Public Sector e-Recruitment practices in Greece: The case of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) website.

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Although it is generally accepted that technology itself has no inherent value, there is no doubt that it is the key enabler of e-Government services. In regards to personnel recruitment, technology has undoubtedly revolutionized traditional methods. E-recruitment, generally defined as the process of utilizing new Information and Communication Technologies for candidate attraction, selection and communication management, has been extensively used in the private sector over the last two decades. The success of e-recruiting, especially in terms of reductions in hiring time and costs, also made the practice attractable as part of most e-government initiatives worldwide. Greece is no exception to this trend. Following the institution of the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) as an independent authority in 1994, the Greek State was provided with an autonomous entity tasked with the staffing of the Public Sector, *"in conditions of full transparency, publicity, objectivity and meritocracy"*. However, it is this very statement that points at the particularities pertaining to public sector recruitment practices which are rarely present in the private sector. Greece is characterized by a decades-old clientelistic approach to public sector employment and e-recruiting for the state is a mission that raises the stakes clearly higher than that of a measured cost reduction. The current paper briefly reviews the benefits of e-recruitment practices in the private sector, examines the significant differences that apply to the recruitment practices of the Greek state and finally assesses the official ASEP website in a technical and functional manner as a tool for promoting trust between citizens and the State by applying the guidelines provided by the Greek Public Portal Certification Framework.

1. Introduction

The digital revolution can be recognized as one of the key elements of the 21st century. Since the early 1990s, the world has observed a technological evolution of digital services of a magnitude comparable to that of the industrial revolution. The era commonly described as the "digital age" has manifested itself as a wide array of change in the established economic rules and order (Holroyd & Coates, 2015: 3-10), and a paradigm shift from traditional "old" economy to an economy based on information computerization (Khosrow-Pour, 2006: xxxviii; Vassilakis, et al., 2009). In regard to the public sector, Reddick (2005:40) notes that due to the growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), a transition was noticed from what has been commonly labeled as street-level bureaucracies to system-level bureaucracies. The term street-level bureaucracies refers to "the public servants who have direct contact with citizens", while system level bureaucracies could be defined as "the information

systems that have replaced street-level bureaucracies through automation of their decision-making processes".

The main tool that made this transition a reality is none other than the Internet. In principle, by using an internet capable computing device, citizens can contact government anytime and anyplace, without going through a street-level bureaucrat. However, beyond the domain of strict technological determinism, it is accepted that technology does not exist in vacuum nor does it carry any inherent value. IT-investments should be made with corresponding changes in the organization, the processes and the human resources involved. In order to reap the expected benefits, the aforementioned entities should be aligned with the organization's long term strategy using technology as an enabler. In any other case, the investments might end in significant productivity losses because the potential value of IT is overcompensated by negative influences due to a mismatch of organizational practices and the IT structure implemented (Brynjolfsson & Hitt, 2000: 25).

Simultaneously, in the context of human resource management, recruitment is a process of locating and acquiring the right applicants to an organization and the goal of the recruitment function is to identify, attract, and hire the most qualified people (Buettner, 2014). Every organization uses some form of a staffing procedure, and staffing is the primary way an organization influences its diversity and human capital (Ployhart, 2006: 868). The basic function of the recruitment process is to seek, attract and eventually select a range of qualified applicants using a variety methods. Among others, "conventional" recruitment methods used by organizations to fill workforce vacancies, consist of contacting existing networks of friends and colleagues, former employee alumni associations, employee referrals, or as mentioned above, using newspaper classified ads. This is an inherently dynamic procedure since, every time that an

organization experiences changes in policy, technology, location, mergers, acquisitions, de-mergers, and employees' resignations, this process continues to take place periodically to add, maintain, or re-adjust their workforce in accordance to the corporate and human resource planning (Tyson, 2006: 49-50).

In today's digital era, most organizations use some form of Internet recruiting to provide information to potential applicants as well as to acquire a pool of human capital by allowing applicants to apply for positions via the web (Braddy et al., 2008: 2992; Maurer & Liu, 2007: 305). As early as 2001, 90% of large U.S. companies were already recruiting via the Internet (Cappelli, 2001: 139).

Online recruitment is considered superior to traditional methods of attracting job applicants. It can be quicker and more informative, and it offers significant although occasionally, unfulfilled potential of cost savings. The attractiveness of internet recruiting to applicants and organizations, is predictable since it offers a range of advantages to all those involved. From an employer's perspective it can be more efficient from the than the traditional methods of posting job vacancies on press classified ads and receiving job applications by mail (Lukaszewski et al., 2015: 370). Apart from the obvious benefits of cost-reduction related to the overhead of storing, managing and accessing written files, online web-based forms provide a means of standardization and common structure thus facilitating the evaluation and selection process. Also, given the mobility of the workforce in many sectors of the economy at an international level, recruiting websites can reach candidates by advertising position openings to job seekers on a global level (Galanaki, 2002: 244; Verhoeven & Williams, 2008: 365).

As a tool, internet based recruiting through an organization's website plays a critical role in respect to attracting candidates and building the public image of the prospective employer. The website itself, its ease of use, aesthetics and functionality are of extreme importance if an organization seeks to exploit these technologies for recruitment purposes (Zusman & Landis, 2002: 295).

Early on, it was acknowledged that an organization's internet presence in the form of websites, provides candidates with the opportunity to learn about the institution, search for and preview job vacancies, submit résumés, and/or fill out application forms (Lievens et al., 2002: 586). Corporate home pages are therefore the first place many people look when evaluating potential employers. Even applicants using third-party sites such as job search engines, are exposed to organizations' websites early in the job search process because third-party sites commonly link applicants to individual companies' pages (Zusman & Landis, 2002: 291).

Because prospective employees commonly encounter companies' electronic representations early in the job search process, organizational home pages should be designed with potential recruits in mind. Attractive formatting and functionality (i.e., user friendliness) are two factors that will enhance a website's appeal, indirectly formulating a user's perception of the organization. Website façade and perceptions of usability, rank among the important drivers of applicant attraction in some theoretical models of organizational website recruitment (Cober et al., 2004a: 635-636). As employment websites have a dramatic effect on employee recruitment, web content is not the only important component of an organization's recruitment strategy. Form and aesthetics are equally significant in the e-recruitment process (Cober et al., 2004b: 211; Thompson et al., 2008: 2385; Sylva & Mol, 2009: 312).

2. Recruiting with an "e" for Government

Nevertheless, a comparison between private sector recruitment practices with the public sector is not directly applicable. Notions of social justice, equal opportunities for citizens, and respect for preexisting social entitlements do not carry the same weight in the private sector as it does in the Civil Service of a sovereign state. Similarly, the versatility, flexibility and adaptability that are frequently noted in private firms are not attributes usually observed in public sector vertical bureaucracies. The latter are bound by law and compliance to procedure, not by personal initiative. As Bower (1977) characteristically notes, "business people should operate under no illusions about there being similarities between their work and the tasks of public administrators". Civil servants even at the executive level, make decisions within the boundaries defined by state legislation rather than by addressing the actual or supposed needs of the organization according to their own perception, training or professional competencies.

Even though over the past three decades, governments have made major changes to the way they manage the public sector, such as privatizing commercial activities, "cutting red tape" and making government more transparent and responsive to citizens, the public's expectations of openness, quality service delivery and solutions to more complex problems, coexist with the requirement of retaining long standing social prerogatives (OECD, 2005: 13). Within this context, public sector employment is undoubtedly changing and the two main traditional ways of organizing civil service systems – career-based and position-based – are both under pressure: the former because it lacks adaptivity and the latter because it lacks collectivity. However as the relevant OCED report states, "despite the fundamental changes observed, strategic resource allocation remains difficult in the public service" (ibid: 182-183). Even though common attributes of the recruiting and hiring processes can in principle be found in

both public and private organizations, in practice there are several important differences that since government employees must frequently (Bower, 1977):

- accept goals that are set by organizations other than their own,

- operate structures designed by groups other their own,

- work with people whose careers are in many respects outside management's control

Similarly, as opposed to typical private sector employment, public bureaucracy employees usually secure a lifelong employment, they are commonly expected to work on a permanent basis in the organization they are hired, they progress through the hierarchy in mostly predefined career paths and their salaries are fixed, predictable and based on seniority and years of service rather than on individual merit and performance. Also, talent attraction and competing with the private sector for qualified potential employees which is routinely mentioned as one of the key benefits of e-recruitment, is not always an issue of government recruitment.

For example the Greek state was always considered a preferential employer by the citizens because of the real and perceived benefits of being a public servant vs an employee in the private economy. Public sector employment in Greece is characterized by its distinctiveness (Spanou, 2008: 165) and civil servants have obtained much better social insurance, health and pension schemes than farmers and private sector employees (Sotiropoulos, 2004a: 408; Trantidis, 2015). For the Greek public administration there was rarely a need to seek out and attract talent since it almost never experienced a shortage of potential applicants. ASEP proclamations to fill vacancies of the civil service usually attract candidates many times over the available positions. As early as 2004, a report by the ASEP independent authority stated that on a yearly average, the

Greek State ran 500 to 600 public contests in order to fill around 9000 vacancies and the average number of candidates ranged from 600.000 to 700.000 (ASEP, 2005: 45). Specifically, in 2006 the written examination for the recruitment of public education gymnasts attracted over 100 applicants per available position (ASEP, 2006). Therefore, public sector employment in Greece does not function as part of the greater labor market (Tsoukalas, 1993: 35) and this was true even before the record high unemployment rates experienced by the country's workforce in the recent years. A more important challenge faced by the Greek State is that of building trust with the citizens as far as its staffing procedures display the qualities of openness, objectivity, transparency and meritocracy.

As an employer, any government needs to address a unique set of ethical and more importantly, legal responsibilities. Modern state authorities are expected to engage in those actions which belong within the strict boundaries defined by the formality and rigidity of law. Among others issues, principles such as those of transparency, accountability, meritocracy and provision of apolitical equal access and opportunities to its citizens for state employment, need to be constantly contemplated. In this sense, although internet recruiting is also an integral part of e-government initiatives, governments cannot rely exclusively on web based recruitment techniques. Issues such as the digital divide, disparities in Internet usage across social groups and lack of uniform access to the same communication and computing infrastructure can hinder the citizen's equal opportunities to access the tools provided, no matter what their level of sophistication is. For example, in the case of Greece, a report by OECD in 2009 exhibits a high degree of discrepancy between the level of online sophistication of existing government services available to businesses and individual services and the level of the

actual use of these services (OECD, 2009: 12-13) due to the still developing infrastructure of the country.

Approaches of the recruitment practices in the public sector are strongly influenced by the New Public Management Concept (NPM). The NPM emerged as a model in the 1980s during the Thatcher administration in the UK and became popular in OECD countries in the decades that followed (Hood, 1989; 1991; 1995). It is an influential set of management techniques drawing on private sector performance criteria and practices (Lapsley, 2009: 1). The NPM models favors a managerial approach to public services, bundling processes and techniques many of which are directly borrowed for the private sector thus pushing the state toward managerialism - a theme that evolves around the idea of organizing government based on incentives rather than rules. However this cannot be done without regard to the particularities that characterize and pertain to the public sector of a specific country, the given historical, economic, political and social context through which a Civil Service was initially established and then progressively developed. Thus it is not always realistic nor is it always desirable to blindly transfer established best practices from the private sector, over to the public sector without taking into account the social reality, the political possibilities, the administrative feasibility and the reformation potential of a specific Civil Service. For instance, Western European bureaucracies are typically dominated by an administrative elite, a higher officialdom of "well-educated top civil servants sharing an esprit de corps and enjoying high social esteem" (Sotiropoulos, 2004a: 416). It is these civil service elites that usually exhibit bureaucratic resistance to reform and modernization initiatives. So governments, at least to some extent, have to establish a modus vivendi with these elites in order to proceed with their reform policies. However no such group exists in the Greek Civil Service since many public servants have been employed on the basis of

qualities such as partisan affiliation or personal networking, rather than on meritocratic criteria and rational qualifications. In the case of Greece, any government attempting to implement reforms needs to take into account and correspondingly plan for potential confrontation with powerful and highly politicized public sector unions (ibid: 410) and handle opposition from party-level "bureaucratic" clientelistic networks (Lyrintzis, 1984), even when those belong to the party in office.

3. Personnel Selection of the Greek Civil Service

Political patronage has been a "time-honored" feature of Greece's political system (Pappas & Assimakopoulou, 2012: 145). The practice of clientelism is widespread and apparent in the Greek public administration, especially in many aspects of its human resources management, even though the state is the country's largest employer (ibid: 147). Hiring, transfers and promotions of personnel tend benefit mostly those who side with the governing party and this notion has characterized the Greek civil service throughout the twentieth century (Sotiropoulos, 2004b: 266). Also, a common hypothesis is that Greek political elites have traditionally used the State's public administration mechanism not as a tool for policy implementation but as an instrument of vote generation, by exchanging among other favors, public employment for voter loyalty (Lyrintzis, 1984; Mouzelis, 1978; Afonso et al., 2015; García, 2015) as clientelism has been a central structural feature of modern Greek politics (Mavrogordatos, 1997: 1). While clientelism manifests itself in many ways, providing a wide array of services, it is public employment that is the single most important attribute in the eyes of public opinion (ibid: 3).

As such, the process of employment and other internal HR functions e.g. promotions of the Greek Public sector has a long history of being one that thrives directly or indirectly, within the realm of governing party affiliated individuals. The Supreme

Council for Civil Personnel Selection (in Greek: ASEP) which was established in 1994 (Law 2190/1994) offered for the first time a centralized independent institution for managing public sector hiring in a meritocratic manner, in principle beyond partisan control and manipulation. The Council functions as an independent authority within the Greek state bureaucracy subject to parliamentary but not governmental control (Mavromoustakou, 2009: 25). A large number of amendments and legal provisions were enacted since the Council's institution, determining the specifics of state hiring however the core procedures have been essentially the same over the years: staff hiring through written examinations or a predetermined grading system based on a collection of "objective criteria" that yields "points" to an applicant. Secondary recruitment tools such as personal interviews and psychometric tests, which are successfully used in the private sector, were not originally utilized by the Greek state as they were deemed highly subjective (Alexopoulos & Mavromoustakou, 2005: 751). Also, beyond the task of initial staff recruitment, a second equally important function of the Council is that of approving and controlling the legitimacy of staff procedures followed state agencies not only for hiring but also for internal HR functions such as promotions.

However, even though the declared intentions of all Greek governments typically include the containment of particularistic/clientelistic recruitment practices and officially the procedures of hiring and promoting within the civil service are consistent and meritocratic, the relevant measures are always undermined by counter-measures circumscribing the existing provisions of previous policies (Spanou & Sotiropoulos, 2011: 729). Pappas & Assimakopoulou (2012: 148-149) mention four techniques that political elites employ so that traditional patronage and clientelistic practices in the domain of public sector recruitment continue to exist: a) Institutional exemptions are set as to circumvent the Council's jurisdiction altogether, b) personnel are hired based

on renewable, fixed-term contracts, which are then typically expected to be converted to permanent employment at a more "politically convenient" later time, c) work experience is gained through temporary employment in state-funded programs, which is then used to gather "points" that meet the criteria set by the Council, and finally, d) by abusing the practice of interviewing candidates and selecting applicants based on non-transparent criteria. Especially in regard to the personal interview established as a complementary process to the existing ASEP criteria (Law 3320/2005), there was no provision for keeping and publishing minutes (ibid: 149) and it doesn't come as a surprise that as a recruitment tool, it is "discredited in the Greek context" (Spanou & Sotiropoulos, 2011: 729).

Nonetheless, in spite of the institutionalized exemptions and loopholes that challenge and undermine the Council's authority, as well as certain dysfunctions due to "slowness, legalism and rigidity" (Spanou, 2008: 164), ASEP remains the most prominent feature of the official recruitment system and its autonomy was further institutionally secured by provision of the 2001 Constitution (article 103/7).

4. The ASEP portal and the Greek Public Portal Certification Framework

An integral tool for the accomplishment of the Council's mission is its official web portal. It is the main delivery channel for content and interaction between the Council, the citizens and other state agencies and it is ranked among the most visited sites of the Greek public sector. Within the greater context of providing access facilitation and provision of government service to the people, state agencies websites are expected to promote efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability (Holmes, 2001; Karvonen & Parkkinen, 2001; Jaeger, 2003; Searson & Johnson, 2010; Hong, 2013).

Of the aforementioned benefits of government portals, transparency and accountability are most important in the process of building trust between the citizens and the state. Accountability of government services provided is an integral component of democratic governance (Pollitt, 2003: 3) and a key variable towards increasing citizen trust in government by making services directly accountable to the citizens (Nayer, 2015: 194). Transparency on the other hand, is commonly associated with public spending however approaching transparency solely through the lens of public expenditure, limits the significance of the term. Transparency within the domain of e-government generally describes the use of IT to allow public sector decisions and actions more open to public scrutiny (ibid: 194). Within this context, the Council's website should help the institution to accomplish its mission by open and unrestricted information provision for vacancies, results such as exam grades or points gathered, as well as the processes and methods involved for obtaining these results. Furthermore, as an integral part of building trust, it has been suggested that information provision drives fairness heuristics (Bell et al., 2004: 33; Ployhart, 2006: 870; Holz et al., 2016: 201) and information presented early in the selection procedure affects perceived fairness (Harris et al., 2004) and fairness perceptions can affect applicant reactions at this early stage of the selection process.

A key tool available to all state agencies in Greece in order to design, build and evaluate their web portals is the Greek Public Portal Certification Framework (PPCF). The framework was initially documented in 2005 and was based on the "European Interoperability Framework for pan-European eGovernment services" (European Commission, 2004). The PPCF is part of the general framework for e-government services regulated by laws 3731/2008 and 3979/2011 and article 5 of latter states that "every public sector agency shall be required to create and maintain a website" making

web presence essentially compulsory for all state agencies. By 2008, the Greek State, had documented well over 1000 public agency web portals (Ministry of Interior, 2008a). However, the variety of approaches to their implementation in functionality and aesthetics demonstrates that even though a standardization was in place the required consistency across the public sector was not in fact achieved. The end results show that the relevant effort undertaken by the public agencies was actually uncoordinated and heterogeneous leading to problems and discrepancies for both agencies and citizens alike (Sarantis et al., 2008).

The framework requires that all state agency portals adhere the following five principles (Ministry of Interior, 2008b):

a) Principle of Equality and Egalitarianism by securing unrestricted access to state electronic services by all citizens without discrimination

b) Principle of Completeness and Credibility by hosting content that is complete, valid, concise and current

c) Principle of Trust by strengthening citizens' confidence and securing their personal data and privacy, using up to date authentication and authorization tools

d) Principle of proper use of Public Resources by building cost-effective portals

e) Principle of Open Public Data Provision by distributing public information in a consistent manner with no technical, legal or organizational constraints.

The framework's functional components consist of a comprehensive methodological toolkit that provides rules and guidelines which can be are classified in five categories: a) general principles for designing and operating portals, b) portal administration and optimization, c) content organization and presentation, d) Services support and

interoperability e) Security and legal issues. The evaluation guidelines are categorized into three different groups: a) compulsory (105 criteria), suggestive (55 criteria) and "under consideration" (6 criteria). In an attempt to simulate the original visitor experience, the approach adopted for the evaluation was that of an external user i.e. no interviews were conducted with ASEP personnel responsible for managing the web portal. Therefore parts of the PPCF criteria related the portal's technical administration and infrastructure such as server hosting and architecture solutions were not evaluated. The results of the assessment are presented in the following table:

Table 1. ASEP Portal PPCF Criteria Compliance

	Total	Applicable	Compliance	
1. Portal Administration & optimization	**35**	**20**	**50%**	**Partial**
1.1 Administration	6	1	100%	Full
1.2 Domains & URL	15	9	61%	Partial
1.3 Content & services evaluation	7	4	0%	None
1.4 Portal promotion	7	6	58%	Partial
2. Content Organization & Presentation	**63**	**59**	**83%**	**Partial**
2.1 Design & aesthetics	21	21	90%	Partial
2.2 Content Management	21	17	68%	Partial
2.3 Searching & navigating	13	13	100%	Full
2.4 Accessibility	8	8	69%	Partial
3. Services, support & interoperability	**35**	**30**	**55%**	**Partial**
3.1 Electronic services support	13	12	79%	Partial
3.2 Newsletters & discussion forums	22	18	39%	Partial
4. Security requirements & legal issues	**33**	**20**	**100%**	**Full**
4.1 Security & privacy	25	12	100%	Full
4.2 User categories & access rights	3	3	100%	Full
4.3 Legal issues	5	5	100%	Full
Totals	**166**	**129**	**74%**	**Partial**

The overall compliance of the portal with the relevant guidelines provided by the PPCF is deemed satisfactory although there are clearly areas were improvement is feasible. Functionally the process of informing is well defined although hindered by the lack of an electronic starting point on the part of the Council, i.e. information dissemination at a personal level by delivering newsletters and/or RSS feeds. This is obviously related

to the fact that the core processes of the Council revolve around candidate selection and not attraction.

In the technical aspect of the evaluation, there two features that are missing: In regard to the government-to-citizen aspect of the portal, single sign-on services (SSO) functionality could be provided by perhaps the most complete electronic database of the Greek State, that of TaxisNet. Such SSO functionality is already present and available to use in other government portals. For example, using their TaxisNet account as an SSO service, government employees can access their own personnel file in the Central HR Register database and their financial data from the Single Payment Authority of the State. This would essential refute the need for user registration with portal specific functionality and would eliminate the duplication of citizens' data within state agencies. Similarly, within the greater context of e-government oriented technologies, the Council should consider building a mobile friendly portal if not a specific mobile application to handle the core of the services already provided by its web portal informational and transactional functionality. The PPCF takes into account the proliferation of internet capable mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets in the recent years, and provides guidelines for the compliance of presentation and functionality in the context of small screen applications and web portal renderings. This is especially important for ASEP as its services are more commonly directed towards the younger generations. The younger age groups have been more actively seeking jobs in the public sector given the extremely high unemployment rates they currently experience while at the same time they are avid users of mobile communication devices. Yet accessibility by mobile devices is not supported by the Council's portal essentially rendering on mobile, the same pages as the ones used for desktop browsers. One final observation to note is that the above results are very similar to an assessment performed

by Sarantis et al (2008) indicating that little has changed in terms of the modernization or transactional abilities of the portal over the last years.

5. Discussion

The Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection, is one of the most recognizable and trusted public institutions in Greece. In a public opinion poll measuring the "Greek Index of Confidence in Institutions (GICI)", the Council enjoys a high level of trust among the Greek public (Public Issue, 2009) and in a similar poll in 2014, its institution was regarded as one of the most important events that occurred in the country during the 1990s (Public Issue, 2014).

The Council's website, as evaluated using the official Greek Public Portal Certification Framework demonstrates that it acts as an important building block in the construction of public trust towards the Institutions and the hiring procedures of the Greek State. In this context it fulfills its goals as set by the established e-government practices and accordingly, its expected benefits of increased transparency, accountability and meritocracy. The key requirements of transparency and accountability are met by publicizing, for every candidate, all the stages of the staff selection procedure (OECD, 2011).

However its contribution and scope to this end, can only be partially achieved regardless of the tools used, for reasons not directly related to technology. First, personnel selection is only part of the HR functions of any Public Administration. Most internal procedures such as evaluations, promotions and intra-governmental employee mobility lie beyond the Council's established institutional responsibilities. In this sense its Government-2-Employee (G2E) functionalities are virtually non-existent. Second, as mentioned earlier, the Greek political system was all too quick to enact legal

loopholes in order to subtly circumvent official established procedures, or indirectly manipulate the Council's authority.

Apart from the "deliberate" exemptions set to limit the Council's power, the independent authority also has to deal with the constantly changing and ever increasing legal environment of provisions and amendments that define and alter the boundaries of its jurisdiction. The Council's annual report for 2010 alone, lists 12 laws and 10 ministerial decrees enacted in that year pertaining to the ASEP's role and jurisdiction (ASEP, 2011). An interesting side-effect of the complicated legal environment that regulates civil service hiring in Greece is that it has led to "novel" private sector business that assume the responsibility of submitting applications on the account of candidates so that they cannot be excluded for typical-bureaucratic reasons of application compliance.

The above ultimately demonstrates the limits of the transformational aspects of technology within the public sector. The institutional enhancement of the Council's power, the expansion of its political autonomy and responsibilities within the Greek Public Administration is something that needs to be constantly addressed and refined while at the same time utilizing the available technology to this purpose. It is important to note that the existing institutional loopholes for personnel selection and internal HR procedures, do not only undermine the autonomy of the Council. They also weaken the public's trust towards the Council's authority and state institutions in general.

The Greek State can and should continue to build upon the established public's acceptance of the Council as a credible, trustworthy independent institution by enhancing both its legal and operational capacity. This does seem to be the general direction, as very recently, two important steps were taken by the Greek state to

institutionally and operationally assist the Council's mission. Article 11 of law 4325 enacted in May 2015 provisions the creation and maintenance of an electronic database by the Council which within a 5 year data lifespan, holds all the relevant data and qualifications submitted by applicants so that they may be reused without the need for resubmission. At the same time, other public agencies are obligated to provide any data required by the Council insofar as they relate to processes that fall within its jurisdiction. Furthermore, legislation introduced in February 2016 (law 4369/2016) provisions the creation of a "National Register of Public Administration Executives". This is essentially a database of civil service personnel that hold advanced qualifications and will serve as the pool of selection for appointments in executive positions of the Greek public administration. This qualified personnel database will be developed and maintained by the Council, thus lending its credibility to internal HR function of the Greek Civil Service such as selection procedures for appointments and promotions in the higher levels of the public bureaucracy.

The aforementioned legislation is definitely set on the right track, yet one should keep in mind that hiring through the Council is almost deterministically, a time-consuming process. Modern governments operate in an environment that demands versatility and flexibility. For these reasons, direct staff hiring for certain positions in the public administration, by bypassing long legalistic Council procedures, invariably provides an advantage. After all one could reasonably argue that allowing a minister to choose his associates on his own can only make him more effective and efficient at his tasks.

Still, in the eyes of public opinion, state hiring will always be an integral component of trust between citizens, Institutions and the Greek State in general. This trust will constantly hang in the delicate balance between on one hand, the versatile yet inevitably particularistic, extra-Council hiring procedures, and on the other, the lengthy, legalistic

yet unbiased and impersonal, official ASEP hiring channels. Creating and sustaining this balance is a perpetual challenge for any Greek government seeking build the public's trust while at the same time maintaining the ability to run an effective and efficient public administration.

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