

## MOTIVATION POLICIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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*This study analyses the issues involved in aiming to increase the motivation of public sector employees and managers in the Slovak Republic. The article analyses public sector organizations and defines motivation policy as a tool for management to achieve a higher level of employee motivation and satisfaction. Motivation policy can be understood as a system of thoroughly defined and agreed priorities, principles, and rules, the purpose of which is to contribute systematically to the improvement of motivational atmosphere within the organization and strengthen the motivation of individuals, groups, and the entire organization. The study is supplemented by the results of a survey conducted in Slovak organizations in 2009. The survey addressed motivation dynamics of private and public sector employees and managers.*

**Key words:** *public sector, policy, motivation, motivation policy, survey, motivation tools.*

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** *viešasis sektorius, politika, motyvacija, motyvavimo politika, apklausa, motyvavimo įrankiai.*

### 1. Introduction

In spite of many efforts, a market system in developed economies may not always bring high employment, price stability, desired living standards, socio—

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economic security, and criteria for economic growth demanded by – society. To achieve these goals, appropriate public policy measures are necessary. This is especially important for open economies (Musgrave and Musgrave, 1994, p. 5), where the public sector plays an irreplaceable role. The effective functioning of the public sector provides stability to the country, while services provided by the public sector supplement those of the private sector.

## **2. The Public Sector and Its Relation to the Private Sector**

The public sector provides a set of programs characterized by social, educational, ecological, developmental, or safety contents. The organizations involved in these activities do not follow market and profit criteria, but rather seek to provide services which are of benefit to the entire society. This particularly applies to social infrastructure projects, which address education, health care, care for socially vulnerable groups of the population and other issues. (Jakúbek et al., 1993, p. 115). Public sector organizations (ministries, courts, municipal and audit institutions, transport and other institutions) have static and pre—assigned characteristics, which according to Robert J. Smith, are determined by the fact that such organizations have clearly defined functions by nature (1994).

In analysing the structure of the public sector, it is useful to consider the public sector as a set of 'industries', which consist of core government departments, armed services, public health providers, schools and many others organizations. These 'industries' are similar to firms in the private sector, which face similar challenges and have similar approaches to human resource management (e.g. Bach and Kessler, 2007). Two broad characteristics regarding the public sector can be distinguished. Public service ministries and local government departments are typically much larger and older than private sector establishments. Therefore, they rely heavily on tall hierarchies and such bureaucratic management tools as job description, job evaluation and performance appraisal systems. The second important characteristic of the public sector is that most of the work done can be classified as highly skilled. (Kalleberg et al., 2006, p. 282).

On the other hand, the public sector employee situation is not always satisfactory. According to P. Boxall and J. Purcell, instead of feeling like partners, public sector employees are increasingly experiencing more stress and imagine to be losing the society's and government's trust. A common complaint made by the employees is that they do too much bureaucratic work and therefore fail to get the 'real job' done (2008, p. 218). Too much bureaucracy and confusing administrative procedures present significant impediments to a more effective functioning of public sector organizations.

R. B. Reich states that business issues are central to many of the most pressing public policy challenges: 'The financial crisis has also brought to head issues related to the availability of credit, the adequacy and safety of private pensions, and access to affordable housing, all of which involve business enterprise. Other emerging pub-

lic concerns—the development of renewable energies, access to broadband, infrastructure repair and upgrades, and workplace education and training—necessarily influence how companies operate and how they design goods and services for their customers' (2009).

If organizations consider the fundamental mission of the public sector in planning their activities, the influence of public sector motivation policy on business organizations can be significant. According to Stringer, 'Attitudes are uttered in a social context, from one person to another. Their predictive content may depend on the context. The behaviour which one attempts to predict will also occur in a social context which may be quite different from that in which the attitude is elicited. There is no space here to expand the argument, but quite radical changes are needed in the ways in which we use information about people's values, opinions and beliefs so as to inform policy decisions' (In: Banister, and Hall, 1981, p. 36).

### 3. Motivation Policy in the Public Sector

To determine the reasons for the necessity of the motivation policies in the public sector, the authors analyse the results of the Cranfield Project on European Human Resource Management. As Koubek states, human resource management practices are becoming increasingly similar throughout Europe. Human resource management is also becoming more strategic, and an explicit formulation of *human resource strategies and policies is required*. More attention is paid to the external factors that might affect the functioning of the human resources policy, especially to the questions of population development, job market, social characteristics of the society, new technology, political and legal issues, and issues related to the globalization process (Koubek, 2007, pp. 34 – 35). There is a need to pay more attention to the formulation and implementation of the strategies, policies, and programs that address a wider net of social and public issues. Certainly, the objects of these strategies would not only be the private sector, but also public sector organizations.

In the Slovak Republic, programs and measures for improving employment, social inclusion, and other issues operate under the umbrella of the *Social Development Fund*. The most recent Operation Program of European Social Fund provides support in four basic areas—human resource development, employment, social inclusion problems, and building capacities of public administration in the period from 2007 till 2013 (Sika, 2009, p. 13). It seems that none of the projects (e.g. National Project XII-2 Development and Improvement of Human Resource and Systematic Increase in Employees Qualification; ÚPSVR, 2010) address the issue of the systematic motivation of the employees in public sector organizations. As seen from the results of our survey conducted in Slovakia in 2009, the motivation of public sector employees does not always reach the anticipated level. The low motivation of public sector employees might negatively influence the motivation of business sector employees. Therefore, the need to create *a policy for the motivation of public sector employees* becomes extraordinarily important.

Human resource management policy aids in creating a state where values of the organization are harmonized with the decision making on employee matters (Armstrong, 2002, p. 271). Every organization (private and public) could use various types of policies, such as employment, sustainable improvement, career development, customer approach, motivation and other policies.

The motivation policy is a system of thoroughly defined and agreed priorities, principles, rules, measures, the objective of which is to contribute to the improvement of the motivational atmosphere within the organization, to strengthen the motivation of the individual, the group, and the entire organization. It also aims to improve the 'motivation structure', that is, motivation to work, develop one's potential, accept the desired level of responsibility, achieve higher creativeness and effectiveness, manage and motivate others, harmonize motivations of individuals, groups, and the entire organization. Similar to other policies, the authors recommend the organization to have its motivation policy in a written form and communicate it to all members of the organization, including managers and employees.

To not depart from the rules and principles defined by government, the respect for priorities, intentions, and measures recommended from the side of government will be needed at the same time. The situation where the motivation policy of one branch of an organization in the public sector becomes an obstacle or contra-productive force to the motivation policy of another public organization is unacceptable.

An important task is that the *motivation policy in public sector and private sector organizations* be created according to open partnership and cooperation. This requires that the creation of the motivation policy in public sector includes the participation of:

- government representatives,
- ministry professionals,
- municipal experts,
- managers and experts of medical care (hospitals), transport organizations, educational institutions (universities and high schools), armed services (the army and the police), courts,
- managers and experts employed in private sector organizations

Cooperation with managers and experts from the private sector is necessary: professionalism, knowledge, flexibility, the level of motivation and other personal traits of *public sector employees and managers* have an *important effect* on the motivation, innovativeness, values, success, and engagement of the *private sector employees and managers*. Health care quality expectations of patients can serve as an example. According to Rosak and Stasiak-Betlejewska, patients generally represent employees and managers of private sector organizations, and hospital employees (doctors and nurses) represent the public sector. In this study, the authors confirm that the satisfaction of hospital patients depends on how modern the hospital equipment is, honesty, communication, protection of the patients, taking into account the opinion of the patients and other factors (2008, pp. 51 – 52). This means that patients, after successful treatment of their illnesses, can devote their full energy to their work duties and thus

contribute to the success of their employer. Thus, highly-motivated employees at hospitals may positively or negatively influence the motivation and capability of private employees and managers.

#### **4. Survey of Motivation of Public and Private Organization Employees and Managers**

In close cooperation with colleagues, the authors conducted an extensive survey in the area of motivation policies in private and public sector organizations in 2009. The goal of the survey was to obtain relevant facts on the dynamic aspects of motivation at work. Given efficiency constraints (time, costs, abilities, processing difficulty, etc.), the questionnaire method was chosen. According to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, there were 2,241,000 actively working people in Slovakia in December 31, 2008 (2009, p. 33). There were 1,734,000 employees in the private sector and 507,000 employees working in the public sector. The number of our survey participants (3,328) constitutes 0.15% of the actively working population in Slovakia (thus, the sample is *representative of the population*).

The basic scientific hypothesis of this survey states that the motivation of human potential is dynamic, that is, it changes with time and is influenced by many factors. The questionnaire consisted of two versions: one was created for employees and another one for managers. 3,600 questionnaires were distributed to both groups, and, as noted previously, 3,328 questionnaires reached their recipients. The participants of the survey worked in 164 Slovak organizations, of which 129 were private sector organizations and 35 were public sector organizations. These organizations were chosen according to their size (small, medium and large organizations). The survey was conducted in organizations based in all geographical areas of the Slovak Republic (west, middle and east Slovakia). The structure of organizations corresponded equally with the classification of branches in Slovakia.

2,891 employees (1,821 working in the private sector and 1,070 working in the public sector) and 437 managers (294 from the private sector and 143 from the public sector) responded to the questionnaire. There were 1,515 men in the group of employees (920 from the private sector and 595 from the public sector), which represented 52.4% of the total number of employees (55.61% versus 50.52%) and 1,376 women (901 from the private and 475 from the public sector)—47.6% of all employees (49.48% versus 44.39%). In the group of managers, there were 248 men (168 from private sector—57.14% versus 80 from public sector—55.94%), which constituted 56.75% of the total number managers. In the group of managers, there were 189 women (126 from private sector—42.86%, versus 63 from public sector—44.06%), that is, there were 43.25% women in the group of managers. The structure of the respondents in terms of age, length of employment, and acquired education is outlined in Table 1.

The average age of the respondents was 38.63 years, the average time of employment reached 17.39 years, and the most frequent education level achieved was

secondary (51.62% of all respondents). We can conclude that the qualification level of public sector employees is higher on average than that of the private sector employees.

**Table 1. Identification of respondents by age, length of employment and acquired education**

<i>Age of respondents Private/public sector</i>		<i>Length of employment Private/public sector</i>		<i>Acquired education Private/public sector</i>	
<i>Interval in years</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Interval in years</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Education/ Degree</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
0–20	58/2	0–5	493/148	Apprentice	290/74
20–30	671/217	5–15	680/236	Secondary	1.179/539
30–40	672/270	15–25	571/358	University	637/444
40–50	520/405	25–35	313/351	PhD.	9/97
50–60	180/279	35–45	57/118	Associate professor	0/47
60 and more	14/40	45 and more	1/2	Professor	0/12

The survey results reveal that the motivation level of the managers and employees does not always reach the desired level. The majority of the respondents stated that they possess only 'average motivation level' to improve their work performance (Table 2).

Only 41.56% of respondents employed in private sector organizations possessed an average level of motivation to new propositions and to increase the effectiveness of processes. 35.04% of public organization managers marked their motivation to creative leadership and motivating their employees as 'average'. The motivation of public sector organization managers for leading and motivating employees is lower on average compared with private sector managers. This result is likely a direct consequence of the insufficient motivational conditions, non-existing motivational policies, and strict and not always appropriate motivational procedures created by superior institutions (government, ministries, regional administration, etc.). Low motivation is also a result of the impaired motivation in the private sector.

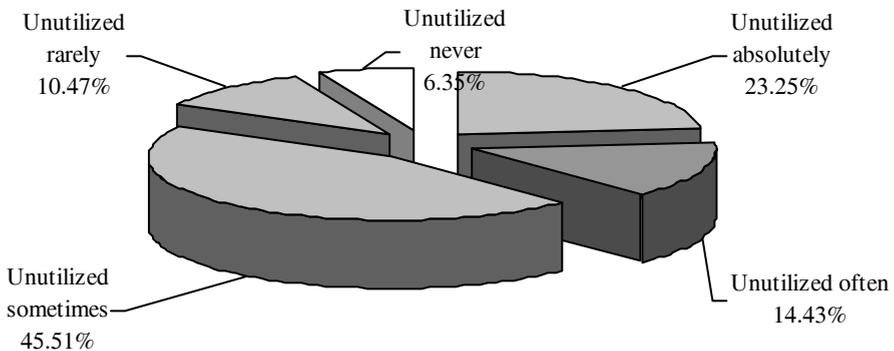
Problems in the field of motivation and motivating employees in the public sector are indicated by looking at the utilization of the managers' and employees' potential. The following question was included in the questionnaire: 'Do you think that some unutilized potential exists in yourself and this potential can be utilized better in case of more efficient motivating efforts by the superior?' From Figure 1, we can see that more than 37% of respondents stated that their potential is never utilized and often unutilized. This means that employees and managers in the public sector 'throw away' many of their skills and knowledge. Management of public organizations have an opportunity and also an obligation to utilize these hidden competencies, because it would increase the level of employee and manager motivation and performance.

**Table 2. Level of motivation in private and public sector organizations**

Area of work	Level of motivation of private sector employees and managers (number of answers, %)					Level of motivation of public sector employees and managers (number of answers, %)				
	Very high	Sufficiently high	Average	Lower	Low	Very high	Sufficiently high	Average	Lower	Low
Quality of work done	22.88	54.09	20.85	2.08	0.09	22.34	56.72	18.55	2.14	0.25
Increase in level of knowledge and skills	15.13	45.53	32.72	5.77	0.85	13.27	55.48	27.62	2.64	0.99
New suggestions and increase in efficiency	8.61	39.72	41.56	8.13	1.99	8.66	43.86	38.25	7.42	1.81
Cooperation with a manager and management /*	9.06	42.28	38.33	8.57	1.76	7.01	45.33	37.48	6.36	3.83
Leading and motivating of an employee /**	21.09	54.08	22.79	2.04	0	8.49	47.49	35.04	5.61	3.38

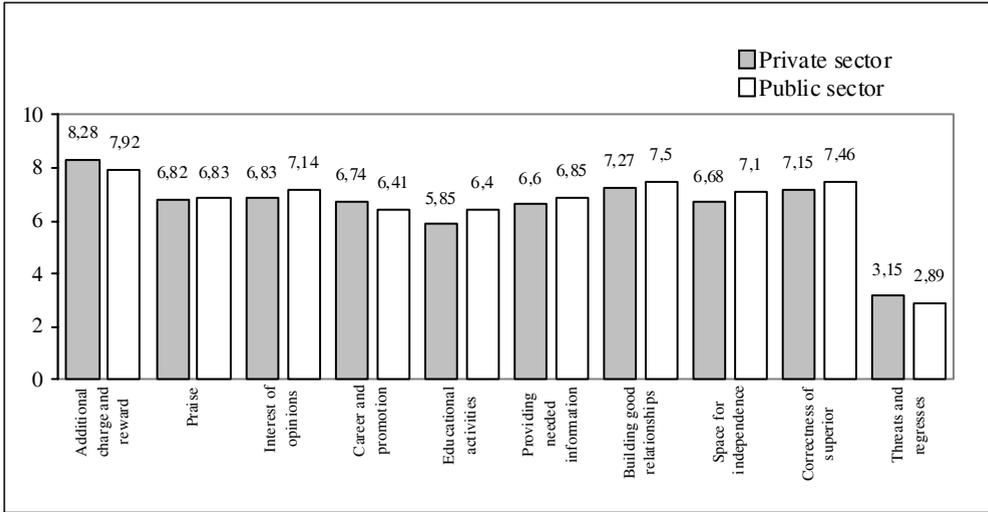
/\* this area was surveyed only in the employee group

/\*\* this area was surveyed only in the manager group



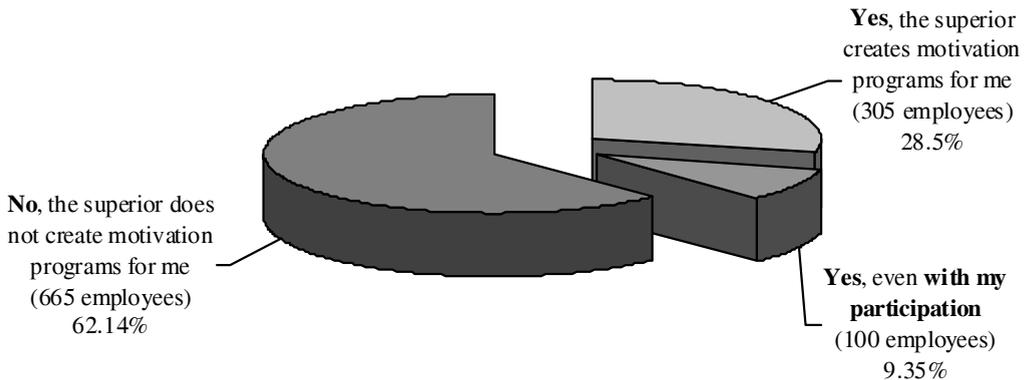
**Figure 1.** Utilization of public sector managers' and employees' potential

This situation can be improved by adequate motivation policies, that is, by application of suitable motivating factors. It is important for managers to know *the most effective motivating factors*. As seen in Figure 2, certain differences exist between the perceived efficiency of several motivators (respondents could chose the efficiency of every defined motivator according to scale 1 to 10; 1 indicating the lowest and 10 indicating the highest level of effectiveness of the motivator).



**Figure 2.** Average values of motivator effectiveness: private sector versus public sector in the Slovak Republic

In private sector organizations, the rank of the motivators from the least to the most effective is as follows: extra reward, building good relationships, correctness of the superior, interest shown in employee opinions, and praise for the employee. In public sector organizations, the order of effectiveness of the motivating factors is similar: extra reward, building good relationships, correctness of the superior, interest in employee opinions, and space for independence. We can observe the greatest differences in the effectiveness of motivators in the case of educational activities provided (5.85 points versus 6.4 points) and in case of the space for independence (6.68 versus 7.1). This indicates a higher need for intellectual and creative motivators in the public sector.



**Figure 3.** Public employees' answers about the creation of individualized motivation programs

The results mentioned above are in line with the following information of the survey: answers of the public sector employees confirm that managers *did not create a motivational program* for 28.5% of the employees (Figure 3). According to the results of the survey, only 9.35% of respondents confirm that their manager has a motivational program established for them (the employee already possesses a high motivational level).

These imperfections should be corrected, especially with respect to the results outlined in Table 3. Respondents are generally willing to improve the quality of their work performance—more than 83% of employees and managers are willing to improve their behaviour at work.

Table 3. **Willingness of respondents to increase their effort after more effective motivation programs are established**

Expression	Employees + managers		Employees		Managers	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of employees	Number	% of managers
<b>Private organizations respondents</b>						
Yes, average increase	1.760	83.22	1.507	82.76	253	86.05
	<i>of 40.77%</i>		<i>of 41.51%</i>		<i>of 36.35%</i>	
No	355	16.78	314	17.24	41	13.95
<b>Public organizations respondents</b>						
Yes, average increase	1.009	83.18	899	84.02	110	76.92
	<i>of 38.73%</i>		<i>of 39.05%</i>		<i>of 36.14%</i>	
No	204	16.82	171	15.98	33	23.08

The motivation and willingness of employees and managers to increase their work performance (40.77% in the case of private sector organizations and 38.73% in the case of public sector organizations), if motivational programs are improved, can be a challenge for the realization of modern forms of management and the creation of motivational policies in the public sector. As previously mentioned, an improvement in motivation in the private sector (apart from the systematic effort of government and local administration) can become a strong support for motivation in the public sector.

## **5. The Content of Motivation Policies and Motivation Factors in the Public Sector**

Motivation policy, as a system of principles, rules, and recommendations on how to proceed in strengthening motivation of employees and managers should be accompanied by high-quality motivation programs. The creators should clearly define the mission/intention of the motivation policy. For example: to strengthen the level of public sector employee motivation and increase the quality of services pro-

vided to society, to improve manager motivation and performance, to increase the level of satisfaction of work done, and others.

Based on existing knowledge, it is possible and even necessary, to understand motivation policies in the public sector such as:

- a) *a strategic document defined, agreed, and supported by the government and parliament*, which has a wider universal context (to strengthen the motivation of citizens and the private sector by means of strengthened motivation in the public sector),
- b) *a system of motivational documents drawn up by ministries, regional administration, institutions or organizations of the public sector*, which has a closer social context in every specific public organization (to strengthen the motivation of public sector employees and managers, increase the effectiveness of their behaviour, develop the potential and capability of individuals and groups within public organizations).

The basic pillars and principles of every motivation policy in the public sector are the following:

- *To adhere to the principles of ethics and correctness* in relation to the primary targets (employees and managers) as well as to the secondary targets of the motivation policy (population, employees and managers in the private sector, students, patients, and others).
- *To use internal and external client approach* in the implementation of the motivation policy, namely, it is necessary to approach the employees and managers of the public sector with maximum respect and support.
- *To combine permanently and conveniently the principle of non—compromise* (in relation to the quality of the public sector’s own work and to the quality of provided services and information) and *the principle of obligation and openness* (in relation to citizens, the addressees of services and outputs of the public sector).

The specific contents of motivation policies and programs in the public sector must be permanently accommodated to the character of the activities that the employee is involved in. There is need to consider the higher average qualification of the public sector employees (i.e. working in education, health service, and judiciary) in comparison with the private, for instance, manufacturing, organization employees, higher sensitivity due to psychological difficulties of their work (security services), work hazard (transport, police), and others.

The system of high confidence is among the most convenient in increasing motivation. This system enables the employees to set the pace and also the contents of their work (within the framework of defined rules) (Soviar, 2009, p. 214). The systems of high confidence, however, have to be primarily harmonised with the effort for permanent improvement of the public sector employee performance, level of services, and quality, time, and costs of information provided to the citizens as well as the effective functioning of the state.

An effective means of increasing the motivation of the public administration employees can also involve *facilitation*. According to this approach, managers act as

facilitators for the members of their team when they support and help employees in improving their skills and abilities (Armstrong, Stephens, 2008, p. 75). At the same time, it is possible to help employees and managers cope with their work stress, the identification of their needs, and the harmonization of their needs with the needs of the organization, the achievement of the feeling of a sufficiently high satisfaction from work done and engagement in the public sector. Facilitators can increase employee potential by means of the right *delegation, empowerment and participation* in goal setting, the simplification of goal achievement, determination of above-average tasks by means of proper *motivational challenges*, and others.

In the public sector, we can also motivate employees and managers through *career planning*, the systematic management and development of their *talent*, a well-thought out management of their performance, the building of suitable conditions at work, including *instigative social atmosphere* within the organization, *the balance of work and personal life*, the possibility to realise not only the *creative abilities* (invention, intellectual skills), but also *communication and emotional needs and skills*.

The intentional building of a space for independence, providing the needed information in time, a *positive and obliging approach* towards employees, accepting their opinions, solutions, and *new ideas* is a necessity in motivational policies and motivational programs of the public sector. There is need to include a highly competent utilization of communication skills, i.e. verbal as well as nonverbal. In terms of other communicational skills, we can propose the usage of *empathy and meta-communication*, which can improve the level of communication—social climate and common understanding, and can prevent needless tensions and conflicts.

Further tools can contribute to the strengthening of motivation in the public sector, but all motivational tools and measures have to be mutually harmonized. It is extraordinarily important that managers in role of motivators have to be flexible—they have to search carefully for any changes in the motivational preferences of their employees and immediately adapt their own total motivational behaviour and decision-taking of topical mix of the most convenient tools, forms of communication, style of leadership, etc. which they will apply towards their employees. This means that the principle of permanent flexibility, and dynamics should be implanted into the motivation policies of the public sector.

## 6. Conclusions

Surveys carried out in the field of public organization management and the field of motivating potential of employees of these organizations indicate that it is important to address these topics systematically. We consider it a necessity to create motivational policies in the public sector. These policies would be created by the representatives of the government and managers of public sector organizations. It is not simple to define and implement the motivation policies in a sector, which has universal (pro-social) dimensions and is present in all regions of the country. This effort will demand sufficient engagement, high competency, a great amount on information

of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics, financial costs, removing the mistrust of participating executives and cumbersome bureaucratic mechanisms typical of the public sector.

On the other hand, an efficient system of motivation policies in the public sector can become a valuable tool for increasing the effectiveness of not only public sector organizations, but also the competitiveness of the private sector and the entire society. Sufficiently high and conveniently oriented motivation for employees and managers creates a basis for strategic success in private sector organizations, and it is possible to accept this premise in the organizations of the public sector as well. Namely, in spite of many differences between these sectors, that must be respected, the basic component of their activities is the same—the people. This means that the performance and demanded results of employees and managers in both sectors have an identical foundation—the satisfaction and permanently strengthened motivation.

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## **MOTYVAVIMO POLITIKA SLOVAKIJOS RESPUBLIKOS VIEŠAJAME SEKTORIUJE**

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Santrauka

*Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos Slovakijos Respublikos viešojo sektoriaus darbuotojų ir vadybininkų motyvacijos didinimo problemos. Apžvelgiama, kaip viešojo sektoriaus organizacijos pasitelkia motyvavimo politiką kaip metodą, kurį taikydami viešojo sektoriaus organizacijų vadovai gali pasiekti didesnę darbuotojų ir vadovų suvokiamos motyvacijos ir pasitenkinimo darbu lygį. Motyvavimo politika gali būti suprantama kaip sistema apibrėžtų ir aptartų prioritetų, principų ir taisyklių, kurių tikslas yra sistemaiškai didinti motyvacinės atmosferos patrauklumą organizacijoje bei stiprinti atskirų individų, grupių ir visos organizacijos motyvaciją. Straipsnio turinys grindžiamas apklausos, atliktos Slovakijos organizacijose 2008–2009 m., rezultatais. Šioje apklausoje tyrinėta viešojo bei privataus sektorių darbuotojų bei vadybininkų motyvacijos kaita, atliktas šių sektorių rezultatų palyginimas.*