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## SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH ENTITLED “DIAGNOSIS OF THE LEVEL OF INTEGRITY CULTURE IN THE CIVIL SERVICE”

The report is the result of research carried out as part of the diagnosis of the level of integrity culture in the civil service. The research, covering a number of techniques, including analyses, in-depth interviews and a survey, was conducted from January to April 2022.

Building and strengthening integrity culture in the civil service entails compliance with the civil service rules. This is supervised by the Head of Civil Service who is the central government administration authority responsible for civil service matters. This task is one of the tasks listed in the Civil Service Act<sup>1</sup>. They can be implemented efficiently because the Head of Civil Service undertakes a variety of informational and promotional activities of preventive nature, as well as activities to monitor compliance with obligations and rules, and reacts in case of signals that they were potentially violated. These activities, implemented in cooperation with Directors General and Heads of Offices which employ the members of the civil service corps, are to contribute to building and strengthening integrity culture in the corps. As a result, they are to ensure a corps of professional government administration officials and employees who carry out assigned tasks to the highest standards, on the basis of applicable law, in accordance with the civil service rules and ethical principles of the corps.

The study included three components which were also three subsequent stages of the research work carried out:

- 1) desk research,
- 2) qualitative research,
- 3) quantitative research.

The desk research was the starting point for the whole study. It was also the tool that allowed the researchers to prepare diligently for the research activities, in particular as regards familiarisation with the research topic and related issues.

The qualitative research used the techniques indicated and described below.

- Online Individual In-depth Interviews (IDI).

The interviewees were the corps members divided into categories based on the office represented, considering the position held and sex.

A total of 46 interviews were conducted, including 16 with Directors General or Heads of Offices and 30 with corps members not holding a senior position in the civil service.

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<sup>1</sup> Art. 15.1.1 of the Act of 21 November 2008 on the Civil Service.

- Online Focused Group Interviews (FGI).

They included corps members with different characteristics in terms of the type of position held, entity, sex and seniority in the corps. Each of the 5 groups included an ethics advisor.

The quantitative research used the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) technique, based on the prepared questionnaire.

The technique returned 4931 effective survey interviews involving the members of the civil service corps. The structure of the research sample is very much similar to the structure of the actual population of the civil service corps' members. This means that the results of the survey are characterised by high representativeness.

#### SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

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- **Taking into account all the studied aspects, on the basis of the research results obtained, it is possible to estimate the synthetic indicator of the level of integrity culture in the civil service corps at 74%.**
- The civil service corps members surveyed evaluate their own knowledge of the civil service rules and the principles of the civil service corps ethics more positively than the knowledge of those rules demonstrated by their colleagues. This trend is also apparent in the other areas covered by the survey – **self-evaluations are more favourable than evaluations of others.**
- **Overall, the knowledge of the civil service rules and the civil service corps ethics was rated very well, 86% of the survey respondents expresses positive opinions on this matter,** with women expressing significantly better opinions than men. Another interesting finding is that the corps members rely more heavily on specific provisions, guidelines, etc. than their own intuition. This signals that they are familiar with the provisions, regulations and explanations concerning the rules in question – familiar enough to base their understanding and application of those rules to a greater extent on those specific provisions rather than only on inner instinct and intuition.
- As regards the most important topics related to undesirable conduct in an organisation, the respondents evaluated their knowledge the most positively in the field of corrupt practices. **One of the phenomena that are still the blurriest, about which the members of the civil service corps have the most doubts as to its recognition, is mobbing.** Better understanding of this phenomenon is found in young people and with the least seniority in the corps.
- **Over 60% of respondents confirm that in the last 3 years they participated in ethics training** (including as part of preparatory service). By far the smallest percentage (30%) of such declarations was recorded among corps members working in the offices of the district detached administration (especially low in the different units of

District Headquarters of the State Fire Service). **This percentage clearly decreases with the drop in the number of corps members employed in an organisation** (especially in: District Veterinary Inspectorates, Provincial Headquarters of the State Fire Service, Provincial Construction Supervision Inspectorates). Research therefore indicates that with regard to training, those are the structures where the recommendations of the Head of Civil Service for the promotion of integrity culture in the civil service are followed to the smallest extent.

- As regards the evaluation of the attitude of superiors, the respondents gave the lowest rating to the issue of consistency in reacting to employees' behaviour characterised by lack of ethics and integrity. 61% of the respondents think that the employees in their office face the consequences if they behave unethically. On the other hand, 74% believe that their immediate superiors comply with ethical standards when making decisions. Very positive opinions were expressed with regard to the respectful treatment of employees by the managerial staff – this opinion is supported by 81% of the members of the civil service corps. **Overall, it can be seen that the lower the number of corps members employed, the more favourable the evaluations concerning the conduct and attitude displayed by the superiors.**
- When evaluating the issues related to their organisations' policies on integrity, the respondents were least likely to confirm that when deciding on the awards (e.g. quarterly) due attention is paid to compliance with the civil service rules and ethical principles (about half of those surveyed agreed with this statement). The following opinions are much more favourable: **77% of respondents think that their immediate superior actively supports employees in complying with the civil service rules and civil service ethics and 72% confirms that employees are satisfactorily informed about all aspects of the organisational policy on integrity.** As in the earlier conclusion, **a higher percentage of positive evaluations of the integrity policy pursued in an organisation was recorded among the employees of offices employing fewer corps members. The least favourable opinions characterise the category of ministries. Better evaluations are also seen among the employees with the least seniority in the civil service.**
- **More than two thirds of the members of the civil service corps familiarised themselves with the regulations/procedures for corruption prevention applicable in their offices.** Almost the same percentage was recorded for mobbing prevention. By far the least common among the respondents are the documents related to proper netiquette, with particularly low percentages recorded among the employees of central offices and district detached administration. **Procedures in other areas (mobbing, discrimination, corruption) are best known to the corps members in the organisations of National Revenue Administration and in ministries.**

- **Positive evaluation of their organisation's procedures against rule violation was given by half of the respondents who confirmed that they faced the necessity to initiate any such procedure (9% of the respondents).**
- **Almost 41% of the respondents confirmed that the employees of their office can use the support of a person who can be addressed in ethically ambiguous situations** (the highest percentage was recorded among the representatives of ministries and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland). Very importantly, **similar part (44%) of the representatives of the entire civil service corps does not know whether they have this option.** 15% of the respondents stated with certainty that there is no such person available to the employees in their organisation. Meanwhile if such a person exists, then in 94% of the cases the office employees know how to contact them. In 77% of the cases, it is a person who holds a position in the office's structure – in the remaining 23% it is a person from outside the organisation. Nearly 80% of those who used the support of an ethics advisor (or another person exercising a similar function), confirms that the consultation was helpful.
- The function of an ethics advisor, or another person with whom it is possible to consult ethically ambiguous situations, is not yet sufficiently widespread, especially in detached administration offices. The research indicates the need for more information on this issue, as a very large portion of the corps members do not even know whether they have someone to turn to in such cases.

#### SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION OF THE LEVEL OF INTEGRITY CULTURE IN AN ORGANISATION AND THE WHOLE CORPS

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**In subjective perception of the representatives of the corps, integrity culture in the civil service is rated very highly.** The perceived assessment of integrity is higher in relation to one's own office (88% positive ratings, above the middle of the scale), than in relation to the civil service corps as a whole (75%). Averaging these scores, **81.5% of the corps members assess the level of integrity culture in the civil service positively.** The least favourable subjective evaluation was expressed by the corps members working in ministry structures and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland.

Table 1. Response to the question: “Overall, how would you rate the level of integrity in your office and then in the Polish civil service corps as a whole? Please mark on a scale from 0 to 10, where: 0 means that there is no integrity culture at all, and 10 means that integrity culture is at the highest possible level.”. In total, all interviewees.

		In the office		In the Polish corps as a whole	
Negative	1	0.5%	5.0%	0.8%	9.5%
	2	0.6%		0.7%	
	3	0.9%		1.3%	
	4	1.5%		2.8%	
	5	1.5%		3.9%	
	6	6.9%	6.9%	15.6%	15.6%
Positive	7	4.4%	88.1%	11.1%	74.9%
	8	10.0%		16.2%	
	9	20.0%		20.2%	
	10	27.0%		15.6%	
	11	26.7%		11.8%	

Source: CAWI survey, N=4931. The values may not add up to 100%, due to automatic rounding.

INDICATOR OF THE LEVEL OF INTEGRITY CULTURE IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CORPS

On the basis of this study, an attempt has been made to estimate the level of integrity culture in the civil service corps, using the synthetic indicators constructed for the purpose of this diagnosis and its future editions. The components that have been used to calculate the value of the indicator are also synthesised results of the survey in several highlighted areas. These areas are the most important aspects of the entire complex issue which is integrity culture in the civil service. The components of the indicator are therefore:

- knowledge of the civil service rules and ethical principles of the civil service corps,
- following the rules in the organisation – conduct and attitude of superiors,
- integrity policy in the organisation,
- evaluation of procedure operation,
- evaluation of the support from ethics advisors,
- absence of undesirable phenomena,
- subjective evaluation of the level of integrity in the organisation and the civil service corps as a whole.

**Taking into account all the studied aspects, on the basis of the research results obtained, the synthetic indicator of the level of integrity culture in the civil service corps can be estimated at 74%.** As described above, the indicator takes into account not only the indicated subjective evaluations of the integrity culture, but also the respondent’s answers

concerning the knowledge of rules, compliance with them among colleagues and superiors, the organisation’s policy on integrity, evaluation of procedure operation, and the occurrence of behaviour violating the rules in question. All the component values used for the calculation of the final value of the synthetic indicator of the integrity culture level in the corps are included below.

Table 2. Estimated value of the synthetic indicator of the integrity culture level in the civil service corps.

Synthetic indicator calculation component	Value
Knowledge of the civil service rules and ethical rules of the civil service corps	85.50%
Following the rules in the organisation – conduct and attitude of superiors	70%
Integrity policy in the organisation	70%
Evaluation of procedure operation	52%
Evaluation of the support from ethics advisors	78.7%
Absence of undesirable phenomena	77.25%
Subjective evaluation of the level of integrity in the organisation and the civil service corps as a whole	81.5%
<b>Average – Indicator value</b>	<b>73.56%</b>

Source: own elaboration based on conducted research.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PAST PERFORMANCE OF THE HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE AND DIRECTORS GENERAL/HEADS OF OFFICES

**Overall, the activities undertaken by the Head of Civil Service in the recent years are evaluated positively** – the very idea of paying more attention to issues related to integrity culture in the civil service is praised and that alone increases the awareness about the importance of these issues over the years.

The effectiveness of actions taken in this area is considered positively, at a satisfactory level in in-depth interviews. For some Directors Generals and Heads of Offices, the measure of effectiveness is the fact that very few proceedings concerning undesirable phenomena take place in their offices. However, it should be remembered that restricting oneself to such a simple correlation is not a sufficient approach. Beyond that, however, it may also indicate that the office does not take sufficient action in this regard (e.g. rule violations are downplayed).

**The studies emphasised that the adopted course of action is correct and the actions taken by the Head of Civil Service are accurate. However, it is also noted that rather than only intensifying them, they can also be modified so that they have an even greater effect and reach the corps members in a better way.**

In this respect, it is possible to identify elements which are already present in these activities and are perceived as valuable so it is worth strengthening them. It is also possible to identify elements that are missing. Below there is a summarised set of strengths and weaknesses related to the overall activities taken so far by the Head of Civil Service and Directors General/Heads of Offices in order to build and strengthen integrity culture.

**Strengths:**

- intensification of activities in the area in question produces an effect whereby the subject of integrity culture in the civil service is being addressed, talked about, and thus the right climate is built and a clear message is given that this subject is one of the priorities and must be given attention; in general, this results in a noticeable increase in the awareness of the corps members about the issues related to integrity culture;
- development and implementation of relevant procedures, regulations and instructions by Directors General and Heads of Offices, prepared with a view to the rules of civil service and ethical principles; particularly visible effects in terms of anti-corruption policy;
- popularisation of the ethics advisor function – this is a very well received function, judged to be a needed and good solution, helpful in practice; it is worth promoting; contact with persons performing such a functions was also evaluated as helpful by the respondents in the quantitative research;
- meetings of advisors organised by the Head of Civil Service – an important source of information about the actions taken, as well as an opportunity to meet representatives of other units, exchange observations and experiences;
- popularisation of ethics training, particularly important initiatives of the Head of Civil Service.

**Weaknesses:**

- the need for even greater activation and mobilisation of Heads of Offices/Directors General to carry out activities as part of promoting integrity culture because it is they who are the key element in this context and it is they who have the ability to give appropriate emphasis to different issues;
- insufficient effectiveness of channels of communication with organisations employing a smaller number of the corps members;
- there is a lack of accessible, easy-to understand materials which would complement the procedures and instructions implemented in the offices; apart from formalised documents, they should also include varied, multimedia forms of communication, videos, animations, infographics, presentations of scenes describing example situations and how to behave in accordance with a given rule;
- no top-down proposed drafts, outlines of procedures related to undesirable phenomena, which could be used for the preparation of relevant documents in the

various offices, taking into account their individual characteristics (this would be particularly helpful in the smaller organisations);

- too few specific examples of disseminating knowledge about the rules among the employees – for example promotional materials (posters, leaflets) prepared by the Head of Civil Service and their representatives;
- insufficient promotion of the materials shared on the website of the civil service about ethics among the office employees who are members of the corps – especially with regard to the FAQ section, which is a desired tool among the respondents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO DIRECTORS GENERAL/HEADS OF OFFICES

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1. It is necessary to strengthen the involvement of Directors General/Heads of Offices in the promotion of appropriate attitudes among their employees, including, in particular, responding to undesirable phenomena. Their attitude and model behaviour remains crucial.
2. An important element that needs to be strengthened when using Human Resource management tools (e.g. granting bonuses, performance reviews) is addressing the issue of observance (or non-observance) of the civil service rules by the corps members working in the office. This is one of the ways to actively promote an appropriate ethical attitude.
3. It is necessary to develop creative and attractive to consumers forms of conveying and promoting the rules among the office employees.
4. A recommended activity is the organisation of training in the form of workshops to discuss specific examples of situations and together, as a group, solve certain cases based on real-life situations that the office employees may face.
5. A particularly important point remains strengthening the employees' knowledge on the recognition of the mobbing phenomenon, which raises the greatest doubts on the part of the corps members. Therefore, during the planned training activities, it is suggested to place greater emphasis on clarifying the issues related to the occurrence of mobbing at the workplace.
6. With regard to the training needs in the field of ethics and the civil service rules, it is particularly recommended to strengthen actions in the district detached administration offices, as well as other offices employing a small number of the corps members. The research shows that with regard to training, those are the structures where the recommendations of the Head of Civil Service concerning the promotion of integrity culture in the civil service are followed to the smallest extent.
7. Despite the universal nature of the rules, the office's management should adjust the relayed content concerning the interpretation of rules, guidelines and other materials to the specific operation of its organisation in order to aid their understanding.



8. It is recommended that Directors General and Heads of Offices put greater emphasis on the dissemination of information related to the behaviour of the members of the civil service corps on the Internet and social media. It is necessary to intensify activities related to dissemination and application of the recommendations of the Head of Civil Service in this respect at the level of Directors General/Heads of Offices, and include these issues in internal regulations (e.g. in the office's rules of procedure).
9. It is necessary to ensure the availability of an ethics advisor or another person exercising a similar function to the office's employees. In organisations where such support already exists, it is necessary to strengthen the activities informing about and promoting the possibility to consult such a person on matters related to ethically ambiguous situations. The research has shown that a very large portion of the corps members do not even know whether they have someone to turn to in such cases.
10. It is recommended that the offices' managerial staff continue strengthening soft skills, which are required for the development of knowledge and skills necessary for the organisation's employees to demonstrate proper values and attitudes, which are also helpful in situations which require resolving conflicts in the team.
11. It is proposed to organise promotional campaigns at the local level (e.g. open days at the office), which would help to build a positive image of the civil service among the public – primarily by communicating the values which guide the civil service, as well as the offices' openness to the citizens, and by strengthening the transparency and clarity of their operation.
12. It is recommended to undertake actions aimed at creating platforms for knowledge and information exchange between particular groups of offices (for example, through establishing a cooperation network in the field of ethics and integrity for particular „sectors“, e.g. ones focusing employees concerned with ethical issues in tax administration in the whole country, modelled on the already centrally operating team of ethics advisors).

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE

1. In contacts with Directors General /Heads of Offices, it is recommended to put a greater emphasis on highlighting their role in the entire process of strengthening and promoting integrity culture.
2. It is necessary to develop creative and attractive to consumers forms of conveying and promoting the rules among the corps members. In particular, it is important to disseminate standardised examples of promotional materials, ready to be used by Directors General and Heads of Offices among their employees.
3. The communications should focus more on spreading information about issues related to inappropriate behaviour online and the phenomenon of mobbing in the workplace. It is particularly advisable to recommend the organisation of training in

the form of workshops that would use examples of difficult situations which the corps members sometimes face.

4. Creating and sharing some general standard models of written procedures related to undesirable phenomena in the offices (specific, the most important, such as anti-mobbing, anti-discrimination) that could be used by individual units to develop their own internal regulations based on a reliable source and adjusted to their own needs.
5. It is necessary to expand and better promote the FAQ segment in the tab „Ethics in the office” on the website of the civil service. This is the form in which respondents showed most interest – an updated and sorted by category database of the most frequently asked questions together with answers that dispel doubts about rules compliance.
6. The communications of the Head of Civil Service are expected to highlight positive examples of the behaviour of the civil service corps members – to a greater extent than mentioning the topic of ethics and integrity mainly when undesirable phenomena already occur.
7. It is recommended to organise promotional campaigns and actions which would show what working in the civil service entails – pointing out the importance of the job which is responsible, linked to many rules and, in fact, a kind of “service” and “mission”. On the one hand, this could help to build a positive image of the civil service among the public, foster respect for this group, and on the other hand, it could communicate the offices’ openness to the citizens, strengthen the transparency and clarity of their operation. At the same time, such actions could help build a sense of belonging to the civil service among the corps members themselves, strengthen their identification with the group, its rules and the culture of the organisation.