any institutional changes in the civil service system have direct economic implications through employment, income, and labour productivity dynamics.

**Table 3. Share of Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security in Kazakhstan’s GDP (2022–2025)**

	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Jan-Sept) *
GDP, in million KZT	103,765,518.2	119,442,289.7	136,693,318.3	99,562,139.4
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security**, in million KZT	1,961,063.2	2,442,908.7	2,630,560.3	2,114,434.0
Share of Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security in GDP, %	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.1

Note: Table compiled by authors with data from the BNS ASPR RK, 2025.

\* Preliminary data.

\*\* This category includes general public administration (executive, legislative, and financial activities at all levels of government) and state regulation in the social and economic spheres.

At the same time, according to the Concept for the Development of the Civil Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2024–2029 (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024), improvements in the remuneration system for civil servants are envisaged, which is expected to contribute to an increased contribution of the respective activity to the national economy. In this context, labour productivity (measured as GVA per employed person) in 2024 amounted to approximately KZT 12.9 million for the economy as a whole and nearly KZT 5.1 million for

<sup>6</sup> See also Legal Documents in the References section.

the activity category “public administration and defense; compulsory social security” (Table 4). This indicates the existence of substantial potential for improving the efficiency of the public sector through the enhancement of organisational processes, the digitalisation of management, and the development of results-oriented practices in the civil service.

At the same time, Kazakhstan already possesses a well-developed digital infrastructure in the field of public services, which creates favorable institutional preconditions for enhancing the effectiveness of the civil service. According to the United Nations assessment of e-government development among 193 countries worldwide, published in September 2024 (UN E-Gov Index, 2024), the top ten countries include Denmark, Estonia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Iceland, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland, and the Netherlands, while Kazakhstan ranked 24th, demonstrating comparatively strong performance in the Online Services Index. In this sub-index, Kazakhstan ranked 10th, outperforming countries such as Germany, China, and Australia. This indicates that Kazakhstan has established a solid digital foundation for the development of a service-oriented civil service model and for the integration of digital solutions into human resource and managerial processes.

**Table 4. Gross Value Added per Employed Person in the Activity «Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security» in Kazakhstan, (2021–2025), in thousand KZT**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (1 <sup>st</sup> Half)
Total economy	5,204.2	10,083.2	11,354.2	12,886.0	5,692.7
Including:					
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security	3,166.9	3,856.4	4,664.7	5,087.8	2,721.5

Note: Table compiled by authors using data from the BNS ASPR RK, 2025.

As the analysis of international practice shows, countries with the most effective civil service models demonstrate a more viable, sustainable and stable relationship between the quality of public administration and the level of economic development. According to the IMD World Competitiveness Index (2024), which evaluates 67 countries across indicators of economic performance, government efficiency, and business efficiency (IMD, 2024), Singapore, Switzerland, and Denmark consistently rank among the leading countries both in terms of government efficiency and GDP per capita. Such a comparison indicates a close relationship between the quality of public administration and the level of economic development, in which an effective civil service serves as one of the key elements of the institutional foundation of a competitive national economy.

**Table 5. Selected Civil Service–Related Expenditures of the Republican Budget of Kazakhstan, (2023–2024), in million KZT**

	2023	2024
Civil Service Personnel Testing Services	268	268
Development and Implementation of a Unified State Policy in the Field of the Civil Service	5,152	4,808
Training, Retraining, and Advanced Professional Development Services for Civil Servants	2,193	2,467
Ensuring Advanced Professional Development of Civil Servants	11	8

Note: Table compiled by authors using data from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025.

From the perspective of budgetary implications, the analysis shows that civil service reforms and related institutional transformations are potentially associated with an increase in public expenditures. In 2024, budgetary spending in Kazakhstan under the category «development and implementation of a unified state policy in the field of the civil service» amounted to KZT 4.8 billion (Table 5). A significant share of these funds was allocated to the training, retraining, and professional development of civil servants.

In addition, the analysis indicates that reforms in the field of public administration have a positive impact on a country's business climate. As shown in an OECD study (Fadic et al, 2019), improvements in the quality of local public administration — from a low-efficiency level (25%) to a relatively high-efficiency level (75%) lead to an increase in firms' labour productivity rates by 2.4 percentage points. This implies that if a firm's productivity grew, for example, by 1% per year, improvements in the administrative environment could raise this rate to 3.4% per year. This effect was measured through a comparative analysis of firms located on opposite sides of administrative boundaries in Italy, where the effectiveness of tax, transport, registration, and other public services varies significantly across regions.

From the perspective of investment activity, the civil service is not a direct object of investment. In 2024, the share of fixed capital investment in the activity category «public administration and defense; compulsory social security» in Kazakhstan amounted to 0.9% of total investment (Table 6). However, institutional changes within the civil service system may exert an indirect influence on the country's investment climate by improving the quality of public service delivery, reducing administrative barriers, and enhancing the predictability of the regulatory environment. In this context, civil service reform can be regarded as an element of institutional and infrastructural support for the country's investment attractiveness.

**Table 6. Fixed Capital Investment in the Activity «Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security» in Kazakhstan, (2022–2024)**

	2022	2023	2024
Total, million KZT	15,251,104	17,649,313	19,461,332
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security, million KZT	164,715.2	202,547.7	178,798.4
Share, %	1.1	1.1	0.9

Note: Table compiled by authors based on data from the BNS ASPR RK, 2025.

Particular attention should be given to the analysis of disciplinary practices and law enforcement in the field of civil service. According to data from the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 125 administrative cases related to violations of civil service legislation were considered in Kazakhstan in 2024, with the total amount of fines imposed reaching KZT 3.7 million. The majority of violations were associated with competitive recruitment procedures and unlawful dismissal from office. This indicates the presence of systemic problems in human resource management and confirms the relevance of institutional changes aimed at enhancing transparency, objectivity, and accountability within the civil service.

Alongside issues related to law enforcement and recruitment procedures, structural human resource constraints persist within the state apparatus. As of 1 January 2025, out of an established civil service staffing level of 91,555 positions in Kazakhstan, only 84,482 positions were actually filled (ACSA, 2024). More than 7,000 positions remained vacant, including approximately 1,600 positions that had been unfilled for an extended period (Table 7). This

indicates the existence of a significant human resource reserve that remains underutilised within the state apparatus.

In addition, the results of a 2024 survey show that 64% of civil servants reported staff shortages in sectoral units, particularly in the fields of economics, information technology, healthcare, housing and communal services, and law. This situation leads to increased workloads for existing employees and may negatively affect the quality of public service delivery.

Such challenges are not unique to Kazakhstan but are also characteristic of many foreign countries with well-developed public administration systems. According to OECD reports, employment in the public sector in OECD member countries ranges from around 10% of total employment (Japan, the Republic of Korea) to approximately 30% (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), while expenditures on civil servants' remuneration account on average for 9.2% of GDP and 22.5% of total public spending (OECD, 2021a; 2021b). At the same time, young professionals aged 18–34 represent only 17.8% of the civil service workforce in OECD countries. In this context, the OECD recommends that governments adopt targeted measures to attract and retain young people in the public sector.

**Table 7. Authorised and Actual Number of Civil Servants in Kazakhstan, Including Administrative and Political Civil Servants, (2023–2025), in persons**

	2023	2024	2025
Authorised staffing level, total	90,053	90,583	91,555
Including:			
- administrative civil servants	89,312	89,830	90,770
- political civil servants	741	753	785
Actual staffing level, total	83,963	83,009	84,482
Including:			
- administrative civil servants	83,237	82,278	83,731
- political civil servants	726	731	751

*Note: Table compiled by authors based on data drawn from the National Report on the State of the Civil Service in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024).*

In Kazakhstan, similar trends are reflected in the dynamics of the age structure of civil servants. In recent years, a slight decline has been observed in the share of young civil servants under the age of 30—from 23% in 2019 to 17% in 2023 (ACSA, 2024). According to data from the Agency for Civil Service Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the average age of civil servants is 40 years, while the proportion of young people under 35 years of age accounts for 34.6%. The average length of service in the civil service is 11.9 years. In this context, measures aimed at fostering early career orientation can be regarded as a tool for the long-term strengthening of human capital in the public sector.

Personnel sustainability of the civil service is determined not only by the inflow of new specialists, but also by the capacity of the public administration system to reduce staff turnover, retain qualified personnel, and foster long-term motivation. In this context, systems of social protection and support for civil servants serve as important institutional instruments for preserving human capital and ensuring organisational stability. International experience confirms that more developed social protection systems for civil servants are correlated with higher levels of personnel stability. In most developed countries, special mechanisms exist to provide healthcare coverage for civil servants and their family members; however, the approaches adopted and the scale of such support vary considerably.

Thus, the healthcare system of the United States is the most expensive in the world, with expenditures exceeding those of any other country. The U.S. system does not include outpatient polyclinics, which eliminates the need for annual public spending on their maintenance. Instead, healthcare provision is organised around a system of family physicians (general practitioners). In cases of illness, employees consult family doctors who conduct an initial examination and, if necessary, refer patients to specialised physicians or hospitals.

At the same time, the country operates three types of hospitals: public hospitals; private for-profit hospitals; and private non-profit hospitals. The latter category includes institutions established by various non-profit or charitable organisations, as well as by national minorities and other community-based entities.

In the United States, a well-developed system of private health insurance is in place, with the majority of Americans receiving private health insurance coverage through their employers. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), approximately 60% of U.S. residents are covered by employer-sponsored health insurance, while only about 9% of Americans purchase health insurance policies on an individual basis.

Against this general backdrop, federal civil servants in the United States have access to the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB), one of the largest health insurance systems in the country. The FEHB programme offers a wide range of private health insurance plans that are partially subsidised by the government. Family members (spouses and children up to the age of 26) may also be covered under the programme. Medical services are provided not through public clinics, but through private healthcare providers participating in the selected insurance plans. Overall, the FEHB programme covers more than eight million federal employees, retirees, and their family members. Participants may choose from over 200 different health insurance plans, ensuring a high degree of flexibility and the ability to select the most suitable coverage option. In particular, the following options are offered:

- Fee-for-Service (FFS) plans and Preferred Provider Organisations (PPOs);
- High-Deductible Health Plans (HDHPs);
- Consumer-Driven Health Plans (CDHPs).

The availability of specific plans depends on the participant's region of residence or employment. Participants may also make use of supplementary health coverage programmes, such as Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) to cover medical expenses on a pre-tax basis, as well as dental and vision insurance programmes under the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

Under the FEHB programme, the federal government covers up to 75% of the insurance premium, while the remaining portion is paid by the participant. Approximately 85% of federal employees and 90% of retirees are enrolled in the programme.

In the United Kingdom, all citizens have access to the services of the National Health Service (NHS), which was established on 5 July 1948. The NHS provides universal access to healthcare for all citizens, including civil servants, members of Parliament, police officers, and municipal employees, on equal terms. This universal approach eliminates the need to create a separate healthcare system for public sector employees. Medical care is provided free of charge at the point of use to every citizen, regardless of employment status. The NHS is financed through taxation.

Some senior civil servants – particularly those working abroad, such as high-ranking officials, diplomats, and members of the security services – may receive additional private health insurance as part of their compensation packages, covering treatment in private medical facilities. Family members may also be entitled to such benefits under contractual arrangements. However, this practice does not constitute mandatory state healthcare policy and depends on the internal human resources policies of individual government bodies.

Thus, unlike in the United States (with the FEHB insurance programme) or Kazakhstan (where specific benefits for civil servants exist), the United Kingdom does not maintain separate programmes or specialised medical institutions for public sector employees. All individuals receive medical treatment in the same hospitals under uniform rules.

**Table 8. Comparison of Healthcare Provision for Civil Servants and Their Family Members in Developed Countries and Kazakhstan**

Country	Healthcare System	Features for Civil Servants	Coverage of Family Members	Specialised Medical Institutions
United States	Private insurance (FEHB)	Choice of a health insurance plan subsidised by the government	Yes	No
United Kingdom	Public (NHS)	Same rights as all citizens; additional insurance for diplomats	Yes	No
Germany	Mixed (public + private)	Beihilfe covers 50–80% of costs; the remainder is covered by private insurance	Yes	No
France	Mixed (public + private (mutuelle))	Basic coverage plus supplementary employer-provided insurance	Yes	No
Japan	Mandatory social insurance	Civil servants are included in the general insurance system	Yes	No
Canada	Universal public system	Same services as those provided to all citizens	Yes	No
Australia	Mixed (public + private)	Basic coverage through Medicare; sometimes supplementary insurance	Yes	No
Republic of Korea	Public insurance system	Preferential contributions and extended coverage	Yes	No
Russian Federation	Public system + compulsory health insurance (CHI)	Civil servants receive care under CHI, sometimes in departmental clinics	Yes	Yes (departmental clinics: Ministry of Internal Affairs, FSB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.)
Uzbekistan	Public system with developing	Civil servants are treated in public polyclinics; departmental	Yes	Yes (especially for security services)

	insurance mechanisms	institutions exist for specific categories		and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Kazakhstan	Public system with elements of compulsory social health insurance (CSHI)	Civil servants receive care in public polyclinics and hospitals; family members are entitled to care when cohabiting	Yes	Yes (medical institutions affiliated with government bodies)

*Note: Table compiled by authors based on academic studies (Hood, 1991; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Sadykova & Abilmazhinov, 2016), data from OECD reviews (OECD, 2021), the European Commission (European Commission, 2018), as well as the Concept for the Development of the Civil Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2024–2029 and the National Report on the State of the Civil Service in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024).*

Thus, the analysis demonstrates that in developed countries healthcare provision for civil servants and their family members is ensured either through universal healthcare systems (the United Kingdom, France, Japan) or through special insurance programmes with state participation (United States, Germany). At the same time, outpatient clinics and hospitals “exclusively for civil servants”, which have become common in post-Soviet states, are absent in developed countries, where a universal approach to healthcare and insurance-based models prevail, granting civil servants the right to choose healthcare providers for themselves and their family members.

Overall, based on the analysis conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In developed countries, an insurance-based approach predominates, rather than the attachment of civil servants and their family members to departmental state polyclinics and hospitals;
- Civil servants are generally not treated in specialised hospitals, with the exception of certain categories (senior officials, military personnel, diplomats), who may access private clinics through supplementary health insurance;
- Family members of civil servants in developed countries are almost always included in coverage automatically or upon payment of an additional premium;
- The state, as an employer, subsidises health insurance or provides it to civil servants on favorable and attractive terms.

Thus, the results of the analysis make it possible to view civil service reforms as a factor of systemic impact on the country’s socio-economic development through institutional strengthening of the civil service corps, increased labour productivity in the public sector, and improved quality of public services. In this context, civil service reform can serve as an element supporting economic competitiveness and the country’s investment attractiveness. At the same time, the effectiveness of civil service reforms largely depends on the quality of workforce planning, adequate financing of social guarantees, and the capacity of public authorities to implement new human resource management instruments in practice.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in interpreting the civil service as a potential “growth point” capable of exerting an indirect influence on the country’s socio-economic development by improving the quality of public service delivery, reducing transaction costs, and strengthening trust in state institutions. Unlike a substantial share of existing academic, analytical, and expert literature, which focuses primarily on the legal aspects of civil service

reform, this article attempts a comprehensive assessment of the institutional, social, and economic effects of ongoing reforms in the civil service.

As the analysis demonstrates, the socio-economic impact of civil service reform may be multi-level in nature, with its key effects presented in Table 9. In contrast to a narrow legal approach, the identified dimensions of impact make it possible to view civil service reform as a factor influencing not only the internal processes of the public administration apparatus, but also the conditions for economic activity, the investment climate, and public trust in state institutions.

As shown in Table 9, the key effects of civil service reform are realised through institutional channels associated with increasing the professionalism of civil servants, introducing results-oriented and digital human resource management mechanisms, and expanding social guarantees for public employees. Accordingly, the table demonstrates that civil service reform can be regarded as an institutional “growth point” capable of indirectly supporting the country’s sustainable development, provided that reforms are implemented consistently and accompanied by systematic monitoring of outcomes.

**Table 9. Socio-Economic Effects of Civil Service Reform**

No	Area of Impact	Channel of Influence	Expected Effect
1	Quality of public services	Increased professionalism and motivation of civil servants; optimisation of administrative procedures	Reduction of administrative costs for citizens and businesses; higher satisfaction with public services
2	Labour productivity in the public sector	Introduction of results-oriented performance assessment and digital HR tools	More efficient use of budgetary resources; higher returns on public sector employment
3	Workforce stability and turnover	Expansion of social guarantees and flexible career mechanisms	Lower staff turnover in public administration; preservation of institutional memory
4	Investment climate	Greater predictability and speed of administrative procedures for investors	Reduced regulatory risks; increased investor confidence in the host country
5	Anti-corruption effects	Enhanced transparency, digitalisation of public sector processes, and higher remuneration of civil servants	Reduced corruption incentives and transaction losses in public administration
6	Fiscal efficiency	Optimisation of the size and functions of the public administration apparatus	Containment of growth in current budget expenditures for maintaining public administration
7	Quality of human capital	Investment in training and professional development of civil servants	Enhanced competencies and managerial capacity of civil servants
8	Trust in state institutions	Improved interaction between the state and citizens	Increased public trust in the public sector and greater social stability

*Source: Compiled by the authors based on academic studies (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Rodrik, 2008; Aghion and Howitt, 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Dahlström, Lapuente and Teorell, 2012), institutional analysis, and synthesis of data from the United Nations (United Nations, 2022), the World Bank (World Bank, 2022), and the OECD (OECD, 2021; 2025a).*

International experience in civil service reform constitutes an important empirical source for assessing the directions and logic of institutional change in public administration systems. In developed countries, civil service reforms are viewed as a systemic instrument for improving the quality of public services, reducing transaction costs, and strengthening trust in state institutions.

The Government Effectiveness Index, which forms part of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2023; World Bank, 2020; 2024), is one of the World Bank's key indicators used to assess the quality of governance in more than 200 countries across six dimensions. It reflects the quality of public service delivery, the professionalism and independence of the civil service, and the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation. According to 2023 data, the top ten countries in the ranking were Singapore, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Luxembourg, and Canada. Kazakhstan ranked 78th in this index. An analysis of civil service practices in the top ten countries makes it possible to identify key models and instruments relevant for assessing the reform potential of Kazakhstan's civil service.

The analysis shows that the service-oriented model of civil service is most consistently implemented in Denmark, where the public administration apparatus is oriented toward citizens as recipients of public services. The Danish civil service model is characterised by decentralisation and the principle of subsidiarity, with many social and administrative services delegated to 98 municipalities (European Commission, 2018). International practice demonstrates that a service-oriented model of public administration is directly linked to levels of public trust and the quality of state institutions. In Denmark, satisfaction with administrative services reaches 72%, exceeding the OECD average of 66%, while the share of citizens expressing high or moderately high trust in government amounts to 44%, compared to the OECD average of 39% (OECD, 2025b).

Digital transformation plays a significant role in the implementation of the service-oriented model of civil service. Denmark has one of the highest scores on the Digital Government Index (0.81), compared to an OECD average of 0.61. The most advanced dimension is "Government as a Platform," reflecting a transition toward a model of the state as an integrated service platform oriented toward users. Overall, the Danish experience confirms that a service-oriented civil service model is built on citizen-centricity, digital tools, and a systematic focus on the quality of public service delivery.

Similar elements of the service-oriented civil service model can be observed in Estonia. According to an OECD report, 83% of citizens are satisfied with administrative services, although the level of trust in government stands at 38% (OECD, 2025c). Estonia demonstrates a high level of digital maturity (0.74). The Estonian civil service operates under the revised Civil Service Act, which entered into force in 2013. As a result of the 2013 reform, the definition of a "civil servant" was narrowed: only personnel performing core state functions (policy formulation and implementation) now hold civil servant status, while support staff (HR personnel, IT specialists, accountants, etc.) were transferred to employment contracts governed by the Labour Code.<sup>7</sup> This approach combines the principles of the traditional

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<sup>7</sup> Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (23 November 2015).

Weberian civil service (meritocracy and legality) with the methods of New Public Management. Within Estonia's public administration model, key performance indicators (KPIs) and regular staff performance assessments in the form of periodic certification have been introduced (Pesti and Randma-Liiv, 2018).

According to an OECD report, high levels of satisfaction with the quality of public services in Southeast Asian countries contribute to strengthening trust in state institutions (OECD, 2025d). In these countries, satisfaction with healthcare reaches 87%, with education 89%, and trust in the judiciary 70%; in Singapore, these indicators are even higher. The report emphasises the key role of digital public services as the infrastructural foundation of the service-oriented civil service model: in Singapore, more than 90% of the population use digital identification to access public services. In addition, civil service management is carried out within a unified human resource system (the Public Service Division), under which all government agencies operate within a common HR policy framework.

Singapore employs a unified grading system (the Management Executive Scheme), in which career advancement and salary progression depend on competencies and performance outcomes rather than, for example, formal educational credentials. Positions are grouped into pay bands, each with an established salary range. This model of horizontal progression ensures equal opportunities for professional development (Government of Singapore, 2017).

At the same time, in Singapore the system of social guarantees is viewed as an element of state policy aimed at building a competitive and stable civil service. It includes extended health insurance coverage, mental health support programmes, corporate well-being initiatives, and pension provision through the Central Provident Fund, as well as annual allowances designed to enhance workforce resilience. These social guarantees, complemented by corporate welfare programmes, health insurance, mental health support measures, and pension provision through the Central Provident Fund, contribute to a high level of social protection and loyalty among civil servants. According to the OECD, countries with well-developed systems of social guarantees demonstrate higher levels of staff retention and greater trust in state institutions (OECD, 2025a).

A similar principle is applied in the United Kingdom,<sup>8</sup> where horizontal career progression within a given position is ensured. Each grade has an established pay band, within which remuneration increases as competencies and experience grow. Progression within the band is based on annual performance appraisals. In France, the civil service personnel system is built on a competitive recruitment basis with a clear division into categories A, B, and C, which ensures structured career progression and institutional stability. In Switzerland, despite the decentralised organisation of personnel management, HR policy is coordinated by the Federal Personnel Office, while the core principles remain meritocracy, equal opportunities, and a focus on continuous professional development.

Thus, international practice indicates that the development of a service-oriented civil service model, digital HR systems, and comprehensive social guarantees is associated with higher levels of civil service effectiveness and greater institutional stability of the public administration.

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<sup>8</sup> UK Parliament's Staff Handbook, Chapter 9. Pay, allowances and benefits.

<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-resources/Staff-handbook/Chapter-9-Pay-allowances-benefits.pdf>

The results of the comparative analysis also show that the application of international approaches requires consideration of national institutional, cultural, and resource-specific characteristics. Differences in the level of institutional development of the state and society, administrative culture, and resource capacity in Kazakhstan create objective constraints on the direct transfer of foreign models and highlight the need for an adaptive approach when drawing on international experience.

The practical significance of the findings lies in their potential use in drafting laws and subordinate regulations in the field of civil service, developing indicators for assessing civil service performance, and designing human resource development programmes. At the same time, the applicability of the results is limited, as the study did not cover intra-organisational aspects of the functioning of individual government bodies.

Among the limitations of the study is its primarily qualitative analysis, resulting from the lack of detailed statistical and forecast data. In addition, the use of international indices and rankings does not fully account for national institutional specificities, which underscores the need for further research, including the development of quantitative models to assess the effects of civil service reform.

**Table 10. Limitations and Risks in the Assessment and Implementation of Civil Service Reform**

<b>Limitation / Risk</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Potential Consequences</b>	<b>Ways to Minimise the Limitation / Risk</b>
Limited quantitative data	Lack of detailed statistics and forecast calculations on the effects of civil service reform	Difficulty in assessing macroeconomic and budgetary impacts	Develop an indicator system; phased monitoring of civil service reform implementation
Institutional inertia	Established public administration practices and resistance to change	Formal adoption of civil service reform without real change in civil servant behavior	Training for civil servants; motivational and incentive mechanisms
Fiscal constraints	Limited budget resources for civil servant salaries and training	Incomplete implementation of HR and incentive tools for reform	Prioritisation of budget expenditures; phased implementation of civil service reform
Risk of formal adoption of international practices	Differences in administrative culture and institutional environment	Reduced effectiveness of adaptation mechanisms in the public administration	Selective adaptation of public administration considering the national context
Digital and technological limitations	Uneven digital maturity across government bodies	Fragmented implementation of digital HR tools	Standardisation of IT solutions; development of civil servants' digital competencies
Workforce shortages in certain public sector areas	Competition with the private sector and migration of qualified specialists	Decline in quality of managerial decision-making in public administration	Targeted incentives; development of professional career paths for civil servants
Limited interagency coordination	Fragmentation of responsibilities and differences in departmental interests	Inconsistency in civil service reform and duplication of functions	Strengthening coordination mechanisms; establishing unified

			standards across public administration
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*Source: Compiled by the authors based on academic studies (Hood, 1991; Rodrik, 2008; Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock, 2017; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017), institutional analysis, reviews of international practice by the UN (United Nations, 2022), the World Bank (World Bank, 2018; 2020), OECD (OECD, 2019; 2021b; 2022), and the National Report on the State of Civil Service (2024).*

The key limitations and risks in the assessment and implementation of civil service reform are systematically summarised in Table 10. These limitations reflect both methodological and institutional factors that may affect the practical effectiveness of reform initiatives.

First, the limited availability of quantitative data and forecast assessments complicates the accurate measurement of the socio-economic effects of civil service reform, particularly in the medium and long term. Second, institutional inertia and resistance to change within certain government bodies create the risk of formal adoption of new legal norms and procedures without genuine transformation of management practices.

Fiscal and human resource constraints also warrant particular attention, as they can reduce the scale and depth of the mechanisms being reformed within the public administration system. Highlighting strategies to mitigate these risks – such as phased implementation of civil service reform, development of monitoring systems, professional training for civil servants, and selective adaptation of best international practices to the national context – underscores the applied orientation of the research and its focus on practical utility in policymaking and the refinement of public administration.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the framework of the stated objectives, this study examined the conceptual foundations of civil service reform in Kazakhstan, compared international practices in civil service organisation, and assessed the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposed legislative changes.

The results indicate that Kazakhstan needs to transition to a service-oriented, citizen-focused civil service model that emphasises results, professional development, and enhanced social protection for civil servants. Conditions and prerequisites for such a transition already exist in the country. The introduction of flexible HR mechanisms, digital personnel management tools, and expanded social guarantees could help reduce staff turnover, increase productivity in the public sector, and strengthen citizens' trust in state institutions. At the same time, the absence of detailed quantitative and forecast data limits the ability to assess the macroeconomic, budgetary, and inflationary effects of civil service reform.

Based on the findings of this study, it is advisable to recommend the following:

- Develop a system of measurable civil service performance indicators linked to Kazakhstan's socio-economic development objectives.
- Implement the provisions of the draft legislation in phases, with mandatory monitoring of their socio-economic consequences.
- Increase the transparency and availability of data necessary for quantitative evaluation of the socio-economic effects of civil service reform.
- Adapt international best practices selectively, taking into account national institutional and budgetary constraints rather than applying them directly.

Future research should focus on developing econometric models to assess the impact of civil service reforms on productivity, investment activity, and the quality of public administration. This will enhance the evidence base for decision-making and support strategic planning for Kazakhstan's development.

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