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PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN CIVIL SERVICE: EXPERIENCES FROM EURASIAN UNION COUNTRIES

Abstract. This study examines project management in the public service sector. Based on the analysis of country cases from Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, it analyzes the formation, development, and implementation of project management practices in the public sectors of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union. The study explores the legislative frameworks regulating project management in the public service system and assesses the advantages and disadvantages of these mechanisms during the implementation of national projects. Through an in-depth study of these cases, the authors reveal approaches that facilitate the creation of a comprehensive project management system in the public sector. The results of the study show that contract service is one of the mechanisms for regulating labor relations in the process of implementing projects with the involvement of experts.

Keywords: *project management, Eurasian Economic Union, contract service, public service.*

Айгерим Амирова, Бауржан Бокаев, Жулдыз Давлетбаева МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК ҚЫЗМЕТТЕГІ ЖОБАЛЫҚ БАСҚАРУ: ЕУРАЗИЯЛЫҚ ОДАҚ ЕЛДЕРІНІҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеуде Мемлекеттік қызмет саласындағы жобалық басқару (жобалық менеджмент) қарастырылады. Қазақстан, Ресей, Өзбекстан, Қырғызстанның елдік кейстерін талдау негізінде Еуразиялық экономикалық одаққа мүше мемлекеттердің мемлекеттік

секторындағы жобалық басқару институтының қалыптасуына, дамуына және имплементациясына талдау жүргізіледі. Зерттеу шеңберінде мемлекеттік қызмет жүйесіндегі жобалық менеджментті реттеудің заңнамалық негіздері зерделенді, ұлттық жобаларды имплементациялау барысында осы тетіктердің артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктері талданды. Мақалада кейстерді терең зерттеу арқылы авторлар мемлекеттік секторда жобалық менеджменттің кешенді жүйесін қалыптастыруға мүмкіндік беретін тәсілдерді ашады. Зерттеу нәтижелері келісімшарттық қызмет сарапшыларды тарта отырып, жобаларды іске асыру процесінде еңбек қатынастарын реттеу тетіктерінің бірі болып табылатынын көрсетті.

Түйін сөздер: жобалау басқармасы, Еуразиялық Экономикалық Одақ, келісімшарттық қызмет, мемлекеттік қызмет жүйесі.

Айгерим Амирова, Бауржан Бокаев, Жұлдыз Давлетбаева
**ПРОЕКТНОЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЕ В ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ СЛУЖБЕ:
ОПЫТ СТРАН ЕВРАЗИЙСКОГО СОЮЗА**

Аннотация. В данном исследовании рассматривается проектное управление (проектный менеджмент) в сфере государственной службы. На основе анализа страновых кейсов Казахстана, России, Узбекистана, Кыргызстана проводится анализ становления, развития и имплементации института проектного управления в государственном секторе государств-членов Евразийского экономического союза. В рамках исследования были изучены законодательные основы регулирования проектного менеджмента в системе государственной службы, проанализированы преимущества и недостатки данных механизмов в ходе имплементации национальных проектов. Посредством углубленного изучения кейсов в статье авторы раскрывают подходы, позволяющие сформировать комплексную систему проектного менеджмента в государственном секторе. Результаты исследования показали, что контрактная служба является одним из механизмов регулирования трудовых отношений в процессе реализации проектов с привлечением экспертов.

Keywords: проектное управление, Евразийский экономический союз, контрактная служба, система государственной службы.

Introduction

According to the International Project Management Association (IPMA), the widespread use of modern project management technologies can save approximately 20-30% of time and about 15-20% of budget funds [1]. Global challenges, world trends, and internal demands compel governments to study and adopt each other's experiences, considering national characteristics. Migration processes and the outflow of professional personnel contribute to competition between neighboring countries, which strive to offer better and more flexible working conditions to attract talent. Project management tools and methodologies are valuable resources for enhancing the efficiency of civil servants. These tools

help in planning, monitoring, and controlling projects to meet objectives within time, cost, and quality parameters [2].

However, the civil service today remains quite bureaucratic in this respect.

Project management is primarily used to implement national projects, and professionals are often contracted only to address urgent and complex problems. There is frequently a lack of knowledge transfer and preservation of institutional memory. Moreover, hiring highly paid specialists on a continual basis contradicts the project management principle of budget discipline.

Public sector projects often face unique challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, and complex stakeholder management. Effective project management can help mitigate these issues by ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources [3, 4]. However, modern scientific research in this area often highlights several obstacles to the effective implementation of the project approach within executive authorities. In international studies, the importance of thorough planning, a clear understanding of the process matrix, and the involvement of stakeholders in project management is emphasized [5]. This, in turn, is closely linked to personnel issues [6]. The challenges of implementing project management in government agencies stem from bureaucratic regulations, insufficient flexibility, and resistance to change from specialists. Therefore, this topic is of significant interest for its potential impact on our country. Project management in the public administration system has been understudied in the post-Soviet space. Since 2016-2017, there has been an increase in publications on project management in these countries, although contract service remains an insufficiently explored issue. The relevance, novelty, and practical significance of this topic have underscored the necessity of conducting this study.

Methodology

The analysis methods employed in this study are desktop research and case studies. Data were systematically categorized by reviewing various sources to align findings with the research questions. This included organizing information by themes such as the effectiveness of project management practices, shortcomings, and lessons applicable to Kazakhstan. Thematic analysis was used to draw comparative insights from the selected case studies. Information sources include publicly available literature, scientific research, the legislative framework, and official online resources of government bodies from the countries under study. The study focuses on the experiences of individual member states of the Eurasian Economic Union bordering Kazakhstan, specifically Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

How effective is the use of project management in the government bodies of the countries under consideration?

What are the main shortcomings in the application of project management?

What lessons can Kazakhstan learn from the experiences of its neighboring states?

The study's limitations include:

- Limited publicly available information on the implementation of project management in the public service system.

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- Lack of a unified methodological basis for the application of project management.
 - Bureaucratic hurdles when receiving responses from government agencies to requests and proposals.
 - Lack of public oversight over the implementation of national projects and other related aspects.

Results and discussion

This section provides a brief overview of each country’s approach to project management in the public sector. It also includes information on the regulatory frameworks for engaging contract employees where applicable.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has established legislative and institutional frameworks to support project management within government agencies. Since 2013, efforts have been underway to implement and provide methodological support for project management in the public administration system. Several regulations have been adopted to govern the management of national projects, as well as the recruitment and compensation of contract employees [7-9]. The Center for the Development of Project Management in Public Administration was established within the Academy of Public Administration under the President. This center has professionally certified over 300 civil servants and quasi-public sector employees.

Foundations have been laid for transitioning from a linear-functional to a matrix structure within government bodies, particularly for national and other state-significant projects. According to the Agency for Civil Service Affairs, 9 experts have been engaged in implementing 6 projects (8 for higher education and 1 for the akimat of the Turkestan region) [10].

Russia

In the Russian Federation, systematic efforts to introduce project management in government bodies began in 2016 with the establishment of the Council for Strategic Development and Priority Projects by presidential decree, alongside the creation of the Department of Project Activities within the Government Apparatus. Additionally, procedures for organizing project activities and the functional structure of the project management system were formalized.

Over the years, the regulatory framework has been expanded to include various aspects of selection, monitoring, evaluation, and control within project management [11]. Project manager certification was introduced, along with financial incentives such as quarterly bonuses. Since 2018, project management has been actively employed to achieve national goals and strategic priorities, including key national projects such as “Healthcare,” “Education,” “Housing and Urban Environment,” and “Systemic Measures for the Development of International Cooperation and Exports” [12-15].

Under the Federal Law on the State Civil Service of the Russian Federation (2004), a service contract is an agreement between an employer representative and a civil servant or prospective civil servant regarding the performance of civil service duties and filling a civil service position [16]. In government bodies, civil servants carry out their duties in accordance with official regulations and guidelines.

A promising area for further development in the Russian civil service is the expansion of fixed-term contracts. This was highlighted in an expert note by the Center for Advanced Management Solutions of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, which outlines the 7th step for effective transformation and the future vision of Russian public service. The proposed measures include:

Fixed-term contracts (up to 5 years) for new and junior specialists.

Open-ended contracts for those who have successfully completed service under fixed-term contracts.

Project-based contracts to attract specialists for specific tasks.

Special fixed-term contracts for senior managers [17].

To implement these measures, it is proposed to establish “project offices” within government agencies, where employees will be employed under fixed-term contracts [17].

Uzbekistan

A key development in project management in the Republic of Uzbekistan was the creation of the National Agency for Prospective Projects in 2017, which reports directly to the President [18]. However, the agency’s functions also encompass the regulation of crypto-assets, capital markets, insurance markets, e-commerce, and bookmaking activities. Additionally, a central project management office was established within the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, and district (city) and regional project groups were formed [19]. This integrated approach is noteworthy. Besides the ministry and local executive bodies, the Agency for Strategic Development also plays a key role. Projects are managed through the electronic system “Control and Monitoring of Investment Projects,” with oversight provided by the Department for Control over the Execution of Legislation in the Fields of Foreign Trade, Investment, and Entrepreneurship under the Prosecutor General’s Office.

In 2018, a new master’s degree program in “Project Management” was introduced to train specialists. The plan is to involve consultants from government bodies, affiliated organizations, leading project institutes, academic institutions, international organizations, foreign companies, and non-governmental non-profit organizations [18]. The terms and conditions for employing foreign specialists and experts are established based on relevant agreements [20]. However, detailed information on the number of experts involved is not available.

Particularly noteworthy is the use of employment contracts, whether fixed-term or indefinite, for individuals entering civil service. The enactment of a new Civil Service Law in 2022 introduced several changes. Notably, the law introduced job groups, including:

- Political (leadership positions: senior advisor, ranks 1st, 2nd, and 3rd);
- Managerial (management positions: employees of ranks 1st, 2nd, and 3rd);
- Auxiliary (specialists: employees of ranks 4th, 5th, and 6th) [20].

Productivity and continuous professional development are the foundations for career advancement.

Kyrgyzstan

Before addressing project management, it is important to highlight the civil service reforms that have taken place. In 2016, a law was adopted to transform the

legislative framework, shifting from state service to civil service and municipal service. Subsequently, the 2021 law introduced a contract-based salary system for certain positions, which serves as one mechanism for implementing project management. Specifically, the number of such positions should not exceed 10% of the total staff in a government or local self-government body, as determined by the head of the organization. Additionally, the average monthly salary of a contract employee cannot be lower than the salary for their position [21].

A major milestone in the development of project management in Kyrgyzstan was the adoption of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2013-2017, followed by the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040 [22-23]. These strategic documents outline the republic's priority development areas, including key sectors, human capital development, socio-economic foundations, and key aspects of public administration.

In summary, the case analysis highlights several features of the development of project management and contract service in the public sector (see Table 1), which provide guidelines for the further evolution of the national civil service system.

Table 1 – Systematization of Country Case Analysis

Public Sector	Kazakhstan	Russia	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan
Project Management	A legislative framework has been developed, certification has been introduced, and design offices have been created.	Interconnected with the vision of the future of the civil service	Transformation into a state civil service, a new register of positions, certification, a new remuneration system in relation to performance and project activities, an information system has been created, state control over projects has been introduced	National projects in connection with project management, transformation into state civil and municipal service
Contract Service	The procedure for attracting experts has been determined, agreements have been concluded with the first industry specialists on national projects	Expansion of the list of conditions of use	Contract for a definite and indefinite period	Contract employees make up no more than 10% of the staff, positions are determined by the head of the organization, the salary is not lower than for government positions

Despite the established legislative framework, a common challenge across the countries in question is the unpreparedness and lack of understanding among civil servants regarding the benefits of transitioning to project management and contract services. This issue stems from a lack of competencies, which are a critical prerequisite for the successful implementation of project management [24]. Often, the clarity of goals and implementation mechanisms are overshadowed by the need to address current issues and routine tasks, which are under existing controls. As a result, staff motivation to adopt new methods rather than adhering to traditional regulations is diminished. As Alvarenga et al. (2019) demonstrate, communication, commitment, and leadership are three of the most critical factors for successful project management. Unfortunately, the majority of civil servants lack these essential skills, which hampers effective implementation [25].

For Kazakhstan, one potential solution is to broaden the application of fixed-term and indefinite contracts. Min and Lee (2024), who assert that local governments with a higher proportion of contract-based employees are more likely to exhibit improved performance levels, support this approach’s effectiveness [26].

Open borders and the use of temporary registrations for work activities are intensifying competition among countries for skilled labor. Drawing on the experiences of neighboring states, transformations should be implemented at all levels of government. Notable practices for Kazakhstan could include:

- Fixed-term contracts for political appointees, such as heads of state bodies;
- Short-term contracts for new entrants to the civil service;
- Project-based contracts for the duration of a project or strategically important task, applicable to both external experts and existing employees (but not exceeding 5-10% of the total staff). These employees would retain their current positions and receive compensation no less than their official salary, with additional bonus payments based on successful project or task completion (see Figure 1).

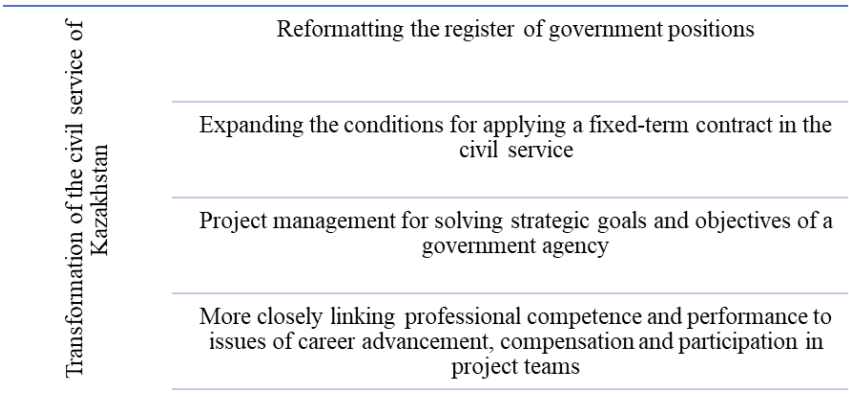


Figure 1 – Prospective Directions for Transforming the Public Service in Kazakhstan

Note: Compiled by the authors based on the case study

According to the data presented above, transforming the registry of government positions appears to be a promising direction for Kazakhstan. Several factors support this transformation. First, the new grading-based salary system for civil servants has been implemented, which organizes positions into functional groups. Second, there are initiatives aimed at reducing bureaucracy in interactions with citizens, optimizing and automating internal business processes. Third, generational shifts pose challenges. With the average age of civil servants currently around 39 years, future decades will see Generations Y and Z becoming the core of the civil service. These younger generations prefer a work environment that offers flexible schedules and room for error, while current service regulations and oversight mechanisms may hinder the full implementation of project management principles.

A comprehensive shift to contract-based service and project management will also impact related aspects of strategic HR management. The experiences of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan highlight the importance of aligning continuous professional development (including international and domestic certification) with compensation and career advancement. Looking ahead, there is a trend toward moving from project management for national projects to project management aimed at addressing strategic tasks within government bodies. Consequently, contract employees will become a key component of organizations for implementing innovative solutions. Meanwhile, the staff of support services (e.g., human resources, legal, financial) may be partially redeployed or reassigned to project teams due to opportunities for centralization and process automation.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that approximately five years ago, the necessary regulatory frameworks for implementing project management were established in the countries under consideration. However, the scope of these transformations has been limited to national projects, with similar constraints on the use of contract services. This is due to insufficient management flexibility, prevailing bureaucratic procedures and service regulations, and a lack of understanding and interest among regular civil servants.

Therefore, for a comprehensive transition to project management and the recruitment of highly qualified specialists on a contract basis, it is essential to address a number of systemic issues.

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