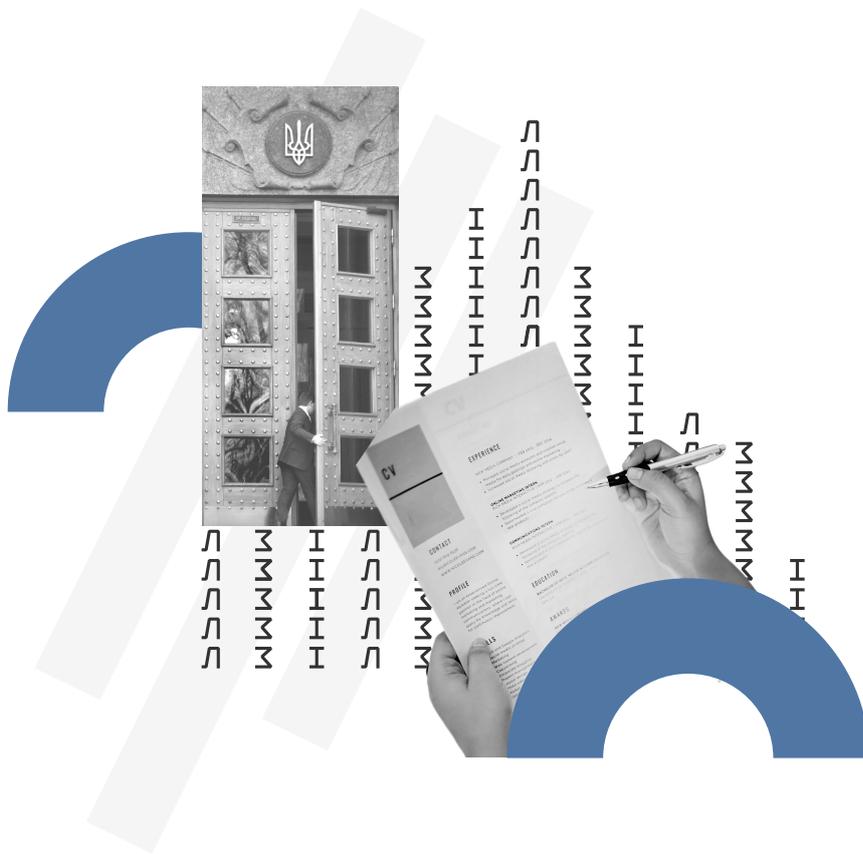


Infobrief

Restoration of Competitive Selection for Civil Service Positions under Martial Law



2026

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The Problem

Competitive selection is a basic tool for ensuring professionalism, integrity and political neutrality in the civil service. In Ukraine, this model was developed after 2016 as part of public administration reform, implemented with the EU support.

After the full-scale invasion, the state abandoned competitive selection. This alleviated the staff shortage caused by mobilisation and massive forced displacement, both internally and abroad. At the same time, the prolonged suspension of competitive selection created systemic risks for the quality of governance, institutional memory, and trust in the civil service.

Why It Matters

- › temporary appointments are gradually becoming the 'new normal';
- › there is a growing risk of politically motivated decisions and abandonment of the meritocratic approach;
- › it will be difficult to return to the standard competitive model after the war.

Current Solution

Currently, the only legislative initiative aimed at restoring competitive selection during martial law is the Draft Law No. 13478-1. It provides for:

- › the gradual restoration of competitive selection procedures;
- › the determination of deadlines for competitive selection procedures for positions to which persons have been appointed without competitive selection for the duration of martial law;
- › the possibility of continuing service by decision of the appointing authority to preserve human resources, time, and budget;
- › the application of positive measures to achieve gender balance in civil service positions in specific state bodies.

The Government supports the adoption of this draft law.

Key Risks

1. **Political blocking of the process.** Despite the declared political readiness to gradually resume competitive selection procedures during martial law, in practice, this

process remains blocked and has not been brought before Parliament for consideration for a long time. This delay indicates a lack of consensus on restoring competitive selection in wartime. The issue of competitions for top civil service positions remains particularly controversial¹. The reasons include the desire to maintain maximum managerial flexibility, concerns of complicating procedures, and the general focus of political attention on security issues. At the same time, this approach ignores long-term risks, as temporary appointments are gradually becoming the 'new normal.'

2. **Unfinished remuneration reform.** Resuming competitions without completing remuneration reform creates **the risk of an outflow of personnel from the civil service**². Despite the adoption of the Law of Ukraine [No. 4282](#) and positive developments, the level of remuneration remains one of the key demotivating factors. There are still **significant disparities in remuneration between bodies of different jurisdictions, as well as between different categories of positions within the same body**. In its conclusions, the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine also notes that the reform has not fully achieved its goals of creating a fair, transparent and competitive remuneration system³.
3. **Institutional instability.** Frequent changes in the system of central executive bodies (reorganisations, mergers, changes of powers) destabilise their activities, cause staff turnover, loss of institutional memory and reduced efficiency.
4. **Political dependence of senior civil servants.** After the reset of power in 2019⁴, state secretaries of ministries and heads of central executive bodies (category 'A' positions) remain dependent on political figures. Appointment and dismissal procedures undermine the meaning of competitive selection and create conditions for politically motivated decisions⁵. The practice of frequent changes of state secretaries (who change with the appointment of a new minister, or even more often) makes it

¹ First Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Oleksandr Korniyenko: Return to competitive selection for top positions triggers debate among MPs. [Interfax-Ukraine. 24.09.2025](#).

² This is supported by data from an anonymous questionnaire survey of civil servants conducted by the Agency for Legislative Initiatives in December 2025 with the assistance of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Organisation of State Power, Local Self-Government, Regional Development and Urban Planning and the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

³ Report of the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine [on the results of the compliance audit on the topic 'Reforming the remuneration system in public administration'](#), approved by Decision of the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine No. 26-1 from October 28, 2025.

⁴ Based on the Law of Ukraine [No. 117-IX](#) 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Restructuring of Government'.

⁵ Starting from September 29, 2019 (the date of entry into force of the Law of Ukraine [No. 117-IX](#)), the Commission determines not the winner of the competition, but the candidates for civil service positions who have received the highest total number of points based on the results of the overall ranking of candidates (no more than three per position) for selection of the winner by the appointing authority or head of the civil service.

impossible for them to perform their key function — ensuring the stability and continuity of the work of ministries⁶. The Draft law No. 13478-1 does not eliminate these risks.

Conclusions

The restoration of competitive selection is a necessary condition for a professional civil service; however, it must be accompanied by systemic changes. Without the completion of the remuneration reform, reduction of political influence, and ensuring institutional stability, competitive selection may not fully fulfil its function.

Recommendations

Short-term:

1. Adopt the Draft Law No. 13478-1 in the first reading (take as a basis).
2. During the revision of the Draft Law No. 13478-1 for the second reading, provide for:
 - › strengthening the role of the Senior Civil Service Commission and competitive commissions formed by the appointing authority, granting them the power to determine one winner and the next candidate who can take the position in case of refusal by the winner or vacancy of this position within a year after the competition;
 - › establishing the submission of the Senior Civil Service Commission as a mandatory basis for the dismissal of category 'A' civil servants;
 - › specifying the responsibility for interference in the work of the Senior Civil Service Commission and the competition commissions;
 - › bringing the procedure of the Senior Civil Service Commission formation in line with the Constitution of Ukraine.

Medium-term:

1. Complete the remuneration reform, taking into account the recommendations of the Accounting Chamber.
2. Introduce the practice of reformatting the system of central executive bodies only based on a functional review of the entire system, identification of all alternatives, and justification of the proposed changes, in particular in terms of financial and human resources.

⁶ For example, over the past five years, the state secretaries of the Ministry of Culture (in all variations of its name) have changed five times since 2019 ([Bidenko A.](#), [Dul' Y.](#), [Leshchuk Y.](#), [Kurochenko O.](#), [Levchuk V.](#)) and none of them has served the full five-year term provided for by law (although the latter still has a chance to do so).