

Reform of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine: Parliamentary or Public Administration Reform?

This article examines the current state of one of the areas of public administration reform — the parliamentary service.

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[The Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022–2025](#), although aimed at reforming the entire system of professional and politically neutral public service focused on protecting citizens’ interests, excludes from its scope the reform of the civil service within the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. This is explained, in part, by the fact that parliamentary service reform is most often explicitly viewed as part of parliamentary reform rather than as a component of public administration or civil service reform. However, such an assumption is unlikely to be justified. The implementation of public administration reform should be carried

out in accordance with the European [Principles of Public Administration, developed by the OECD/SIGMA](#), which state that these principles also apply to parliaments and other independent constitutional bodies, with due respect for their constitutional independence and specific functional characteristics.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is the sole legislative body, which, in turn, determines the specific features of the functioning of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. This body performs a wide range of tasks — from financial and logistical support to scientific, expert, and analytical assistance to the work of Parliament. The Secretariat operates in an environment characterised by a plurality of political positions and a high level of politicisation in the decision-making process. For an institution that provides support, consultation, and daily services to the Parliament and its Members, **it is essential to have mechanisms in place that ensure Members of Parliament receive impartial assistance in exercising their powers, while staff are protected from potential abuses of status by MPs.**

Among such abuses are the registration of many low-quality draft laws and the formal compliance with explanatory note requirements, or the practice of adopting draft laws ‘on the same day’.¹ In the first case, the responsible structural units do not have the authority to refuse registration of draft laws and supporting documents that do not meet the requirements of the [Rules of Procedure of the Verkhovna Rada](#), which in turn contributes to the phenomenon of ‘legislative spam’. In the second case, units responsible for conducting legal and analytical assessments of draft laws and other acts are only able to provide a superficial evaluation of the consequences of their adoption and their consistency with existing legislation. For example, during the 12th session, in the case of 45 draft laws (60% of the draft laws adopted in the second reading), the deadline for Members of Parliament to review the relevant conclusions before their consideration in the plenary session was [violated](#).²

Particularly vulnerable in this context are, for example, the committee secretariats, as they are subject to dual subordination: to the Head of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada and to the respective parliamentary committee. While this situation is not [unique](#) to committee secretariats in Ukraine,³ parliamentary civil servants are constantly forced to balance the need

¹ This refers to draft laws that are registered and passed on the same day or the next day.

² [Monitoring Report of the Activity of the 12th Session of the 9th Verkhovna Rada](#).

³ For example, in the Estonian parliament, the head of the committee's secretariat reports to the head of the Parliamentary Office and the committee chair on matters directly related to advising and servicing the committee's work. [Statutes of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu](#).

to comply with the Rules of Procedure against political pressure from interest groups that use administrative leverage to [‘bypass’](#) certain parliamentary procedures.⁴

In addition to the protection of the Secretariat staff from political pressure exerted by parliamentarians (or groups of parliamentarians, such as party factions or committees), another important dimension of the Secretariat’s ‘independence’ is its independence from the executive branch of power — i.e., administrative autonomy. This may include such [components](#) as: the existence of a separate legal framework with clearly defined powers; freedom in organising its internal structure; an independent mechanism for hiring parliamentary civil servants, including the appointment of the head of the parliamentary service; autonomy in budget formation; and transparency and accountability to Parliament rather than to the executive branch, among others.⁵

Staff of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada represent a relatively small portion of all civil servants in Ukraine, especially when compared to those employed in ministries and other central executive bodies. Nevertheless, their work in supporting the functioning of the sole legislative body is regulated only in a fragmented manner. The Law of Ukraine [‘On Civil Service’](#) stipulates that the procedures for entry into, progression through, and termination of civil service within the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada are governed by this law, taking into account the specifics defined by special legislation. For instance, the [Rules of Procedure of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine](#) set out specific provisions only for the appointment and dismissal of a single individual — the Head of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. Similarly, the Law of Ukraine [‘On Committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine’](#) establishes procedures for appointing and dismissing the heads of committee secretariats by order of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, based on a proposal by the relevant committee and in agreement with the Head of the Secretariat.

The Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada has approved the [Regulation on the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine](#). However, this regulation does not outline the specifics of parliamentary service either. It merely stipulates that the procedure for recruitment, hiring, transfer, application of disciplinary measures, and dismissal within the Secretariat is determined by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada.

⁴ [Case Study ‘Ethical and Professional Standards of Civil Servants of the Apparatus of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine’](#).

⁵ [Comparative research paper on parliamentary administration](#).

Both the Rules of Procedure and the Regulation on the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada primarily define the operational areas of the Secretariat across various domains, rather than setting out the actual conditions for civil service within it.

State of Play and Progress of Reform

To ensure the independence and administrative autonomy of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada, it is essential to establish a legal framework that does not necessarily require a separate regulatory regime for parliamentary civil servants, but which nonetheless protects staff of the Secretariat from potential external influence.

› Draft Law of Ukraine No. 4530 'On Parliamentary Service'

In December 2020, the Draft Law [No. 4530](#) 'On Parliamentary Service' was registered in Parliament. The authors of the draft law noted that the existing Law of Ukraine 'On Civil Service', which is primarily aimed at regulating the work of civil servants within executive bodies, is insufficient for addressing the specific conditions and nature of civil service in Parliament. In January 2021, Draft Law No. 4530 was adopted at first reading, and the lead committee⁶ was instructed to prepare it for a second reading.

The draft law outlines three categories of parliamentary staff:

- 1) parliamentary civil servants;
- 2) employees of the parliamentary patronage service;
- 3) parliamentary staff performing service-related functions.

The draft law clarifies the principle of political impartiality, stating that parliamentary civil servants must ensure equal treatment of every Member of Parliament of Ukraine, their assistant-consultants, staff of parliamentary faction (group) secretariats, and other employees of the parliamentary patronage service.

The draft law provides for:

- setting requirements for candidates seeking parliamentary civil service positions;
- conducting competitions for Category 'A' positions (first deputies and deputies of the Head of the Secretariat) not by the High Civil Service Commission established by the

⁶ The lead committee is the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Organisation of State Power, Local Self-Government, Regional Development and Urban Planning.

Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, but by a Commission for the Selection of Parliamentary Civil Servants of Category 'A' directly formed by the Head of the Secretariat;

- streamlining the regulation of parliamentary civil servants' career progression: the Head of the Secretariat is tasked with approving the Procedure for the Advancement of Parliamentary Civil Servants, the Procedure for Evaluating Performance Results, and the Procedure for Internships for young professionals;
- establishing a Disciplinary Commission by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada to conduct disciplinary proceedings aimed at determining the presence and degree of guilt, nature, and severity of disciplinary offences committed by parliamentary civil servants holding Category 'A' positions, among other responsibilities.

The mentioned provisions only partially address the issue of dependence on the executive branch by granting the Head of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat significant powers regarding the organisation of service within the Secretariat. At the same time, the problem of dual influence on committee secretariats is not only unresolved but even exacerbated: the draft law proposes that the results of performance evaluations of committee secretariat staff should be approved by the committee chair. This may seem logical, as the Secretariat's work is meant to satisfy the committee itself. However, it creates conditions for undue influence over employees, mainly since the evaluation results determine the payment of an annual bonus. The opinions of committee members and chairs should be advisory and used to improve interaction between the Secretariat and the committee, but should not directly affect the evaluation of individual employees.⁷

Among other things, to harmonise with the relevant law, the Personnel Management Department is replaced by a Personnel Management Service, which, in addition to the tasks and functions stipulated by the Law of Ukraine 'On Civil Service', will undertake:

- 1) the development of standard professional competency requirements for parliamentary civil servants holding Category 'A' parliamentary civil service positions;
- 2) the development of a list of test questions for conducting competitions for parliamentary civil service positions;
- 3) personnel support for Members of Parliament of Ukraine;
- 4) preparation of legally mandated materials concerning individuals elected or appointed to positions, and the granting of consent for appointments within the jurisdiction of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

⁷ [Parliamentary service — why is it needed in the Verkhovna Rada?](#)

However, this draft law does not create a new type of public service — the ‘parliamentary’ service — but merely establishes certain specific features of the work of civil servants within the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The law is aimed more at regulating the **parliamentary civil service** rather than the parliamentary service as a whole.

After its [adoption at first reading](#), Draft Law No. 4530 has not been brought to a vote at the second reading for four years.⁸ This delay indicates that for the majority of Members of Parliament, the draft law is not among the priority issues requiring consideration in the plenary session. Furthermore, should it be brought back to the Verkhovna Rada’s agenda, it will be necessary to assess the draft law’s compliance with the EU acquis (*the parliamentary committee on European integration had raised concerns about its content already at the first reading*), as well as to determine its place within the ongoing public administration reform.

› Recommendation No. 39 of the Needs Assessment Mission to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

The legislative establishment of a separate parliamentary civil service is one of many [recommendations aimed at internal reform and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine](#). Some of these recommendations focus on enhancing the administrative capacity of the Verkhovna Rada and thereby reforming public administration within Parliament.

One recommendation (Recommendation No. 36) suggests consolidating the entire regulatory framework governing the work of the Verkhovna Rada’s Secretariat into a single internal regulation on staffing. This has not been achieved at the institutional level — apart from the aforementioned Regulations on the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada, other regulations govern the work of individual structural units, such as the [Regulations on the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada Committee](#), and the [Regulations on the Secretariat of a Parliamentary Faction \(or Group\) within the Verkhovna Rada](#). Additionally, recommendations relating to the regulation of the work of parliamentary assistants-consultants have not been implemented at all. This issue is also not addressed by Draft Law No. 4530.

At the same time, the Secretariat has implemented another recommendation (Recommendation No. 39) concerning the elaboration of a comprehensive human resources development strategy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

⁸ [According to First Deputy Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine O. Kornienko](#), the draft law on parliamentary service was ready for consideration in the second reading already in October 2021.

Adopted in 2019, the [Strategy for Building the Personnel Potential of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat until 2022](#) is aimed at optimising, preserving, strengthening, and developing the personnel capacity of the Secretariat. This capacity should be competent and responsible in fulfilling its tasks and functions, and timely and effectively support innovative processes aimed at the efficient execution of the powers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. One of the primary objectives set by this Strategy was to **align the main directions of personnel work within the Secretariat with the goals of the public administration reform**, particularly in terms of the ability to analyse, develop, implement, timely adopt, and adjust management decisions. Another objective was to define, in legislation regulating the activities of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and its Secretariat, the status of the Secretariat's employees, as well as the specifics of entry, tenure (including professional training), and termination of civil service, patronage services, and other staff. Measures implemented within the Strategy included conducting [a functional review of the Verkhovna Rada's Secretariat](#),⁹ carrying out [a gender audit](#),¹⁰ developing an [online training platform](#) for the Verkhovna Rada's Secretariat, adopting methodological recommendations on the development of [corporate culture](#)¹¹ within the Secretariat, and adopting other documents related to the system for improving professional competence and performance evaluation.

› Remuneration of Parliamentary Civil Servants

For a long time, parliamentary civil servants remained excluded from the reform of the civil service remuneration system based on job classification. The main measure of the remuneration reform was the establishment of the fixed and variable components of salaries according to a '70/30' formula. The reform commenced in January 2024 pursuant to the [Law of Ukraine 'On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2024'](#). However, Clause 22 of the Final Provisions of this Law introduced an exception for civil servants in the Secretariat of the legislative body. Thus, without a conducted job classification, they retained the possibility to receive incentive payments based on decisions by the head of the civil service. At the same time, the size of the wage fund was to be no less than that provided for in 2023.

The Law of Ukraine ['On the State Budget for 2025'](#) established that until the first job classification is carried out for civil servants in state bodies that did not conduct a job classification in 2024, the remuneration conditions set for 2024 will remain in effect, but no later than *1 April 2025*. Such bodies include the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. Job classification in this office is to be conducted in accordance with the catalogue of civil service

⁹ [The Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine received the results of the functional analysis.](#)

¹⁰ [Gender audit in the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.](#)

¹¹ [Corporate culture to be promoted in the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.](#)

positions in the Secretariat of the legislative body, approved by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine upon submission by the Head of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. On 11 April 2025, the Government adopted a [resolution establishing the scheme of official salaries for civil service positions, taking into account job families and levels of positions in the Secretariat of the legislative body](#), effective from 1 April 2025. This resolution also determined that the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada approves the catalogue of typical civil service positions in the Secretariat of the legislative body.

On 11 March 2025, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law of Ukraine '[On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Implementation of Unified Approaches to the Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Job Classification](#)', which aims to introduce unified approaches to civil servants' remuneration based on job classification. The law establishes that in 2025, the classification of civil service positions shall be [carried out](#) in accordance with the [Algorithm for Conducting Job Classification of Civil Service Positions under Martial Law](#), which is to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.¹²

Another adopted draft law, [No. 9478](#), stipulates that the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service does not approve job classifications conducted by certain bodies, including the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. This draft law is currently awaiting the President's signature.

The Draft Law No. 4530 'On Parliamentary Service', regarding remuneration, refers to the Law of Ukraine 'On Civil Service', although it establishes certain particularities. For example, the salary for civil servants of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada cannot be lower than the salary of civil servants in the permanent auxiliary body that supports the exercise of the powers of the President of Ukraine (considering the notes to the salary scale determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine). However, unlike other civil servants, the draft law allows parliamentary civil servants to receive an additional payment for an academic degree.

¹² The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued Resolution No. 369 dated 1 April 2025 'Certain Issues of Classification of Civil Service Positions', which comes into force simultaneously with the Law of Ukraine No. 4282-IX dated 11 March 2025 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Implementation of Unified Approaches to Remuneration of Civil Servants Based on Position Classification' (Draft Law No. 8222).

Recommendations

In its latest [report on Ukraine's progress within the 2024 Enlargement Package](#), the European Commission noted that the public administration reform strategy requires more effective implementation, particularly regarding the broader application of the remuneration system across the entire civil service.

The reform of the parliamentary civil service is proceeding in an unsystematic and inconsistent manner, disconnected from the overall civil service reform. For instance, the Strategy for Building the Personnel Potential of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat was designed only for the period up to 2022, and the lack of reporting on the measures implemented prevents a comprehensive assessment of its outcomes. Nevertheless, it provided impetus for planning human resources policies and actively undertaking initiatives to develop the human resources capacity of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada. Adoption of a new Strategy for Building the Personnel Potential as a programme document aimed at strengthening the human resources of the Secretariat would be appropriate.

It is also worth continuing the discussion on the distinction between the parliamentary civil service and the civil service in general, particularly through the renewed consideration of Draft Law No. 4530. This discussion is especially important in the context of the adoption of the Law of Ukraine '[On Lawmaking](#)', which defines the actors responsible for supporting the lawmaking process (which undoubtedly includes the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada) as participants in lawmaking activities and assigns them certain powers, such as conducting mandatory expert reviews of draft legal acts. Ensuring the lawmaking process will require strengthening the analytical human resources capacity and enhancing the administrative capability of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada, starting with the regulation of the status of parliamentary civil servants by developing robust mechanisms aimed at ensuring their independence and impartiality.