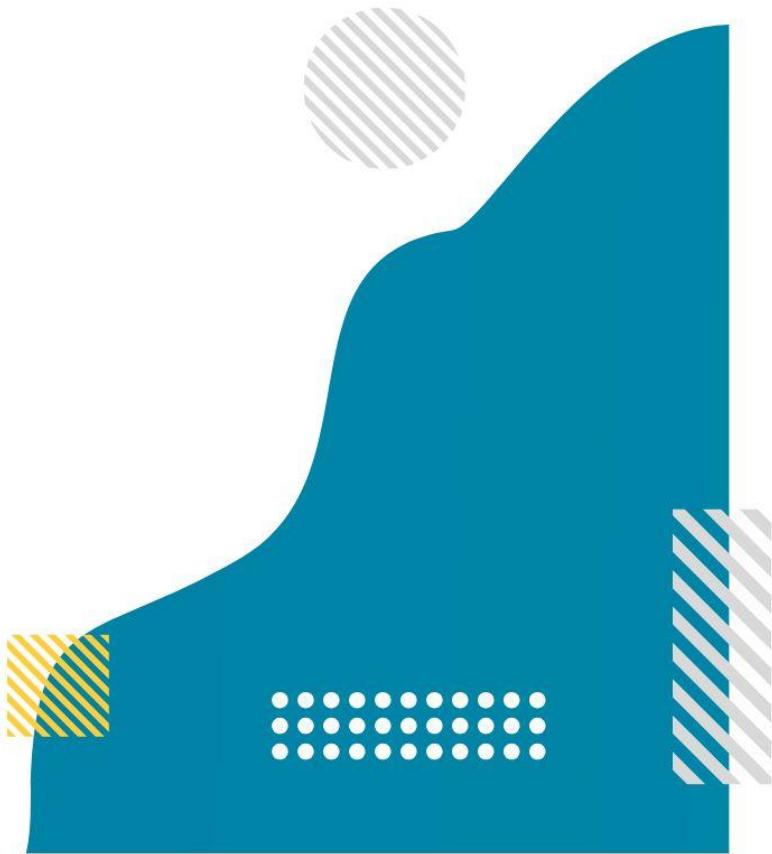
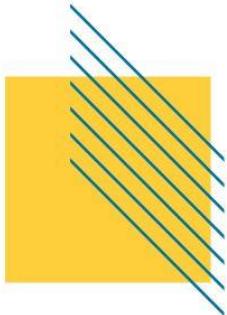


KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

VOLUME 1: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) is an intergovernmental organisation that enhances regional cooperation, promotes shared learning, and supports the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, it helps governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses. It helps prepare them for membership and integration into the European Union (EU).

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About this Knowledge Package

This publication is part of a three-volume **Knowledge Package for Succession Planning in the Western Balkans**. **Volumes 1 and 2** were refined from materials produced during the 2025 ReSPA Seasonal School on Succession Planning. **Volume 3 (Toolkit)** was developed **separately** to provide a practical companion to the first two volumes.

The Three Volumes

Volume 1 — Succession Planning in the Western Balkans Public Administrations: Analysis and Recommendations (hereafter: **Analysis and Recommendations**). Regional diagnosis and reform directions.

Volume 2 — Strategic Framework for Succession Planning in Public Administration (hereafter: **Strategic Framework**). Principles, conceptual foundations, and **implementation pathways**.

Volume 3 — Prospective Succession Planning Toolkit for the Western Balkans Administrations (hereafter: **Toolkit**). Hands-on methodology, tools, and templates (developed independently from the Seasonal School).

How to read this package. This volume (*Analysis and Recommendations*) covers the regional **why** and **what**. For conceptual foundations and **implementation pathways**, see **Volume 2 – Strategic Framework**. For hands-on **templates and forms**, see **Volume 3 – Toolkit**.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK	7
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Policy Foundations	7
1.3 HRM and Organisational Integration	8
1.4 Leadership Development	9
1.5 Leadership Continuity	10
1.6 Tools and Monitoring	11
1.7 Lessons Learned	12
1.8 Roadmap for the Western Balkans Administrations	13
2. WESTERN BALKANS SNAPSHOTS: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	17
2.1 Albania	17
2.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina	19
2.3 North Macedonia	22
2.4 Montenegro	22
2.5 Serbia	24
2.6 Kosovo*	25
3.1 Case Study: Slovenia	26
3.2 Case Study: Estonia	29
3.3 Case Study: France	33
4. CONCLUSION	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Succession planning is increasingly recognised as a cornerstone of modern, future-ready public administration. As Western Balkans governments pursue civil service reform and professionalisation, the need to secure leadership continuity, retain institutional knowledge, and develop internal talent is becoming more urgent and complex. However, across the region, succession planning remains underutilised and insufficiently formalised.

This report offers a comprehensive diagnosis of the state of succession planning in the region. It recommends a strategic and operational framework for embedding it into public sector human resources management (HRM) systems.

A New Understanding of Succession Planning

Traditional approaches to succession planning often treat it as a narrow HR process, focused on identifying a direct replacement for a departing official. This report reframes succession as a broader organisational strategy. In dynamic, knowledge-driven public services, succession planning ensures institutional resilience, enables long-term leadership development, and supports impactful public policy delivery. It is about preparing individuals and building systems that can adapt, regenerate, and perform under conditions of uncertainty and change.

The proposed approach shifts the focus:

- From **position-based replacement** to **competency-based development**;
- From **reactive staffing** to **strategic foresight**;
- From isolated HR functions to integrated **talent ecosystems**.

This redefinition aligns succession planning with broader public sector transformation agendas, including performance management, leadership development, digitalisation, and public value creation.

Current State of Succession Planning in the Western Balkans

A regional survey conducted in mid-2025 provides a detailed picture of succession planning practices in the Western Balkans administrations. The results confirm that succession planning is at an early stage of development, but also reveal emerging momentum and shared aspirations across the region. Key findings include:

- **Legal and strategic frameworks remain weak.** Succession planning is rarely embedded in legislation or formal public administration strategies. References are often indirect, appearing under broader goals such as HR modernisation or leadership development. As a result, succession lacks visibility, legitimacy, and sustained institutional support.
- **HRM integration is limited.** Most administrations report little or no integration of succession planning into existing HR systems. Core processes such as recruitment, appraisal, promotion, or mobility are not systematically connected to leadership continuity objectives. HR units are generally under-resourced and lack the mandate to lead strategic talent planning.

- **Leadership development systems are underutilised.** Civil service academies/public training institutions provide leadership training, but these efforts are often generic, fragmented, and disconnected from succession pathways. Structured career development frameworks are rare, and mentoring, job rotation or development planning are not institutionalised.
- **Knowledge transfer practices are inconsistent.** Most administrations do not have formal mechanisms to ensure the handover of responsibilities or the retention of institutional memory. Planned retirements are often treated as administrative events, with minimal attention to continuity or learning. Knowledge is lost when experienced staff leave.
- **Tools, data, and monitoring systems are largely absent.** Dedicated succession planning tools – such as talent maps, leadership risk matrices, or onboarding protocols – are minimal. Monitoring and evaluation are informal or non-existent. Where HR data exists, they are rarely leveraged to inform planning or decision-making.
- **Cultural and political factors pose structural barriers.** Succession planning is often seen as discretionary or politically sensitive. In some administrations, the absence of clear criteria fuels perceptions of favouritism. Institutional inertia, lack of trust in HR processes, and political cycles further undermine continuity and long-term planning.

Despite these challenges, there are important enablers:

- A shared **recognition of the importance** of succession, especially in light of aging public workforces and upcoming retirements;
- **Digital transformation agendas** that can support talent analytics, knowledge management, and performance tracking;
- Growing **interest in intergenerational management** and leadership development as part of broader civil service reform;
- Opportunities for **regional collaboration and peer learning**, facilitated by ReSPA and other platforms.

Strategic Directions for Reform

The report proposes a dual-track strategy for advancing succession planning in the Western Balkans:

1. **Institutionalising strategic succession planning:** Succession should be integral to public administration reform. It should be embedded in HRM strategies, formalised in legal or regulatory frameworks, and backed by high-level political and administrative commitment. This includes:
 - Creating dedicated roles or coordination bodies for succession planning;
 - Adopting guidance or frameworks for critical position analysis and talent development at the level of administrations;
 - Ensuring coherence with related initiatives (e.g., competency frameworks, digital HRM systems).

2. **Operationalising succession through practical tools:** A suite of instruments – developed and tested in the region – can support administrations in implementing succession planning at the organisational level. These include:

- Tools to identify critical positions and institutional knowledge at risk;
- Talent mapping methods to assess performance and potential;
- Individual development plans tailored to future leadership needs;
- Protocols for mentoring, onboarding, and knowledge transfer;
- Templates and dashboards to monitor progress and measure impact.

This approach is consolidated in a dedicated section in the aforementioned companion document, Volume 3 – Toolkit.

Lessons from International Practice

Three case studies – Slovenia, Estonia, and France – illustrate different models of succession planning:

- **Slovenia** demonstrates how succession planning can be introduced as part of a broader HRM reform, anchored in strategy, coordinated through pilot projects, and developed with cross-institutional participation.
- **Estonia** shows how values-based, integrated talent systems can deliver many benefits of succession planning, even without a formal framework, mainly when supported by career pathways, development interviews, and performance analytics.
- **France** exemplifies a decentralised but structured model, where central institutions provide tools and guidance while individual ministries adapt succession approaches to their needs. This includes a strong focus on digital platforms, diversity, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

These cases offer transferable insights for the Western Balkans: the importance of pilot testing, the value of building a shared understanding of "talent", and the need to combine strategic frameworks with grounded operational mechanisms.

Towards Implementation

The report concludes with recommendations and next steps for scaling and institutionalising succession planning across the region. These include:

- Launching **pilot initiatives** in selected ministries or agencies to test the toolkit and refine practices;
- Strengthening **HR capacities** through targeted training, technical support, and institutional partnerships;
- Embedding succession in **strategic workforce planning** and linking it to budget cycles, performance frameworks, and digital HR systems;
- Promoting **transparency and fairness** through open criteria, communication strategies, and inclusion mechanisms;

- Creating a platform for **regional peer learning**, enabling administrations to exchange experiences, benchmark progress, and co-develop tools.

Succession planning helps administrations become more adaptive, capable, and attractive as employers when implemented effectively. It supports institutional continuity, improves leadership quality, and builds trust in public service careers. It represents a vital step toward building resilient, modern and professional public sectors for the Western Balkans.

1. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

This section summarises key concepts that underpin the regional analysis. For full conceptual foundations and **implementation pathways**, see **Volume 2 – Strategic Framework**. For ready-to-use **templates and forms**, see **Volume 3 – Toolkit**.

Succession planning is increasingly recognised as a key pillar of resilient and future-oriented public administration. It supports leadership continuity, facilitates knowledge transfer, and enables a more strategic approach to talent development, especially during institutional change and reform.

In the Western Balkans, succession planning remains relatively new. ReSPA conducted a regional survey in June 2025 with public administrations in the Western Balkans to capture a regional snapshot of existing practices. The survey aimed not to rank or compare administrations, but to gather evidence on current approaches, informal mechanisms, pilot initiatives, and aspirations for the future.

The results provide valuable insights into succession planning, the institutional factors shaping it, and the directions in which administrations wish to move. Findings are organised into six thematic areas that reflect the strategic, operational, and cultural dimensions of succession planning.

The **final section of this chapter – the Roadmap for the Western Balkans Administrations** – builds on these findings. It identifies recurring patterns, shared challenges, early signals of promising practice, and opportunities for regional cooperation. These instruments offer a structured basis for supporting strategic thinking, reform design, and peer learning among Western Balkans administrations.

1.2 Policy Foundations

This area explores the degree to which succession planning is embedded in broader public administration reform strategies and legal frameworks. It looks at formal references in laws, policies, or strategic documents, and examines the roles of the institutions responsible for designing and coordinating succession-related activities. The section also considers how coordination is ensured across levels of government and whether any formal mechanisms, such as inter-institutional bodies, are in place to support a coherent approach.

The survey responses confirm that succession planning is still at an early stage of development in the Western Balkans and has not yet been formalised as a distinct policy area.

While the concept is generally acknowledged as relevant, it is rarely embedded explicitly in legal frameworks or strategic public administration reform documents.

In most cases, references to succession are indirect, appearing within broader objectives such as leadership development, HR modernisation, or workforce planning. These references often signal awareness of the need to maintain institutional memory and prepare future leaders, but stop short of defining succession planning as a structured process with clear goals, responsibilities, and tools.

There is momentum around integrating succession-related elements into existing public administration reform strategies or HRM development plans. A few administrations describe how goals such as leadership continuity and talent development have been incorporated into reform strategies or action plans. Although succession planning is not recognised as a separate legal or policy domain, it is considered part of the effort to professionalise the civil service and modernise human resource management.

Where legal frameworks are mentioned, the focus tends to be on general civil service provisions, such as merit-based recruitment, performance appraisal, or mobility, rather than succession planning as a coordinated system. Still, these foundations may offer entry points for more deliberate succession approaches in the future.

Institutional responsibility for succession planning typically lies with central HR authorities or civil service agencies, but without specific mandates, dedicated procedures, or cross-government coordination mechanisms. Formal structures such as inter-institutional working groups or steering bodies focused on succession are not reported. Where cooperation between levels of government exists, it is often described as general rather than tailored to leadership continuity.

Despite the lack of formalisation, several responses reflect a growing recognition of the strategic importance of succession planning, especially in the context of expected retirements and the need to strengthen leadership pipelines. This emerging consensus suggests a shared interest in moving from informal practices and isolated efforts to more structured approaches over time.

1.3 HRM and Organisational Integration

Succession planning is not alone – it is most effective when integrated into core HRM functions. This area examines how HR units are involved in succession-related processes and whether they have the capacity and resources to fulfil this role. It also explores how succession is linked to recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, and broader talent management systems. Mechanisms for identifying high-potential individuals and ensuring transparency and meritocracy are also addressed.

The integration of succession planning into core HRM functions remains limited across the Western Balkans administrations. Most responses indicate that succession planning is not formally recognised as an HRM responsibility, and its connection to existing HR processes, such as recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal, is weak or only implicit.

In general, HR units are described as playing a supportive or technical role, rather than being strategically positioned to drive succession planning. They are often involved in administrative aspects of workforce management but lack the mandate, tools, or capacity to proactively

identify and develop future leaders. In a few cases, HR units contribute to workforce planning or maintain basic data on staffing trends, but these efforts are not yet systematically linked to succession objectives.

Some administrations note ongoing efforts to improve HRM systems more broadly, such as through digitalisation, centralised personnel databases, or competency frameworks. While these developments are not framed as succession planning tools per se, they could eventually provide a stronger foundation for identifying high-potential staff and supporting their career progression.

A few examples point to initial steps in linking succession to other HR processes. In one case, promotion and development opportunities are tied to performance appraisal results; in another, internal mobility procedures are being revised to create clearer career pathways. However, these remain isolated initiatives, and there is no indication that they are embedded in a coordinated succession planning system.

The availability of skilled HR professionals to support succession planning also appears challenging. Several responses mention capacity constraints – both in terms of staffing levels and competencies – within HR units. Without targeted training or structural support, HR professionals are not in a position to lead succession-related initiatives or to provide strategic input on talent development.

Across the Western Balkans, succession planning is still considered a future ambition rather than an operational HR function. While the necessary building blocks – such as performance data, recruitment systems, and mobility rules – may exist in various forms, they are not yet configured to serve the broader goal of leadership continuity. Nevertheless, the survey responses suggest growing awareness within HR structures of shifting from reactive staffing approaches to more forward-looking and integrated talent management practices.

1.4 Leadership Development

Developing future leaders requires sustained investment in learning and development. This section covers the involvement of public training institutions (academies/schools/departments within civil service agencies/authorities) in leadership development, the availability of programmes targeting future leaders, and the use of mentoring and job rotation approaches. It also considers the existence of structured career paths and whether legal or practical barriers affect internal mobility, especially across ministries or levels of government.

The survey responses reveal that leadership development activities exist in most administrations but are rarely embedded in a structured approach to succession planning. Training and development efforts tend to focus on general capacity building for civil servants, rather than on the deliberate preparation of future leaders.

Public administration training institutions or civil service academies are involved in delivering various types of training, including modules on leadership or management. In some cases, these programmes are mandatory for specific categories of staff, such as new managers or senior officials. However, they are often described as generic, with limited tailoring to the specific needs of high-potential individuals or those transitioning into leadership roles.

Several responses mention mentoring as a development tool in informal forms or as part of pilot initiatives. Job rotation and mobility are also possible mechanisms for broadening staff

experience, but these practices are not widespread and are often constrained by institutional or legal barriers. There is frequently no clear pathway linking these experiences to leadership positions.

Career development frameworks, where they exist, are typically limited in scope. Few administrations report having structured career paths for civil servants with leadership potential. Internal mobility rules are in place in most systems, but are not always flexible or sufficiently promoted to serve strategic talent development purposes. Some responses cite legislative or procedural restrictions that make it difficult for staff to move across ministries or levels of government, limiting the opportunities to develop cross-cutting competencies.

Despite these limitations, some administrations report efforts to revise training curricula or introduce new leadership development programmes. These are often donor-supported or part of wider public administration reform projects. In such cases, attention is paid to leadership competencies and succession needs, though the initiatives are usually in early stages or not yet institutionalised.

While leadership development is recognised as important, it is not yet linked systematically to succession planning. Programmes tend to be offered on a supply-driven basis, rather than as part of a coherent strategy to prepare future leaders. Nonetheless, there is growing interest in making leadership development more intentional, better aligned with career progression, and more clearly connected to succession planning needs.

1.5 Leadership Continuity

Whether planned or unexpected, leadership transitions risk organisational memory and stability. This area examines the practices in place to support continuity, focusing on knowledge transfer from outgoing to incoming staff. It looks at handover notes, mentoring arrangements, and digital documentation, and whether these are formalised or depend on individual initiative. The section also explores how retirements are managed and the extent to which retiring officials are engaged in advisory or mentoring roles.

Continuity mechanisms for leadership transitions – such as knowledge transfer, retirement planning, and mentoring – are generally underdeveloped across the Western Balkans administrations. Most survey responses suggest that practices ensuring a smooth handover between outgoing and incoming staff are informal or inconsistent, rather than institutionalised.

Knowledge transfer tends to rely heavily on the discretion and goodwill of individuals. Some administrations mention using handover notes or written instructions, but these are not standardised or mandated by regulation. In several cases, outgoing managers are expected to brief their successors, but the quality and scope of these briefings vary, and they are not monitored or coordinated systematically.

Mentoring is occasionally reported as a tool for continuity, either in an informal capacity or as part of pilot initiatives. However, there is little evidence that mentoring is embedded as a regular practice within transition processes. Where it does occur, it is often dependent on the personal initiative of senior staff or the culture of a particular institution.

Digital documentation or knowledge capture tools are available in some administrations, but are rarely explicitly used for succession purposes. A few examples mention internal platforms

or databases that could support knowledge continuity. Still, these are typically intended for broader HR or institutional memory functions and are not tailored to leadership transitions.

Planned retirement and the management of leadership exits are another weak spot in most systems. There are few, if any, structured mechanisms for identifying upcoming retirements and preparing successors in advance. In most cases, retirement is treated as an administrative event rather than an opportunity to plan for continuity. As a result, transitions often take place with limited preparation or handover time.

Some administrations express interest in developing more systematic approaches to retirement and succession. Some respondents explain about engaging retirees in advisory roles or using their experience in transitional periods, but these ideas remain largely aspirational and are not supported by formal procedures.

While there is widespread recognition of the risks associated with leadership turnover, especially in critical or senior positions, existing systems are not yet designed to mitigate those risks through structured knowledge transfer or succession planning. Current practices rely heavily on informal arrangements, and the absence of institutionalised procedures leaves administrations vulnerable to disruption when experienced staff leave their posts.

1.6 Tools and Monitoring

Effective succession planning is supported by dedicated tools and mechanisms for tracking progress. This area examines whether administrations use instruments such as leadership risk matrices or digital talent platforms, and whether these are formally adopted or in experimental phases. It also explores how succession planning is monitored and evaluated – through indicators, dashboards, audits, or feedback systems – and who is responsible for this oversight.

The use of tools and mechanisms to support succession planning remains limited across the Western Balkans administrations. Most responses indicate that no dedicated instruments – such as talent databases, leadership risk matrices, or succession tracking platforms – are used systematically. Where tools are mentioned, they tend to be general-purpose HR systems, not designed explicitly for succession management.

Some administrations report having developed or piloted digital HRM platforms that include data on staff profiles, qualifications, or retirement forecasts. While these systems could potentially support succession planning, they are not yet being used in a structured way for that purpose. In several cases, data availability is cited as a constraint, either because information is incomplete, not standardised across institutions, or not accessible in formats that support forward-looking planning.

A few responses refer to the use of competency frameworks or performance appraisal systems, which could serve as input for identifying leadership potential. However, these tools are generally used for evaluation or development purposes, not as part of a broader succession planning strategy. There is little evidence that administrations have mechanisms to track or analyse the readiness of their leadership pipelines over time.

Monitoring and evaluation of succession-related efforts are largely absent. No administrations report having specific indicators, dashboards, or key performance measures dedicated to succession planning. In rare cases, aspects of leadership development are included in broader

HRM or reform strategy monitoring frameworks, but without dedicated follow-up mechanisms. Reviews or audits of succession practices have not been conducted systematically, and learning from experience remains informal and ad hoc. Some administrations express interest in developing more structured tools or systems in the future, and a few note donor-supported initiatives that may include elements relevant to succession planning. These are generally in the early phases and have not yet been integrated into standard HR procedures.

In summary, while the potential for evidence-based succession planning is increasingly acknowledged, the necessary tools and monitoring practices are not yet in place. Existing systems provide a partial foundation – through data collection, performance management, or training records – but are not currently configured to support systematic identification, development, and tracking of future leaders. The gap between available data and actionable insights remains a key barrier to progress in this area.

1.7 Lessons Learned

Beyond formal systems, succession planning is shaped by political, cultural, and administrative factors. Here, the broader environment in which succession planning occurs, including political cycles, institutional resistance, and turnover patterns, is captured. It also highlights the challenges administrations face, the innovations or pilot efforts they have introduced, and the lessons they have drawn from their experiences. Recommendations and insights for others beginning or strengthening succession planning efforts are also presented.

Survey responses highlight various political, administrative, and cultural contextual factors that influence the development and implementation of succession planning in the Western Balkans administrations. These factors often operate as constraints but also help explain the current state of play and the pace of progress.

Political influence is consistently cited as a challenge. Changes in political leadership frequently lead to shifts in personnel, priorities, and institutional focus, undermining the continuity needed for long-term planning. In some cases, political considerations strongly affect leadership appointments, which limits the space for merit-based, structured approaches to succession. Political cycles also discourage forward planning, as reforms are often interrupted or redirected with changes in government.

Administrative culture is another key factor. Succession planning is not yet considered a standard managerial responsibility in many administrations. The emphasis remains on compliance and procedural tasks, rather than proactive talent development. Hierarchical structures and low tolerance for risk can make it challenging to promote high-potential individuals or to create flexible development pathways. Resistance to change is also reported, particularly where succession planning is perceived as threatening established practices or entitlements. Preparing successors in advance is sometimes met with scepticism or interpreted as favouritism, especially without clear, transparent criteria. In such environments, informal networks and personal loyalty often substitute for formal career development systems.

Despite these constraints, several administrations have encouraged development. Some have piloted small-scale initiatives, such as talent identification workshops, internal mentoring programmes, or leadership development schemes. While these are often donor-supported or led by specific agencies, they allow innovation within existing structures.

Challenges related to capacity – both human and institutional – are also noted. Many HR units operate with limited staff and under tight constraints, which affects their ability to take on strategic functions like succession planning—the lack of dedicated funding, tools, and political backing further limits what can be achieved.

Nonetheless, a shared lesson across administrations is the need for gradual and context-sensitive approaches. Respondents suggest that succession systems should be developed incrementally rather than importing rigid models, drawing on local realities, and building on existing HRM practices. Peer learning, regional exchange, and adapting good practices from within the Western Balkans are also valuable.

There is a broad consensus that succession planning will become increasingly necessary due to demographic trends, upcoming retirements, and reform pressures. Administrations are beginning to reflect on how to address these needs more systematically, even if full implementation remains a longer-term goal.

1.8 Roadmap for the Western Balkans Administrations

The Roadmap below sets system-level, policy directions for the Western Balkans (the why and what to prioritise). It does not duplicate operational procedures. For implementation pathways (the how), see **Volume 2 – Strategic Framework**, Chapter 3; for editable instruments and forms, see **Volume 3 – Toolkit**, Chapter 7.

The analysis of succession planning practices across public administrations in the Western Balkans reveals a region grappling with common challenges such as fragmented governance, limited strategic HR capacity, and insufficient institutionalisation of succession frameworks. Despite shared strengths—including growing political commitment to public administration reform and emerging digital HR tools—the absence of coherent and systematic succession planning hampers leadership continuity and organisational resilience.

To address these issues, this set of general recommendations offers a unified and practical roadmap for introducing and institutionalising succession planning across the Western Balkans. Grounded in cross-cutting challenges, shared experiences, and recurrent reform priorities identified in contexts of individual administrations, the recommendations seek to move the region from reactive, ad hoc approaches toward strategic, data-driven, and sustainable succession planning systems.

The following chapter details eleven interlinked recommendations covering essential areas—from embedding succession planning in legal frameworks and clarifying governance structures, fostering leadership development, enabling knowledge transfer, and promoting a culture of continuous learning. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework to enhance the professionalism, continuity, and resilience of public administrations in the Western Balkans, ensuring that institutions are better prepared to meet current and future leadership demands.

1. Institutionalise Succession Planning in Legal and Strategic Frameworks

It must first be formally recognised in legal and strategic frameworks to build a sustainable and systematised approach to succession planning. This includes explicitly defining succession planning within civil service laws, HRM strategies, and public administration reform (PAR) documents. Doing so elevates succession planning from a series of ad hoc or pilot initiatives to an essential element of public administration professionalism and continuity.

Strategic alignment with key values such as meritocracy, leadership development, and institutional resilience ensures that succession planning is not seen as an isolated HR function, but as a contributor to broader reform goals. Operationalising this principle will require the development of clear guidelines, standard templates, and procedural steps that ministries and agencies can follow, thereby embedding succession planning into routine institutional practice.

2. Designate Clear Governance and Coordination Structures

Effective succession planning requires clear ownership and coordination to ensure consistency, accountability, and alignment across institutions. Assigning responsibility to a central body—such as a Civil Service Agency or a designated HRM authority—helps embed succession planning into national public administration systems. This body should be empowered to lead the development of frameworks, oversee implementation, and support institutions in adapting approaches to their specific contexts. To avoid fragmentation and duplication, the roles of key actors—HR units, training academies, line ministries, and oversight bodies—must be clearly defined. Cross-institutional cooperation should be promoted through formal coordination mechanisms and structured exchanges of experience. At the regional level, platforms for peer learning and collaboration (e.g., through ReSPA) can support harmonised approaches and accelerate uptake of good practices. A coordinated model ensures that succession planning becomes a shared institutional commitment, rather than a series of disconnected efforts.

3. Strengthen the Strategic Role of HR Units

Human Resource (HR) units are central to the success of any succession planning system, but across the Western Balkans, they often operate in a limited, administrative capacity. To change this, HR units need to be repositioned as strategic partners within public administration, equipped with the mandate, resources, and competencies to lead workforce and succession planning efforts. This includes moving beyond transactional tasks to engage in proactive talent management, career development, and leadership pipeline building.

To support this shift, targeted capacity building is essential, particularly in workforce analytics, competency mapping, and strategic planning. HR professionals should be empowered to use data and insights to anticipate staffing needs, identify leadership gaps, and support decision-making processes. This transformation is especially critical at local government levels, where resource and capability constraints are often more pronounced. By strengthening the strategic function of HR units, administrations can create a more professional, forward-looking civil service that is better prepared to manage leadership continuity and institutional memory.

4. Develop Competency-Based Talent Identification and Career Pathways

A core component of effective succession planning is the ability to identify and nurture talent early, using clear, competency-based criteria. Introducing or refining competency frameworks helps define the skills, behaviours, and attributes required for leadership and critical roles within public administration. These frameworks create a transparent and objective foundation for talent identification, performance evaluation, and career development. To operationalise this, administrators should integrate performance appraisals, manager feedback, and engagement in training or development activities as high-potential indicators. Structured career paths linked to promotion criteria and individual development plans can provide clear progression routes for aspiring leaders. This not only supports internal mobility and motivation

but also strengthens the leadership pipeline by ensuring that talent is developed purposefully and fairly, in line with institutional needs and reform objectives.

5. Institutionalise Leadership Development and Mentoring

Leadership development should be more than occasional training—it must be embedded as a strategic function linked directly to succession planning. Formalising leadership development through structured programmes, mentoring, coaching, and job rotation helps prepare high-potential individuals for future responsibilities. These activities not only build competencies but also strengthen institutional knowledge and cross-functional understanding. Public administration training institutions—such as ASPA, NAPA, and KIPA—should play a leading role in designing and delivering leadership programmes that align with national succession planning frameworks. Mentoring and coaching, particularly when structured and institutionally supported, provide valuable guidance and accelerate readiness for leadership roles. By linking these development efforts to succession goals and individual career plans, administrations can ensure that leadership growth is intentional, continuous, and aligned with public sector reform priorities.

6. Establish Succession-Focused Digital HR Systems

Digital tools are essential to transforming succession planning from a reactive process into a data-driven and strategic function. Expanding or upgrading Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS) to include dedicated modules for succession planning can help track key indicators such as leadership readiness, upcoming retirements, and staff participation in training and development programmes. These tools can also support the management of talent pools and competency profiles. With comprehensive and real-time data, HR units and decision-makers can conduct workforce forecasting, identify succession gaps, and make informed staffing decisions. Integrating succession functions into digital platforms also facilitates institutional memory, enhances transparency, and enables evidence-based monitoring and reporting. For the Western Balkans, investing in digital HR infrastructure is a technical upgrade and a strategic enabler for long-term leadership continuity and capacity building.

7. Enable and Promote Internal Mobility

Internal mobility is a vital mechanism for talent development and leadership readiness, yet it remains underutilised in many Western Balkan administrations due to legal, procedural, and cultural barriers. Enabling civil servants to move across departments, ministries, or levels of government allows them to broaden their experience, build cross-cutting competencies, and prepare for more complex leadership roles. Encouraging mobility also helps match institutional needs with available talent more dynamically. To facilitate this, administrations should remove restrictive rules and simplify internal transfer procedures, while promoting mobility as a valued part of career progression. Transparent internal job boards, competency-based transfer mechanisms, and career planning tools can support this effort. Building a culture that views mobility not as a risk but as an opportunity will enhance agility and improve long-term succession outcomes.

8. Institutionalise Knowledge Transfer and Retirement Planning

Leadership transitions—mainly due to retirements—pose significant organisational memory and continuity risks. However, in most Western Balkan administrations, knowledge transfer

practices are informal, inconsistent, or absent. Administrations should institutionalise processes such as standardised handover protocols, structured onboarding guides, and mentoring arrangements involving outgoing officials to ensure smoother transitions. Proactive retirement planning should begin before leadership exits occur, particularly for critical roles. Tracking expected retirements and preparing potential successors in advance can prevent leadership gaps and loss of institutional expertise. Where possible, involving retirees in advisory or mentoring roles can support continuity and strengthen the learning culture. By embedding these practices into HR procedures, administrations can move from reactive staffing responses to planned, resilient leadership transitions.

9. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt Succession Practices

Effective succession planning requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that strategies deliver tangible results beyond mere procedural compliance. Introducing succession-specific key performance indicators (KPIs)—such as successor readiness rates, internal promotion ratios, and training-to-advancement metrics—enables administrations to track progress in developing leadership pipelines and making informed adjustments.

Using dashboards, feedback mechanisms, and regular reporting, HR and leadership can identify gaps, celebrate successes, and refine succession approaches over time. This dynamic evaluation fosters a culture of continuous improvement and accountability, ensuring that succession planning evolves in response to changing needs and remains aligned with organisational goals.

10. Pilot and Scale Succession Planning Models

Given the varying levels of readiness and institutional capacity across the Western Balkans, piloting succession planning initiatives in select ministries or municipalities allows administrations to test frameworks, tools, and processes on a manageable scale. These pilot projects provide valuable lessons, highlight practical challenges, and enable adjustments tailored to specific national and organisational contexts. Successful pilots can then be scaled up and adapted more broadly, ensuring feasible and effective reforms. Leveraging regional learning opportunities and donor support can facilitate resource mobilisation, knowledge exchange, and coordination. This phased approach helps embed succession planning gradually, building momentum and institutional buy-in for sustainable reform.

11. Foster a Culture of Leadership Development and Continuity

Embedding succession planning in the public administration requires more than formal systems—it demands a cultural shift toward meritocracy, transparency, and accountability in career advancement. Promoting these values helps build trust in leadership selection processes and encourages staff to engage in professional development actively.

Reducing the impact of political turnover by strengthening civil service protections and developing neutral leadership pipelines supports organisational stability and resilience. Cultivating a future-oriented, values-driven culture rewards leadership growth and institutional learning, ultimately fostering continuity and reinforcing the professionalism essential for effective public service delivery.

2. WESTERN BALKANS SNAPSHOT: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Across the Western Balkans, succession planning is gaining traction as a critical dimension of public administration reform, yet progress remains uneven. While all administrations acknowledge the importance of leadership continuity, institutional memory, and talent development, only a few have moved beyond ad hoc or pilot practices to embed succession planning systematically in their legal, strategic, and operational frameworks. Administrations like Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have launched promising initiatives—such as leadership development programmes, talent assessments, and digital HR systems—but often lack coordination, formalisation, or scalability. Others demonstrate strong intent and foundational reforms but remain limited by fragmentation, weak HR capacity, and insufficient digital or legal infrastructure.

The regional picture reveals shared challenges: a need for legal clarity, empowered and strategic HR units, structured talent identification, internal mobility, and mechanisms for knowledge transfer and retirement planning. Political influence, limited resources, and cultural resistance further complicate implementation. At the same time, there is significant momentum—fuelled by administrative reform strategies, donor engagement, and regional cooperation—that creates a strong enabling environment.

The 11 general recommendations outlined in this report offer a coherent, step-by-step roadmap to transition from fragmented efforts to comprehensive succession systems. They reflect and respond to the most pressing needs observed across the region: the institutionalisation of succession planning in legal frameworks, strengthening of HR roles, development of competency-based career paths, digitisation of workforce data, and cultivation of a leadership development culture insulated from political cycles.

The Western Balkans can collectively advance toward more professional, resilient, and future-ready public administrations by aligning administration-specific priorities with this broader regional framework. Building succession systems is a technical or managerial task and a strategic investment in long-term institutional stability and public sector excellence.

2.1 Albania

Succession planning in Albania is not formally defined as a standalone process but is integrated into broader public administration reforms and legal frameworks. The draft Cross-Cutting Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2025–2030 outlines the development of a politically neutral, professional civil service. Though succession planning is not explicitly mentioned, the strategy emphasises leadership development, institutional memory, and HR capacity—key succession elements. Law no. 152/2013 "On the Civil Servant" provides the legal foundation, which mandates merit-based recruitment, promotion, and career development. Senior positions are filled through the Senior Management Corps (TMC), requiring competitive selection or advanced training, with a minimum evaluation score to ensure meritocracy. Oversight is shared among the Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption, the Department of Public Administration (DoPA), and individual institutions. While no formal coordination body exists specifically for succession, collaboration

is achieved through shared standards and training programs delivered by the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA).

HR units manage recruitment and performance evaluations, but have limited authority and capacity for strategic planning. Their role in succession is indirect, primarily through maintaining personnel records and supporting mobility processes. Capacity gaps—particularly in local institutions—underscore the need for more staff, better training, and legal empowerment. ASPA plays a central role in leadership development, offering foundational and advanced programs, including mandatory training for senior managers. Initiatives such as the Excellence, Young Cells, and Leadership Development Program aim to identify and prepare future leaders. However, these efforts are not yet fully integrated into a cohesive succession strategy.

Talent is identified through competitive promotions, performance reviews, and engagement in professional development. The TMC is a centralised leadership pool, with up to 20% of senior positions open to qualified external candidates. While legal provisions encourage internal mobility, implementation faces practical barriers like manager reluctance and limited data integration. Knowledge transfer mechanisms are informal. Handover notes and mentoring occur sporadically, without standardisation. Although the Central Personnel Registry (RQP) could support succession tracking, it is currently used only for administrative record-keeping. Retirement planning is reactive, with no structured transition protocols or formal roles for retirees in mentoring. Notifications typically occur close to retirement, limiting proactive leadership transitions. Digital tools dedicated to succession planning are absent. While the RQP holds potential, no predictive or analytical systems are used. Likewise, succession planning is not monitored through KPIs or formal evaluations. Current leadership development assessments focus on procedural compliance rather than long-term impact. Frequent leadership turnover and a weak planning culture—exacerbated by political cycles—challenge continuity. ASPA and DoPA promote professionalism and neutrality to offset these pressures. Resistance is addressed through communication, training, and the sharing of best practices.

Despite the absence of a formal system, progress has been made through leadership programs, merit-based recruitment, and early efforts to strengthen HR capacities. Challenges include limited strategic planning by HR units and a lack of dedicated tools. Innovations such as digital training platforms, ASPA's leadership academies, and regional collaboration are promising steps forward. Key lessons stress the importance of early talent identification, competency-based training, and institutional commitment. Clear frameworks, data-driven tools, and targeted pilot initiatives are recommended for developing an effective succession system. Aligning training with career progression and encouraging a culture of continuous development will be essential for building leadership continuity in Albania's public administration.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To strengthen succession planning and ensure leadership continuity, Albania should prioritise the following actions:

- Formalise succession planning as a distinct function within legal and strategic frameworks, leveraging existing leadership and HR reforms.

- Enhance HR units' capacity and authority to lead proactive workforce planning, using digital tools like the Central Personnel Registry for more than just administrative purposes.
- Improve internal mobility by addressing managerial resistance and data limitations, fostering merit-based career progression.
- Standardise talent identification and knowledge transfer through formalised mentoring, onboarding, and handover protocols.
- Develop proactive retirement forecasting and transition plans for critical roles, shifting from reactive to strategic workforce renewal.
- Align leadership development programs (e.g., ASPA initiatives) directly with succession goals to support long-term institutional continuity.

2.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina Institutions

Succession planning in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still in an early and informal stage, lacking formal legal or strategic foundations. Although the revised public administration reform plan includes goals related to human resource planning, it remains unadopted, and institutions are not required to prepare succession or staffing plans. The Civil Service Agency (CSA) of BiH informally promotes planning by requesting annual staffing plans, with about 60% of institutions responding in 2024. However, the absence of a centralised employee register and limited authority over internal structures prevents CSA from effectively coordinating or supporting succession planning. A formal training program for senior civil servants exists and covers key areas like leadership and HR management, but it is disconnected from broader planning or evaluation systems. There are no standard processes for identifying talent or supporting career development. Internal mobility is weak, constrained by fragmented records and underpowered HR departments. Knowledge transfer remains informal, with no structured handovers or mentoring practices. Retirement planning is primarily administrative, with no strategic preparation for leadership continuity. The lack of digital tools further hinders workforce forecasting and talent tracking. Structural issues—such as outdated laws, resource constraints, and vague HR roles—continue to limit progress. While some training initiatives are in place, their impact is not measured, and reforms like job systematisation remain slow. BiH needs legal reforms, a centralised staff database, defined HR roles, and stronger digital and training systems to advance succession planning. Building HR capacity and leadership awareness will ensure continuity and develop a modern, resilient public administration.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To strengthen succession planning and ensure leadership continuity, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Formalise succession planning within legal and strategic frameworks to make it a core function of public administration.
- Establish a centralised employee register to track staffing, skills, and vacancies, improving workforce planning and talent management.

- Strengthen HR units' capacity by updating roles, improving skills, and assigning clear responsibility for talent development and succession management.
- Introduce leadership training and mentoring to prepare future managers and build a sustainable leadership pipeline.
- Develop structured retirement transition protocols to ensure smooth leadership handovers and proactive planning.
- Leverage digital tools and workforce data to support succession planning decisions and streamline HR processes.

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Institutions

Succession planning in the institutions of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) is gradually being integrated into the civil service through strategic reforms led by the Civil Service Agency (CSA FBiH). While not yet a standalone policy, it is reflected in key documents such as the Human Resources Development Strategy (2022–2027), which emphasises workforce planning, training, and leadership development. The system remains decentralised, with differing HR rules across federal and cantonal levels, making unified implementation difficult. Most promotions still occur through open competition, limiting internal career growth. However, CSA FBiH is working to introduce internal mobility, structured career paths, and formal talent identification processes. Leadership training and mentoring are used informally to prepare future managers. Tools like the HRMIS, a central employee registry, and performance appraisals now support better workforce planning. The HRMIS also helps institutions track upcoming retirements and plan replacements in advance. Challenges include legal fragmentation, limited promotion opportunities, and difficulty retaining skilled staff due to competition with the private sector. Still, recent digital reforms and strong political support are creating better conditions for planned leadership transitions. To strengthen succession planning, FBiH needs to align laws, expand internal promotion options, link performance reviews to development, formalise mentorship, and fully use digital HR tools to anticipate staffing needs. These steps will help build a stable leadership pipeline and a more resilient public administration.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To strengthen succession planning and ensure leadership continuity, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Amend legislation to formally include succession planning and align federal and cantonal HR rules for consistent implementation.
- Identify talent early using performance appraisals and supervisor input to ensure the right leaders are prepared for future roles.
- Enable internal promotions by introducing clear career paths and internal competitions to foster staff advancement.
- Formalise mentorship programs between senior staff and potential successors to ensure knowledge transfer and leadership readiness.
- Leverage digital tools like HRMIS to track retirements, identify key vacancies, and plan staffing needs in advance.

Republika Srpska Institutions

Personnel planning in the institutions of *Republika Srpska* is legally regulated and embedded in the Law on Civil Servants and the Rulebook on Personnel Planning. The system is structured into three phases: preparation by individual bodies, consolidation into a unified Government personnel plan, and monitoring implementation. This reflects a clear procedural framework and alignment with budget processes. Strengths include the legal foundation, standardised methodology, and financial and personnel planning integration. The Civil Service Agency and the Ministry of Finance play distinct, complementary roles: the Agency ensures compliance with the Rulebook, while the Ministry ensures alignment with budgetary constraints. Annual planning cycles, clear timelines, and reporting obligations reinforce accountability. The use of a Central Personnel Registry and oversight by the Agency and Administrative Inspection support monitoring. However, the process remains highly technical and procedural, focusing on compliance and data aggregation rather than strategic workforce planning. Plans appear rigid, structured primarily by rank and numbers, leaving little room for strategic consideration of skills, competencies, or leadership pipelines. The narrative notes that the current structure may be overly rigid and insufficiently responsive to organisational needs. The existing framework does not address knowledge transfer, career development, succession planning, and internal mobility. The planning exercise does not engage with broader trends, challenges, or talent development goals. While the system ensures control and order, it would benefit from being enriched with qualitative analysis, a focus on critical roles, and mechanisms to identify and develop future leaders.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To enhance succession planning and build a more strategic workforce, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Broaden the scope of personnel planning to include qualitative aspects like skills, competencies, and leadership potential, moving beyond just rank and numbers.
- Integrate succession planning explicitly into the personnel planning framework, identifying critical roles and potential successors.
- Enhance flexibility in planning by shifting from rigid structures to a more dynamic approach focused on strategic workforce needs and talent development.
- Establish formal mechanisms for talent identification through performance reviews and supervisor input to identify high-potential employees.
- Implement structured development pathways and mentorship programs to prepare employees for leadership roles and career advancement.
- Use the Central Personnel Registry to track talent pools, forecast staffing needs, and improve internal mobility.
- Improve knowledge transfer with formalised handovers, shadowing, and onboarding practices to ensure continuity and leadership readiness.

2.3 North Macedonia

Succession planning in North Macedonia is emerging as an area of interest, but is not yet institutionalised. While the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy 2023–2030 and related laws embed meritocracy, leadership development, and HR professionalisation, succession planning remains informal, ad hoc, and fragmented. Strengths include a solid legal and policy foundation in HRM reform, merit-based recruitment, annual performance appraisals, and efforts to introduce competency frameworks. The Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) is recognised as the lead policy body, coordinating with the Agency for Administration and the HRM Network. Training institutions and donor-supported pilots (e.g., mentoring and leadership development) have raised awareness and momentum. The planned Academy of Public Administration, updated HRMIS, and forthcoming Law on Senior Civil Service offer clear opportunities for embedding succession planning structurally. Potential for improvement lies in the informal and reactive nature of current practices. Talent identification and knowledge transfer depend heavily on managerial discretion rather than structured frameworks. HR units lack resources, digital tools, and strategic capacity to support succession planning. Leadership development programmes, mentoring, and retirement planning are underdeveloped, and internal mobility remains limited by cultural and procedural barriers. Monitoring, evaluation, and KPIs for leadership readiness are absent. Political influence and administrative inertia also challenge transparent, merit-based career progression. The commitment to regional cooperation, data-driven planning, and fostering a leadership culture is commendable and provides a strong foundation for further progress.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To advance succession planning and ensure leadership continuity, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Embed succession planning in the Public Administration Reform (PAR) and HRM strategies directly linked to leadership continuity and institutional resilience.
- Formalise competency-based frameworks for leadership roles and integrate them into talent identification, development, and progression.
- Build HR unit capacity by providing training, resources, and strategic roles to strengthen workforce planning and succession management.
- Expand and formalise mentoring and leadership programmes, aligning them with long-term succession objectives and clear career pathways.
- Enhance HRMIS to track talent pools, forecast leadership gaps, and monitor the development of potential leaders.
- Standardise knowledge transfer practices with formal handover protocols and institutional memory documentation to ensure leadership continuity.
- Initiate early retirement and transition planning to ensure smooth leadership succession and involve retirees as mentors or advisers.

2.4 Montenegro

Succession planning in Montenegro's public administration is emerging as part of broader HR modernisation, supported by the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy 2022–2026.

Although not formally established as a distinct function, leadership continuity and talent development concepts are explicitly recognised in strategic documents and operationalised through several initiatives. Montenegro already benefits from a well-defined institutional structure, where the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) sets the strategic direction, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) implements training and workforce policies, and inter-ministerial bodies contribute to coordination. This provides a strong platform for developing a sustainable succession system. However, the lack of a designated body or explicit normative framework dedicated to succession planning limits the strategic potential of these efforts and leaves them vulnerable to inconsistency and fragmentation. There are encouraging practices, such as the HRA's leadership training programmes, mentoring initiatives, and job rotation schemes, demonstrating a commitment to developing leadership capacity. However, these remain relatively informal, not systematically linked to talent pipelines, and constrained by HR units' limited resources and strategic influence. Internal mobility is legally possible and culturally gaining acceptance, but it relies more on individual initiative than proactive planning. Montenegro's planned digital platform to track talented civil servants shows foresight. However, the absence of operational tools and monitoring mechanisms means that workforce planning is still primarily administrative rather than strategic. Similarly, while knowledge transfer through mentoring and retiree involvement exists, it is neither standardised nor embedded in organisational routines. Overall, Montenegro has created a favourable environment for succession planning by embedding its principles into reforms and investing in leadership development. Turning this foundation into a coherent, systemic practice will require stronger formalisation, better tools, and more robust HR capacities, while continuing to build on the innovative and collaborative spirit already present.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To formalise and strengthen succession planning, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Formalise succession planning within the HRM framework, establishing clear legal and methodological guidelines for consistent implementation.
- Develop and operationalise a competency-based talent identification system, supported by the planned digital platform, to track and develop future leaders.
- Strengthen HR units by providing training, resources, and strategic mandates to lead workforce and succession planning processes effectively.
- Institutionalise mentoring, job rotation, and knowledge transfer as formal mechanisms within succession planning to build leadership continuity.
- Establish merit-based career paths and strategically promote internal mobility to foster career advancement and development.
- Improve retirement and transition planning by identifying key roles early and involving retirees in mentoring and transition processes.
- Introduce monitoring tools (KPIs, dashboards) to track leadership readiness, evaluate succession outcomes, and adapt strategies accordingly.

2.5 Serbia

Succession planning in Serbia is in its infancy but shows promising groundwork through ongoing reforms and pilot initiatives. There is no dedicated institutional or legal framework for succession planning yet, which limits coherence and authority. Nonetheless, several actors—the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG), the Human Resource Management Service (HRMS), and the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA)—are already engaged in complementary activities such as leadership training, Development Potential Analysis, Assessment Centre for future leaders and maintaining the central personnel registry. One notable strength is the Talent Management career model, currently piloted, which introduces structured tools like competency-based interviews, development potential assessments, and mapping high-potential employees to critical roles. This pilot also innovatively combines behavioural assessments, feedback sessions, and tailored development recommendations—an additional development and enhancement of the existing formally established practices. The Career Management Centre of the Human Resources Management Service has validated its existing tools used in practice through this pilot project, and in addition, new assessment centres were developed within the project to map employees with high potential. However, its sustainability and scalability remain uncertain because it is still a pilot, and the additional steps and further development undertaken during the pilot should be further formalised.

Professional development is firmly anchored in law as a right and obligation, and NAPA provides a range of general, managerial, and tailored training programmes. These are complemented by mentoring, coaching, and retirement transition initiatives, demonstrating sensitivity to leadership continuity and institutional memory. Many of these efforts depend on individual initiative and are fragmented rather than embedded into a coordinated succession strategy. Internal mobility mechanisms, such as the Internal Labour Market Registry, and career counselling and coaching services provided by HRMS, reflect an advanced understanding of career development. Still, uptake appears uneven, and cultural and procedural barriers persist. Monitoring and evaluation are relatively robust, with annual surveys and public reporting, yet there is still no formal feedback loop explicitly for succession planning outcomes.

Serbia has demonstrated creativity and openness to innovation, primarily through the implementation of certain forms of talent management models and piloting new ones and engagement with international partners. To realise the full potential of these efforts, they now need to be formalised, embedded in legal and strategic frameworks, and supported by leadership commitment and adequate resources.

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To formalise and strengthen succession planning, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Formalise succession planning in legal and strategic frameworks, ensuring institutional clarity and authority for long-term integration.
- Scale and integrate the pilot Talent Management career model into regular HRM practices, standardising competency-based talent identification and development.

- Strengthen HRMS and HR units' capacity by providing training, resources, and strategic mandates to effectively lead workforce and succession planning.
- Institutionalise mentoring, coaching, and retirement transition programmes, linking them directly to succession objectives to ensure leadership continuity.
- Clarify and standardise competency-based criteria for identifying and developing high-potential employees to ensure consistency and fairness in talent management.
- Enhance internal mobility mechanisms by removing procedural barriers and promoting cross-functional development opportunities within the public sector.
- Expand monitoring and evaluation systems to explicitly track succession planning outcomes, using KPIs and regular reviews to assess leadership readiness and talent development.

2.6 Kosovo*

Succession planning is increasingly recognised as an important component of a resilient and professional public administration, but is not yet formally embedded in practice. The Law on Public Officials and the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy 2022–2027 establishes merit-based recruitment and career development principles, which provide a helpful foundation. However, succession is not explicitly mentioned, leaving initiatives fragmented and mostly aspirational. It is encouraging that key actors—the Department for Management of Public Officials (DMPO), the Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), and institutional HR units—know the need for leadership continuity and talent development. They already carry out relevant activities, such as general and leadership training, maintaining HR data, and implementing recruitment. However, these efforts remain informal and disjointed without precise coordination or a dedicated body.

On the one hand, mentoring exists in some ministries, and KIPA offers leadership training; on the other, it is neither systematic nor linked to career pathways or succession planning. Similarly, internal mobility is legally possible but is culturally and administratively underused. HR units generally lack the authority, capacity, and tools to engage strategically, often focusing only on administrative tasks. The growing awareness of risks—such as knowledge loss during retirements or leadership turnover due to political changes—is positive. However, knowledge transfer is left to individual discretion, and retirement planning is reactive. Digitalisation efforts, notably the development of HRMIS, show promise but are not yet oriented toward succession tracking. A favourable environment for progress exists, marked by openness to reform, donor-supported initiatives, and a commitment to meritocracy. Moving from intent to structured practice will require institutionalising coordination, strengthening HR capacity, and embedding succession planning in strategic HR processes.

**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*

Specific Priorities and Recommendations

To formalise and strengthen succession planning, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Incorporate succession planning explicitly into the Public Administration Reform (PAR) strategy and HR policies, linking it to leadership continuity and organisational resilience.
- Designate a coordinating body or mechanism to oversee succession planning across central and local government levels.
- Strengthen HR units with resources, training, and authority to lead strategic workforce and succession planning.
- Formalise mentoring, job rotation, and knowledge transfer as key components of career development and succession practices.
- Develop structured career paths and competency-based criteria for identifying and developing high-potential employees.
- Leverage HRMIS, not just for administrative purposes, but to track talent pools, leadership gaps, and readiness for succession.
- Establish KPIs, dashboards, and periodic reviews to track succession planning progress and outcomes.

3. EU PRACTICES

3.1 Case Study: Slovenia

Peter Pogačar, Director-General of Public Sector, Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia
Strategic and Legal Foundations

Slovenia is in the early stages of institutionalising succession planning, positioning it within a broader human resource reform in public administration. At the heart of this reform is the creation of a **Competence Centre/Human Resources Centre**, which was formalised by adopting a new **Public Employees Act** that came into force on 21 May 2025. This legislative milestone ensures the Centre becomes operational on 1 June 2025 and serves as the hub for HR modernisation across the public administration.

The reform is guided by the **Public Administration Human Resource Strategy 2030**, a long-term vision structured around two main priorities: making public administration an attractive work environment and developing competent and motivated civil servants. The second priority, making the civil servant competent and motivated, explicitly includes establishing a **system for talent identification, development, and succession planning** as its first goal, which marks a strategic shift from fragmented or ad hoc HR development towards a coordinated and systemic approach.

Additional strategic goals indirectly support the succession agenda by promoting mobility, fostering lifelong learning, and facilitating the effective management of a multigenerational workforce. These objectives create favourable conditions for embedding succession planning within the broader HR ecosystem. Importantly, this reform builds on a comparative review of domestic and international practices, drawing on models from Singapore, France, the European Commission, other EU Member States, and OECD countries. This strategic learning

approach reflects Slovenia's commitment to grounding reform in tested frameworks while adapting them to national conditions.

Institutional Roles and Coordination

The implementation of succession planning is driven centrally by the **Ministry of Public Administration**, specifically through its **Human Resources Centre** within the Public Sector Directorate. The Centre acts as both a design and coordination hub, tasked with conceptualising the approach, overseeing the implementation of activities, and supporting pilot projects.

Coordination across institutions is taking shape through a phased process involving design workshops, interviews, and consultations with HR personnel, managers, and young employees across public administration. These engagements are participatory and developmental, as they help refine the definition of talent and succession, clarify roles, and build a shared understanding of what the system should achieve.

Pilot projects also play a key coordinating role, with four state administration institutions selected to trial methodologies for identifying employee potential and preparing development plans. These pilots are expected to produce practical lessons and tools that can be generalised across government.

Overall, the coordination approach combines top-down vision with bottom-up participation. The Centre leads, but implementation is grounded in real institutional experiences, ensuring adaptability and ownership.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

As the Slovenian approach to succession planning is still in its early stages, formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are yet to be developed. However, the activities planned suggest that monitoring will become an integral part of the system's design.

The pilot projects offer an opportunity to test and refine tools for evaluating employee potential and monitoring career development outcomes. These pilots will likely generate qualitative feedback from HR managers and participants and quantitative indicators related to mobility, retention, and progression.

In parallel, the forthcoming **Handbook for working with talents and successors** is expected to include standardised practices and frameworks for monitoring progress. This will help embed evaluation into day-to-day HR work and ensure that future policies are data-informed.

Furthermore, the emphasis on training HR staff and internal trainers[†] suggests that feedback loops will be created through ongoing interaction between those implementing and designing the strategy. In this way, evaluation will not be confined to performance metrics but will also take the form of practice-based learning.

[†] Internal trainers are employees within an institution who provide expert support in the field of human resource development, collaborate with HR staff, managers, and employees, and act as ambassadors and promoters of modern HR practices within the organization.

Leadership Pipeline and Talent Identification

Talent identification and succession planning are at the core of Slovenia's reform, and are being addressed through conceptual and practical initiatives. One of the primary goals is to **define what constitutes a "talent" in the public administration**, including the values, competencies, and behaviours expected of future leaders **or field experts — the concepts are not yet fully defined, and both approaches to talent development are considered, as both are recognised in professional literature and practice.**

The design workshops and interviews conducted as part of the reform process are being used to develop a **talent management philosophy** and a structured approach to career development and retention. This signals a move from ad hoc recognition of individual potential towards a systematised pipeline model.

Initial activities focus on equipping HR staff and managers with the **skills to recognise talent**, to conduct meaningful development discussions, and to plan succession with specific individuals in mind. These efforts are being supported through tailored training and the preparation of internal training materials.

Slovenia lays the foundation for a coherent pipeline of future leaders and field experts by combining definition, identification, and development into one integrated process. Although the system is not yet fully implemented, the conceptual clarity and institutional support being developed indicate a strong trajectory.

Generational Management and Knowledge Transfer

Slovenia's Public Administration HR Strategy 2030 explicitly recognises managing a multigenerational workforce. It is included under the second priority—building a competent and motivated civil servant—and is directly linked to succession planning, as intergenerational knowledge transfer is critical to ensuring leadership continuity.

The strategy acknowledges the diversity of values, expectations, and work habits across generations and seeks to develop **new approaches to multigenerational management**. While these approaches have not yet been detailed in the documentation reviewed, their inclusion at the strategic level reflects an awareness that the sustainability of succession plans depends in part on the ability to bridge generational gaps.

The planned pilot projects, which include younger public servants and focus on development planning, will offer opportunities to design and test tools that support generational transitions. Similarly, the emphasis on lifelong learning and flexible forms of work will support longer and more varied career paths, allowing knowledge transfer to occur over time and across different forms of employment.

Knowledge transfer is not yet operationalised in specific tools or protocols at this stage, but it is clearly anticipated as a key outcome of the reform process.

Cultural and Political Context

Slovenia's approach to succession planning reflects a political and administrative culture that values **strategic lifelong learning, institutional development, and participatory reform**. The fact that the reform was preceded by an extensive review of domestic and international

practices indicates a deliberate and cautious approach, seeking to avoid resistance by building consensus and aligning with best practices.

At the same time, the reform is ambitious. It aims to introduce a series of cultural shifts: greater transparency in HR processes, a merit-based approach to identifying and developing talent, and a proactive management of career paths. These shifts may challenge existing administrative routines, particularly in institutions where talent management has not previously been formalised.

The emphasis on strategic communication—through workshops, pilot projects, and eventual handbooks—suggests that the Ministry is aware of the need to **build trust and engagement** across the administration. The reform also aligns with broader European public administration trends, which may enhance its legitimacy and sustainability.

While the political environment appears supportive, the long-term success of the reform will depend on maintaining momentum, ensuring implementation capacity at all levels, and addressing any resistance that may arise from organisational inertia or competing priorities.

Results and Lessons Learned

As of mid-2025, Slovenia is still in the process of building its succession planning system. Nevertheless, several important lessons can already be drawn from its approach:

- Reform must begin with **clarity of purpose and shared definitions**. By taking the time to define talent, succession, and career development through consultations and training, Slovenia is laying a strong conceptual foundation.
- **Learning from others matters**. Including international comparisons ensures that Slovenia is not starting from scratch but adapting proven ideas to its national context.
- **Pilot testing is essential**. Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model, Slovenia uses pilot projects to explore different institutional realities and develop context-sensitive tools.
- **Capacity-building is key**. Training HR staff, managers, and internal trainers helps anchor reform in daily practice and ensures that talent and succession are not abstract goals but part of regular HR routines.

While the system has yet to be rolled out entirely, the approach taken—methodical, inclusive, and forward-looking—offers a promising model for other administrations starting to address succession planning in a structured way.

3.2 Case Study: Estonia

Sander Kiviloo, Deputy Manager of the Career and Training Bureau, Defence Resources Agency, Ministry of Defence of Estonia

Strategic and Legal Foundations

Succession planning within Estonia's Ministry of Defence (MoD) is not framed through a specific national law or civil service-wide reform but embedded in the broader strategic approach to **talent management** and **national defence capability**. Estonia's administrative and defence systems reflect the specific characteristics of a small but digitally advanced state:

its entire population of around 1.3 million and the limited scale of its public administration necessitate a highly strategic and focused use of human resources.

While no legal instrument underpins succession planning, the function is clearly integrated into the Ministry of Defence's **HR governance structures**. The **Defence Resources Agency (DRA)**, directly under the Ministry, is responsible for planning and managing human assets for national defence. This includes HR services, recruitment, service relations, and career and training management. While not labelled explicitly as succession planning, these functions cover the key dimensions of identifying, preparing, and retaining staff for critical roles over time.

The HR approach is strongly value-based, driven by a clear mission and vision: national defence is seen as an honour and a shared societal responsibility. The emphasis on recognising and empowering individuals reinforces a culture in which succession planning is seen as both a strategic necessity and a moral obligation in the context of national defence.

Although not supported by an explicit legal requirement, the framework fulfils many of the objectives typically associated with formal succession planning systems.

Institutional Roles and Coordination

Succession planning at the Ministry of Defence is institutionally led by the **Defence Resources Agency**, particularly through its **Career and Training Bureau**. This bureau oversees the planning and development of talent pipelines and the strategic allocation of personnel across various defence bodies, including the Defence Forces, Defence League, Estonian Centre for Defence Investments, and the Estonian War Museum.

The DRA operates under a clear organisational logic: it plans human resources across the defence ecosystem by linking conscription, training, public service, and career progression into one integrated human capital strategy. This is supported by close coordination among HR units, commanders, and training institutions.

A significant feature of the Estonian approach is its alignment of **military and civilian HR systems**. Talent development includes officers, non-commissioned officers, civil servants, reservists, and other support roles. Coordination across these categories is facilitated by shared values, standardised training frameworks, and a relatively compact institutional setup, allowing more effective communication and shared decision-making.

This integrated model provides a strategic advantage regarding agility and coherence, especially where defence capability is closely tied to efficient human resource deployment.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

The Estonian Ministry of Defence uses **multi-source evaluation** techniques to assess talent and potential within its workforce. Although there is no dedicated monitoring system for succession planning outcomes, several established HR tools contribute indirectly to evaluating readiness and effectiveness.

Evaluation methods include:

- **Performance appraisals** are used to track individual achievements and their alignment with organisational goals.
- **360-degree feedback** collects input from superiors, peers, and subordinates to build a well-rounded view of employees' competencies and leadership potential.
- **Psychological assessments**, which provide insights into personality traits, cognitive abilities, and emotional resilience;
- **Development interviews** are regular dialogues between employees and supervisors to identify career aspirations, gaps, and plans.
- **Training participation tracking** helps monitor employee engagement in upskilling and leadership preparation.

These methods contribute to monitoring leadership readiness, identifying succession candidates, and tracking the depth of talent pools. The combination of psychological insight, behavioural evaluation, and dialogue ensures that potential successors are identified and supported in their professional development.

A key opportunity for improvement lies in enhancing the Ministry's digital systems. While available data are abundant, modernising the current tools would significantly increase the efficiency and consistency of monitoring processes.

Leadership Pipeline and Talent Identification

Talent identification is central to the Ministry's HR strategy. The Ministry defines talent as individuals who not only demonstrate **exceptional performance** but also have the **potential to take on more complex responsibilities** and contribute meaningfully to national defence.

The identification of talent is guided by a specific set of criteria, including:

- High professional competence and skills in their field.
- Leadership qualities and the ability to inspire and motivate others.
- Commitment to the Ministry's values and mission. Talents are ethical, loyal, and responsible, demonstrating honesty, reliability, resourcefulness, and dedication.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Flexibility and can adapt quickly to changing situations. Talents demonstrate resilience and calmness in difficult and stressful situations.
- Proven consistent performance and initiative in their position.
- Mindset and character that express potential.

These criteria are applied through the assessment methods described above and used to populate internal talent pools.

Once identified, talent is offered various **development opportunities** to prepare for future leadership roles. These include structured **career pathways**, access to **international and national training programmes**, **rotations** across units, and participation in **strategic projects**. The MoD adopts a "**train ahead**" policy, ensuring that individuals are prepared in advance for roles they may eventually occupy.

Importantly, the leadership development framework integrates **military and civilian career models**, ensuring cross-pollination of skills and strategic alignment across the defence sector.

Generational Management and Knowledge Transfer

While there is no explicit generational management strategy, several aspects of Estonia's approach implicitly address the challenges and opportunities a multigenerational workforce poses.

The Estonian defence system encompasses a wide range of personnel categories – young conscripts, mid-career professionals, senior officers, and civil servants – who differ in expectations and career stages. The MoD's talent management strategy acknowledges this diversity by offering **flexible training, rotation opportunities, and progression pathways** suited to different life and career stages.

One notable approach to knowledge transfer is the **structured career education for officers and non-commissioned officers**, which involves mandatory rotations between operational units, staff roles, and academic institutions. This not only builds leadership capacity but also ensures that institutional knowledge circulates across the system.

Additionally, the emphasis on **development interviews** and **career coaching** provides a mechanism for capturing tacit knowledge and transmitting it to successors. While the presentation does not mention formal mentoring or offboarding processes, the system relies on a strong sense of service ethos and shared responsibility, which likely supports informal knowledge sharing.

The main area for further development would be formalising generational transition mechanisms, such as mentoring schemes, alum networks, or structured knowledge transfer protocols during retirement or job transitions.

Cultural and Political Context

A distinctive mix of cultural and institutional features shapes Estonia's succession planning efforts. As a small country with a strong digital public administration and high societal trust in national defence, the Ministry of Defence benefits from a relatively agile and mission-driven workforce. However, several challenges persist.

One of the most pressing issues is improving transparency in talent and succession processes and opening a system that remains relatively closed, with factors that undermine merit-based progression. This cultural legacy can limit the credibility and effectiveness of succession planning, particularly if talented individuals perceive the system as unfair.

These aspects are related to the challenge in the tension between **rigid military traditions** and the **flexible expectations** of new generations. Younger staff may seek rapid progression, autonomy, or non-traditional career paths, which may not align with military or defence institutions' hierarchical and structured nature.

Despite Estonia's reputation for digital innovation, there is still a struggle to update HR tools, which limits its capacity to track and manage succession in a data-driven way. This is especially challenging given the volume of personnel data available across the defence ecosystem.

Finally, there is a recognised need to improve **leadership continuity** and **prepare successors for critical roles**, particularly given the country's reliance on a relatively small pool of human resources.

Results and Lessons Learned

The Estonian Ministry of Defence has made substantial progress in building a **systematic and strategic approach to talent management**, directly contributing to succession planning. Key results include:

- The **identification of high-potential individuals** based on behavioural and psychological indicators;
- The **development of structured career paths** that combine operational, academic, and leadership experience.
- A clear **public service ethos and national contribution** foster retention and institutional commitment.

However, several lessons emerge from the challenges encountered:

- **Transparency is critical:** Without clear communication and open criteria, succession planning risks being perceived as biased or opaque;
- **Digital modernisation is overdue:** Despite Estonia's digital leadership, HR systems need to be upgraded to support real-time and scale succession planning.
- **Cultural adaptation is needed:** Institutions must evolve to accommodate the expectations of younger generations while preserving the strengths of hierarchical structures.

In short, Estonia's Ministry of Defence shows that even without a formal succession planning framework, a values-based and strategically aligned talent system can deliver many of the same benefits – if supported by the right tools, culture, and leadership commitment.

3.3 Case Study: France

Yannik Coirint, Project Manager for HR Expertise, Directorate-General for Public Administration and the Civil Service, Ministry of public action, of the civil service and of simplification of France

Strategic and Legal Foundations

Succession planning in the French civil service is not defined through a single dedicated strategy or reform, but rather emerges from a combination of legislative developments, reform agendas, and evolving administrative practices. The foundation of succession planning lies in a legal and strategic framework that supports workforce modernisation and anticipatory human resource management.

While no major civil service reform is underway – partly due to political instability and fiscal constraints – recent measures signal a renewed focus on preparing for demographic change and future workforce needs. For instance, the 2024 reform introducing "supplementary social protection" for civil servants includes a "provident" component to better anticipate retirement transitions. Though not framed as a succession policy, this measure contributes to longer-term workforce sustainability.

More structurally, two key laws provide the legislative backbone. The **2008 Law on Mobility and Career Paths** introduced the role of the *career mobility advisor*, institutionalising a

function within HR departments focused on helping civil servants navigate their professional trajectories. This role implicitly supports succession by fostering internal mobility and career progression.

Further consolidation came with the **2019 Law on the Transformation of the Civil Service**, which allowed greater flexibility in using contractual staff and, crucially, made it compulsory for public organisations to produce an **annual Strategic Workforce Plan**. This plan must be presented to trade unions, adding a layer of accountability and social dialogue to workforce planning efforts.

Finally, the state has committed to modernising HRM practices through digital transformation, as evidenced by developing a strategy for using **artificial intelligence (AI) in HRM**. This includes deploying tools that can facilitate talent identification and workforce planning, further enabling data-driven succession approaches.

While France does not articulate a centralised succession planning policy, it has developed a coherent legal and strategic framework that enables ministries and public bodies to build succession systems within a common regulatory and administrative environment.

Institutional Roles and Coordination

Succession planning in France operates under a decentralised governance model, with clearly delineated responsibilities between central and ministerial levels. The **Directorate General for Administration and the Civil Service (DGAFP)** plays a central role in providing policy guidance, methodological support, and strategic tools for succession planning. However, each Ministry is responsible for adapting and implementing succession planning according to its specific organisational needs.

This decentralisation is operationalised through the role of **local managers**, who are the primary actors responsible for carrying out succession plans on the ground. They are tasked with supporting outgoing staff – those preparing to leave the organisation – and newly recruited staff taking over key roles. Their direct engagement with staff allows for a more nuanced and tailored approach to transitions.

Coordination between ministries and the DGAFP is not enforced through a rigid hierarchy but is supported through shared tools, advisory services, and participation in inter-ministerial HR networks. This allows ministries to maintain ownership over their succession processes while ensuring a degree of consistency across the civil service.

This model promotes flexibility and contextual adaptation but also relies heavily on the initiative and capacity of individual HR units and local managers. It reflects the broader principles of the French administrative model, which balances central standard-setting with local autonomy.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

The evaluation of succession planning practices in France is conducted at both strategic and operational levels, ensuring the process is continuously refined based on evidence and feedback.

At the strategic level, **human resource departments** within ministries assess the effectiveness of **collective recruitment and mobility campaigns**. This includes measuring

how well staffing needs are met through internal mobility or external recruitment, and how effectively talent pools are utilised. These evaluations typically focus on the alignment between planned and actual staffing outcomes.

At the operational level, **local managers** provide qualitative feedback to HR departments. Their input focuses on the **quality of new recruits**, particularly their integration into teams and their capacity to assume key responsibilities. This bottom-up feedback is essential to understanding the practical impact of succession decisions and identifying areas for improvement.

The process implies using **quantitative metrics** (such as recruitment success rates, mobility rates, and retention indicators) and **qualitative insights** (such as managerial satisfaction and team integration). Together, these allow for a feedback loop where real-world outcomes inform succession planning strategies.

This dual-level evaluation system underscores the importance of aligning HR policy with day-to-day practice and maintaining open communication between central HR functions and operational managers.

Leadership Pipeline and Talent Identification

France has invested in a range of targeted schemes to ensure the identification and development of future leaders within the civil service. These efforts aim to build a strong leadership pipeline through structured programmes, digital tools, and inclusive strategies.

At the highest level, the **Interministerial Delegation for Senior Management (DIESE)** plays a key role in overseeing the management of top executives across ministries. This body ensures that leadership development aligns with government priorities and that high-potential candidates are identified early and supported throughout their careers.

Supporting this, the **VINCI** digital platform acts as a talent management system. It tracks and manages **pools of potential leaders**, enabling ministries to match profiles with upcoming leadership needs and succession gaps. Using digital tools ensures a more systematic and transparent approach to succession.

Regarding inclusion, the **Talentueuses** programme supports female senior managers and addresses gender imbalances in leadership roles. This aligns with broader equity goals and widens the talent pool for succession.

Another important initiative is **Talents du Service Public**, which identifies and supports **young individuals from diverse backgrounds**, including those traditionally underrepresented in the civil service. The programme includes pre-recruitment training, mentoring, and career guidance, ensuring that talent is cultivated from early stages and across the social spectrum.

Together, these measures demonstrate a deliberate and multi-layered strategy to ensure that the leadership of the French civil service remains competent, diverse, and future-oriented.

Generational Management and Knowledge Transfer

Recognising the complexities of a multigenerational workforce, the French civil service has made **intergenerational human resource management** a strategic priority. This focus

acknowledges that succession planning must account not only for positional transitions but also for the evolving expectations, values, and needs of different generational cohorts.

The DGAFP has developed a comprehensive **draft action plan on intergenerational HRM**, structured around three main pillars: attracting and recruiting all generations; developing intergenerational teams; and managing career stages to foster loyalty and support.

Under the first area, actions aim to anticipate demographic change and promote an inclusive recruitment approach that appeals to all age groups. This includes designing onboarding systems that help different generations feel welcomed and aligned with organisational goals.

The second area focuses on team dynamics and knowledge sharing. Measures such as **awareness programmes on generational stereotypes**, **intergenerational project teams**, and **reverse mentoring** are designed to build mutual understanding and cohesion. Managers are also trained to identify and resolve generational conflicts.

For knowledge transfer specifically, the civil service encourages the use of "**knowledge transfer forms**" filled by departing senior staff and promotes initiatives such as **mentorship**, **skill portfolios**, and **alumni networks**. These aim to ensure that institutional memory is retained and shared.

The third area addresses the full career lifecycle. It includes tailored mobility and promotion strategies, career discussions at different stages, and ergonomic and work-life adjustments for older employees. Importantly, **multigenerational offboarding** is encouraged, with tools like farewell videos and alumni engagement to celebrate and continue the contributions of retiring staff.

Although this action plan is still in draft form, it is circulating among inter-ministerial HR partners. It is expected to be validated and published by the end of the year. Once adopted, it will represent a structured and holistic approach to managing demographic transitions and securing institutional knowledge.

Cultural and Political Context

Several systemic and cultural barriers shape the implementation of succession planning in France. Among the most pressing challenges is the **declining attractiveness** of civil service careers. Competitions for public positions often attract only five candidates per vacancy, limiting the pool from which successors can be drawn.

Another significant obstacle is the **low level of inter-ministerial mobility**, which restricts the circulation of talent across government and reduces opportunities for career advancement and knowledge sharing. Despite central efforts to encourage mobility, only 3% of staff movements occur between ministries.

Intergenerational stereotypes persist in the workplace and may undermine efforts to promote cohesion and knowledge transfer between age groups. Additionally, **managers often lack the time** to fully engage in mentoring, coaching, or succession planning tasks, which are critical for successful transitions.

There is also a noted **lack of motivation among senior staff**, who may not feel incentivised to participate in knowledge transfer or leadership development activities. Conversely,

younger generations tend to seek frequent career changes, making it harder to retain and prepare them for long-term roles in public service.

These cultural factors require policy responses and organisational change strategies focused on professional identity, motivation, and support.

Results and Lessons Learned

One of the central lessons from the French experience is that succession planning cannot rely solely on strategic tools or policy frameworks – it must also address the human dimension of workforce development.

From a systems perspective, **tools such as Strategic Workforce Planning, digital HR platforms, and competency frameworks** are indispensable. They allow for the rationalisation of recruitment, better visibility of talent, and alignment with long-term organisational needs.

However, these systems only work if individualised support mechanisms complement them. Career mobility advisors, mentors, tutors, and training advisors all play a role in preparing individuals for future roles. Crucially, **the local manager** emerges as the key enabler of succession: their commitment, insight, and time are essential to identifying talent, transferring knowledge, and supporting transitions.

France's experience shows that effective succession planning requires **structural alignment and personal investment**. Balancing strategic foresight with local engagement is critical for building resilient public institutions.

Examples of Tools

Two practical tools illustrate how France operationalises succession planning at both organisational and individual levels.

First, **SICARDI** is a digital application designed to support **talent and skills management**. It allows HR departments and managers to:

- **Identify the skills possessed by employees,**
- **Assess the completeness of those skills within talent pools,**
- **Match employees to job opportunities based on their competencies,**
- **Visualise** future career paths for development planning.

SICARDI provides a structured approach to filling vacancies and preparing successors, making succession planning more data-driven and strategic.

Second, the "**Choose the Public Service**" portal (<https://choisirleservicepublic.gouv.fr>) serves as a centralised platform for all civil service job offers. It increases transparency, supports mobility, and helps build the **employer brand** of the public service. Civil servants and contract candidates can explore roles across government, making the job market more dynamic and accessible.

These tools enhance both the **supply and demand sides** of succession planning: SICARDI improves internal alignment and visibility, while the portal ensures openness and attractiveness to external talent.

4. CONCLUSION

Succession planning is no longer a peripheral HR practice but an essential pillar of public administration reform in the Western Balkans. The regional analysis confirms that administrations are increasingly aware of the need to ensure leadership continuity, safeguard institutional memory, and cultivate future talent. At the same time, progress remains uneven, with differences in legal frameworks, HR capacities, and digital readiness shaping diverse national pathways.

The **11 regional recommendations** presented in this volume provide a practical roadmap to move from fragmented initiatives toward comprehensive succession systems. Their consistent application would allow administrations to embed succession planning into legislation and strategy, strengthen HR units, build competency-based career paths, and leverage digital tools to manage workforce data. Above all, they highlight the importance of cultivating a leadership development culture resilient to political change.

Equally important are the **examples of good practice from EU Member States**, such as Slovenia's emerging approach to succession planning, Estonia's use of digital talent systems, and France's institutionalised processes. These cases demonstrate that succession planning can be innovative and sustainable, offering valuable lessons for adaptation in the Western Balkans.

This report should be read with **Volume 2 – Strategic Framework**, which offers detailed implementation pathways, and **Volume 3 – Toolkit**, which provides ready-to-use templates and instruments. Taken as a whole, the three volumes form a coherent package designed to support administrations in advancing from commitment to practice.

By institutionalising succession planning, the Western Balkans can take a decisive step toward more professional, adaptive, and future-ready public administrations. This is not only a technical or managerial reform, but a strategic investment in the stability, credibility, and excellence of the region's governance systems.