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No One Left Behind**

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Public Finance for Development Programme – Slovakia’s positive footprint in transition countries

Alena Šranková, Viera Orosová, Božena M. Baluchová

Public finance reform is widely regarded as one of the most successful areas in Slovakia’s economic transition. Good practice in public finance is critical in order to combat corruption, alleviate poverty and guarantee effective use of government resources.

Since 2009, the UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States has been implementing the regional Programme: ‘Public Finance for Development (PFD): Strengthening Public Finance Capacities in the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States’ with the goal – to strengthen and enhance national capacities within partner countries in the area of public finance by raising awareness, developing analytical capacities and sharing good practice with regard to reforms implemented in Slovakia and elsewhere.

Since 2014 the PFD Programme has been implemented in the framework of the new “partnership project”: ‘Slovak Republic-UNDP Partnership for Results in the International Development Cooperation’. The project is a partnership development initiative of the MF SR and UNDP. UNDP and MF SR have known what to offer to the partnership, as well as to the partner countries. Slovak experts from MF SR contributed with lessons learned from the economic and social transformation, the reforms, institutions’ building and democratization process. UNDP offered well established network of offices, well working implementation mechanism and a team of independent experts. According to both institutions, reforming process must be designed carefully, suit local conditions and capacity and it must be implemented gradually.

Among the main Activities of PFD Programme are listed: policy advice to governmental partners; capacity assessment; institutional development; small grants schemes; trainings, workshops; study visits. **There are three types of beneficiaries of PFD programme in partner countries:** governmental institutions – finance ministries (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Finance of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance of Ukraine); other central and local public authorities in partner countries (CPAs and LPAs in Moldova); and non-governmental stakeholders (non-governmental organizations, research institutes, universities, think tanks and media). PFD programme is exclusively funded by the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic (MF SR).

1. Slovak experience from public finance reforms

As a part of PFD Programme, Slovak experience from public finance reforms has been

shared and the recommendations has been provided by the experts from MF SR and other experts **to partner organizations in transition countries** in the region – in partner countries: Moldova, Montenegro (and, very soon, also in Ukraine). Shared Reform initiatives tend to be comprehensive and strategic and focusing on both **developing the institutional and human capacities** for sound and effective management, as well as on the **advancement of public debate** and opinion. First written **reports on lessons learned** were prepared by the experts from MF SR on PFM in the period of 2011-2014 in all areas of assistance – on the following topics: Financial Policy Institute at the MF SR; Reform of the public sector accounting and reporting system; Adoption of ESA95 methodology in Slovakia; Budget reforms in Slovakia; Implementation of programme budgeting in local government of Slovakia; Fiscal decentralisation in Slovakia; Lessons learned from debt and liquidity management in the SR. Reports can be used for inspiration in designing legislative framework or drafting operational guidelines by recipients.

2. Projects in Moldova

2.1 Capacity development for program budgeting (PBB) in Moldova (since 2011)

The objective of the project is to support the Ministry of Finance of Moldova in implementation of program budgeting (PBB) in the government of Moldova and to create conditions for **sustainable capacity development for PBB in central and local public authorities** of Moldova. Strong Moldovan ownership and commitment to the budget reform is a key factor driving successful implementation of the PBB project.

2.2 Strengthening capacities of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova in the area of public finance (since 2015)

To support non-governmental stakeholders, a partnership with ZMOS (Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia), was launched in 2015 to **strengthen capacities of CALM** – The Congress of Local Public Authorities of Moldova in the area of public finance.

Following Achievements have been reached in Moldova: better able to fulfill its strategy to implement PBB on all levels; increased capacity to prepare program budget; higher quality of programs; improved cooperation between MF and line ministries; change in mindset – focus on results; peer learning – Moldovans sharing their knowledge and reform experience in the region;

3. Projects in Montenegro

3.1

Strengthening capacities for macroeconomic and fiscal analysis and forecasting;

Adoption of the European System of Accounts Methodology ESA' 95;

Strengthening capacities for public debt management in Montenegro;

Improving public sector accounting and reporting systems in Montenegro

(projects implemented since 2010)

The purpose of the projects was to provide assistance to the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro in **strengthening capacities for macroeconomic, fiscal analysis and forecasting**. Another aim is to support the **improvement of the public sector accounting and reporting systems** in Montenegro via adopting the **accrual accounting principles**.

The Financial Policy Institute (FPI) of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic serves as a model for institutional and capacity building in the Sector for Economic Policy and Development (SEPD) at the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro (MF MN).

3.2 Partnership with Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF) to enhance capacity building in the field of public accounting (since 2015)

The partnership initiative between MF SR, UNDP and Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF) significantly contributes to strengthening capacities of government, civil society and professional community in public accounting practices in Montenegro. The internationally recognized, professional qualification program Public Accountants Certification Training (PACT) in Montenegro, supported by PFD programme is part of the Montenegrin government's efforts to build and strengthen professional qualifications for public sector accountants.

Following Achievements have been reached in Montenegro: organizational re-structuring of the macro-forecasting function at MF; new model for macro-economic and fiscal forecasting; medium-term strategy for transition to accrual accounting completed and approved by the government of Montenegro; action plan for strategy implementation developed; certification training program for public accountants launched by CEF.

4. Project in Ukraine

4.1 Needs assessment in public financial management (PFM) in Ukraine (2015)

Based on a preliminary assessment of needs in public financial management in Ukraine, this country became the third beneficiary partner country of PFD Programme in 2015. The needs assessment report for PFM reform in Ukraine and the action plan for PFM reform implementation were developed and presented to the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine.

5. Next steps of 'Public Finance for Development' Programme

Knowledge sharing, networking and sustainable capacity building have been always shared goals in the project implementation and the main factors that will drive PFD implementation and cooperation with our partners in the future. Strong local ownership and Commitment to reforms are the Key success factors of this Programme.

Among the Next steps of 'Public Finance for Development' Programme there are: **Long-term partnerships** to support public finance reforms within the region and beyond the partner countries; **engagement** of non-governmental stakeholders (NGOs, research institutes,

universities, think tanks and media) into the process of **raising awareness** about public finance management (PFM) and transparent, as well as accountable utilization of public funds. It is also necessary to **share the success stories** achieved in PFM within central and local authorities in partner countries. Further **Capacity development** by encouraging local ownership and fostering citizens' commitment to the budget reform is also very important in order to become the ultimate beneficiaries of the PFD Programme.

The official Website of PFD Programme can be found here: <http://publicfinance.undp.sk> (There have been also created two social media accounts as other channels for success stories sharing and better programme's visibility –Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/PublicFinance4Development/>; Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/PubFinance4Dev>).

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