

CEPA Strategy Guidance Note **Promotion of public sector workforce diversity**

DRAFT FOR COMMENT

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The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) has developed a set of principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The essential purpose of these voluntary principles is to provide practical, expert guidance to interested countries in a broad range of governance challenges associated with implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CEPA has identified 62 commonly used strategies to assist with operationalization of the principles. This draft guidance note addresses promotion of public sector workforce diversity, which is associated with the principle of non-discrimination and can contribute to strengthening the inclusiveness of institutions.

Understanding the strategy

In recent years, workforce diversity has emerged as a priority in both private and public sector organizations. Diversity has multidimensional value that is both intrinsic and strategic. That is, diversity is pursued both as an objective in itself, and because it can advance the performance of organizations and governments. Definitions of diversity vary, including by national context. A useful definition has been put forth by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): "It describes not only a mixture of skills, competences, perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds, but valuing and using that diversity to improve government's efficiency and effectiveness and meet public servants' professional expectations. Diversity entails valuing people in their own merit regardless of their" background or characteristics. This note primarily focuses on diversity concerning social groups.

Workforce diversity is a means of achieving workplace inclusion, with the two terms often used in conjunction ("D&I"). The promotion of workforce diversity reflects the aims of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in building an environment that values and supports the potential of all workers and ensures that some do not have unfair advantage over others. Diversity also relies on fairness and transparency across workplace operations, in particular those of human resources. In the public sector, diversity further supports representative governance in achieving a workforce whose composition reflects the society it serves.² These values are mutually reinforcing with those of public service.³

Diversity is also sought with the aim of improved performance. A diverse organization taps all segments of the population for a range of talents, knowledge, experiences and perspectives. These assets are leveraged for creative problem-solving and to understand the needs of—and best serve—its diverse clients.⁴ Increased representation of historically disadvantaged groups in bureaucracies has been found to improve effectiveness in realizing goals that support those groups' interests.⁵ Workforce diversity is associated with innovation⁶ that may help to improve public service efficiency⁷ and improved quality of outputs⁸.

Diversity may also serve broader social goals. It may promote social mobility through improved quality of public services and employability of disadvantaged groups. Diversity may also support good governance by facilitating citizen engagement across social groups with government and strengthening trust in it. A diverse public sector may serve to improve the image of public institutions and their commitment to equality and inclusion, and also promote or reinforce diversity in the private sector. Attention to diversity in public institutions is often seen as one means of addressing the marginalization of certain social groups and of preventing the concentration of access to opportunities, benefits, and influence in the hands of one or more dominant groups towards building or sustaining social cohesion. Particularly in conflict prevention and post-conflict contexts, diversity in public administration can serve to avoid the capture of State institutions by the elite.

As noted, the culmination of diversity efforts is not simply balanced representation of social groups, skills, and experiences. Diversity can lead to challenges including group conflict, poor communication, dissatisfaction, turnover and poor performance.¹¹ In order to maximize its potential, diversity should be

carefully managed. Diversity management should aim at creating an enabling environment for diversity to lead to inclusion, characterized by, for example, representation at senior and all other levels, equality in wages, a sense of respect for and belonging by all, and measures in place to help optimize the potential of all. It is a long-term and deliberate process involving all levels of management, all stages of human resource processes, as well as a workplace culture that approaches diversity as an asset rather than a problem and that fosters buy-in from employees.

Diversity efforts should be context-specific in terms of directing attention to the groups and skills that are underrepresented in a given country or area, and to utilizing strategies that are most likely to take hold. In part, the success of diversity efforts depends on factors outside public administration, such as the presence of conducive labour laws, prevalent social norms, the accessibility, relevance and quality of educational institutions, availability of social services such as child and elder care, inclusive transportation, pensions systems, and workspace accessibility, among others.

Public sector situation and trends

No central source of information has been identified that assesses the degree to which most or all countries' public sectors are diverse. This is likely due to factors such as how broadly diversity is approached and measured and a lack of comprehensive data. Most information available is limited to specific countries or country groupings and to the representation of certain social groups. With some notable exceptions, data indicates numbers and proportions of certain groups in public administration or civil service, and in some cases, information on their level of seniority and wages and information pertaining to diversity strategies and their implementation.

Gender diversity is most extensively assessed across countries. While women are more represented in the public sector than the private sector, and in some countries—including many in the European Union (EU)—are even over-represented, disparities continue to exist in public administration. Overall, men outnumber women; the share of women increases with country incomes, though there is considerable variation in shares within income levels. In a study of more than 34 countries/country regions, the percentage of women in public administration ranges from 12 per cent in India (2006 data) to 75 per cent in Ukraine (2008 data), with six countries at or above 50 per cent. Men significantly outnumber women in senior positions in many countries. On average, the proportion of female senior officers is below 20 per cent in low-income countries, rising with country income to near parity in high-income countries. At the same time, the proportion of women in clerical occupations increases with income, from just over 40 per cent in low-income countries to nearly 80 per cent in high-income countries. In judiciaries, among 76 countries with available data as of 2015, women's representation among judges and magistrates varies significantly from less than 25 per cent to more than 75 per cent, with men outnumbering women in around half of the countries. However, the share of women declines among senior judicial positions, with women's share of judgeships in Supreme Courts being equal to or larger than men's in just a few countries

and areas. ¹⁶ Women's average wages are 88 per cent of men's in the public sector, higher than the 81 per cent in the private sector. ¹⁷

With regard to age and education, workers in the public sector are on average older and more educated than those in the private sector.¹⁸ Comparable cross-country data has not been identified with regard to other groups, mainly persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, certain ethnic groups, persons with a disadvantaged socio-economic background, persons with a migrant background, and persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex, some of whose share of the population in each country differs.

A 2015 study on EU countries observed that "Despite the fact that hard evidence are lacking in Europe, the public workforce seems to become more diverse in terms of ethnic and national origins, and people with disabilities." ¹⁹ Countries in that region generally do not gather data on employees' ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, or educational background due to regulations and privacy issues, with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) being a notable exception. ²⁰ Where such data collection is permitted, it may be voluntary and reporting by employees can be influenced by factors such as perceptions of discrimination. The assumption made in the study is based on the need to comply with EU law regarding the free movement of workers and non-discrimination.

Another way to assess the world public sector situation and trends in this area is to look at the state of diversity management.²¹ Broad comparable information on this has only been identified within the EU, where a survey on the topic was carried out in 2015. Analysis of the results (from 26 countries) showed that most EU States have laws, strategies and policies targeting women and persons with disabilities, while some have extended their focus to also include other groups, namely older persons, persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, persons with a migrant background, and members of specific ethnic groups. Most strategies have the aim of ensuring equal opportunity to employment and advancement and protection from discrimination, while some have broader aims such as expanding talent and competencies, improving representativeness, and enhancing the quality of services. There remains a gap, however, in the implementation of diversity strategies and tools in many countries, as not all those with a diversity strategy have an action plan for its implementation, fewer have set specific targets, and fewer still hold senior leaders accountable for achieving such targets. Among other findings, few countries prioritize the development of competencies for managing diversity, there is scope for more active interventions to support diversity, and there is a need for better utilization of statistics and employee surveys to monitor diversity.²² Strategies to promote diversity and inclusion are discussed further below.

Methods of implementation

The development of a diverse and inclusive workforce is a long-term process that must be managed. Diversity efforts in public administration should be rooted in a government-wide strategic framework. For

instance, the diversity policies of several OECD countries were laid out in a vision statement linked to the government's political commitment to pursue diversity as part of its broader agenda. Some policies contain goals or targets. A legal framework is also key to ensure that organizations and public servants are bound to pursue diversity as well as to ensure the protection of individual privacy. Many countries have mandated a representative public administration or quotas for specific disadvantaged groups. Examples of quotas for women include South Sudan, whose Constitution requires all levels of Government to promote women's representation throughout legislative and executive bodies through a 25 per cent quota, and Colombia, where a law applies a 30 per cent quota for women in decision-making positions in all branches of the government at both the national and subnational levels and further mandates that equal numbers of women and men take part in selection processes. For persons with disabilities, it is estimated that at least 90 countries have quota requirements in the public sector, mainly of between 1 and 15 per cent. Quotas and preferences are also employed for indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups, among others.

Diversity principles should further be integrated into all human resource processes, not just recruitment. The integration of diversity into strategic workforce planning is particularly important. It entails an analysis of the demographics of the public administration; a determination of objectives to be achieved and how they can contribute to broader government aims; a determination of the specific populations to whom actions will be targeted; specification of tools or means to achieve the goals or targets and fulfill the vision laid out; specification of how the policy will be coordinated and by which actor (typically, the central human resource management body); a determination of the human and financial resources needed to achieve the aims; and a determination of the criteria to be used for evaluating results, which can be adapted over time. All decisions that relate to the work force, from recruitment to retirement, should be based on all available data and take account of implications for diversity. Guidelines for implementing and sustaining diversity policy should be communicated to all staff, with accountability mechanisms in place for managers. Diversity data should also be gathered regularly and shared widely in accessible formats for monitoring and the ongoing evaluation of diversity strategies.

Other factors have been identified as enabling of the success of diversity efforts. It is important for all actors to have clarity on roles and responsibilities. A whole-of-government approach to diversity can be fostered through well-balanced joint management, whereby a central body (often a human resource body) has responsibility for diversity strategy, promotion, monitoring, and providing guidance and support to ministries and agencies, which implement their own policies. Addressing discriminatory practices and attitudes in workplace culture helps to not only generate but also retain a diverse staff. Strong leadership has a role in this regard and in broadly generating buy-in.²⁶

There is no singular set of measures that should be adopted to promote diversity, and a range of options is available. In planning initiatives and monitoring diversity, organizations can undertake diversity or cultural audits to obtain a candid assessment of the diversity climate and experiences of groups of public servants, as well as of workplace values and rules that may undermine an organization's mission and service delivery process.²⁷ They can also develop formal strategies with targets along with action plans,

conduct staff exit interviews, hold regular managerial meetings to discuss diversity issues, establish task forces to develop ideas for attracting a diverse workforce, conduct periodic employee perception surveys to gain insight into barriers and progress, track accountability mechanisms such as diversity measures incorporated into managerial performance evaluation systems, gather diversity data to the extent possible (taking account of privacy concerns), and use benchmarks. In pursuing initiatives, organizations can institute mandatory diversity training to sensitize employees and managers, create or strengthen Ombuds offices to address potential conflicts, develop targeted programmes to strengthen competencies among specific groups (such as mentoring and leadership development), and promote diversity networks. As part of diversity initiatives, measures can be taken to make the workplace more flexible for all public servants. Career patterns can be made more flexible through re-entry programmes and flexible career paths. Working arrangements can be adapted to permit part-time work, flexible working hours, and telecommuting. In general, diversity can be facilitated by enabling human resource and other processes to be responsive to the needs of diverse employees as they are identified, from enabling accommodations for religious obligations to adapting communications materials to be more gender sensitive, disability accessible and/or visually representative. These measures are not exhaustive.

Peer-to-peer learning and research

Research on diversity and inclusion is extensive yet skewed heavily towards private sector organizations. However, much of it is applicable to the public sector. In addition to academic and corporate research, many private consultancies advise organizations on setting up or strengthening their diversity and inclusion strategies. Some private and non-profit entities produce notable reports that can inform both the private and public sectors, including EY, McKinsey & Company, and The Conference Board. Additionally, the Centre for Global Inclusion produced and periodically updates the *Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World* (GDIB), also geared to the private sector but relevant to all organizations. The Centre's website further contains downloadable tools that accompany the GDIB.²⁸

Research and learning on diversity in the public sector specifically is more limited to academia, in particular public administration education, and the field of human resource management. With regard to learning, as noted above, mechanisms exist in public administrations (as well as companies), notably diversity/affinity networks for social groups within departments and/or across public administrations. For instance, the UK's civil service has cross-government race, disability and "LGB&Ti" networks as well as a civil service blog that contains a dedicated section on diversity and inclusion.

Case studies

To follow is a sample of diversity statistics in select countries and with focus on different social groups.

- Despite important progress in Australia, the Australian Commonwealth public sector narrowly missed its goal of increasing indigenous representation to 3.0 per cent by 2018. Between 2015 and 2018, the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rose from 2.2 per cent to 2.9 per cent. Across agencies of the Australian Public Service during that same period, indigenous representation as a percentage of all employees rose from 3.5 per cent to 4.3 per cent, also increasing in senior roles.²⁹
- South Africa has strived to make its public service reflect the racial composition of its population and achieved significant progress. Between 1995 and 2010, the percentage of Blacks in the public service rose by nearly 15 points to 90.29 per cent, exceeding that of the labour force total (77.92 per cent), while the percentage of Whites declined in equal measure to 9.71 per cent, falling below that of the labour force total (12.08 per cent). However, at the senior management level, Blacks were still underrepresented and Whites overrepresented, and at lower levels of public service, Whites were underrepresented.³⁰
- In the **UK** between 2010 and 2019, the percentage of ethnic minorities in civil service (where known) increased to reach 12.7 per cent, slightly exceeding their percentage of the working population (12.6 per cent). Ethnic minority representation during this period has risen at all levels, being highest (14.5 per cent) at the second most junior grade and lowest (6 per cent) at the senior level.³¹ Civil servants in the UK are also requested to record, among other characteristics, their religion and belief as well as sexual orientation, with 2019 recording rates 55 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively.³²

International development cooperation

The United Nations system strongly supports the principles of diversity and inclusion as indicative of respect for human rights and in terms of their roles in development and conflict prevention. While it provides guidance and capacity development support to Member States, there is limited focus in these areas on public administrations. It should be noted, however, that the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in 1990 of achieving a minimum of 30 per cent of women in decision-making positions, notably reaffirmed in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, 33 has been applied to the public sector in assessing progress towards gender equality.

Two UN initiatives have centred on either diversity or inclusion within public administration. In 2001, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences published a book on *Managing Diversity in the Civil Service*. In addition, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has a Gender Equality in Public Administrative (GEPA) initiative,³⁴ whose first phase focused on data collection, analysis and research and whose second phase is dedicated to implementing the recommendations of a 2014 global report, in particular on advocacy, partnerships, capacity development,

policy and programming and the development of a global mechanism to monitor gender equality in the civil service.

In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) engages in research and provides guidance, technical assistance, tools and advice on promoting inclusive and non-discriminatory workplaces. It focuses on ending discrimination, including that based on gender, race, ethnicity, indigenous status, disability, and HIV status as well as sexual orientation and gender identity. Among its relevant publications, which are not geared specifically to the public sector but mainly to employers generally (and often workers and their organizations, employers' organizations and business networks), are: Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: A practical guide (2016); Business as unusual: Making workplaces inclusive of people with disabilities (2014); The win-win of disability inclusion (2016); Managing disability in the workplace: ILO code of practice (2002); Promoting Equity - Ethnic diversity in the workplace: A step-by-step guide (2015); Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Promoting Rights, Diversity and Equality in the World of Work (2016); Gender diversity journey: Company good practices (2017); Women in leadership bring better business performance (2019); and Women in Business and Management: The business case for change (2019). ³⁵ The ILO further produces some data on the composition of the public sector workforce.

OECD engages in research, data collection and policy analysis on workforce diversity and inclusion in the public sector. Its 2009 report on "fostering diversity in the public sector" is widely cited, and its joint report with the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) and the Luxembourg Government on "managing a diverse public administration and effectively responding to the needs of a more diverse workforce" provides insight into approaches used by EU countries to manage diversity within their central public administrations. The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life contains guidelines for the effective implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming initiatives, including enhancing equal access to public leadership for women and men from diverse backgrounds. The organization also produced a "toolkit for mainstreaming and implementing gender equality," parts of which are geared to diversity in public administration and the judiciary. In addition, OECD provides data and analysis on ageing and gender in the public sectors of OECD and some other countries in editions of *Government at a Glance*.³⁶

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also supports governments in the promotion of diversity. Its *Ljubljana Guidelines on the Integration of Diverse Societies*³⁷ specify that the civil service should be representative of the public it serves and that states should address discrimination and promote inclusion. OSCE supports governments with training, research, data collection and analysis, and recommendations on diversity, with particular focus on gender and national minorities, in the civil service and justice systems. It further promotes tolerance and non-discrimination more broadly.

Acknowledgements

The members of the group are...

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content/uploads/2019/02/2015 2 LU Managing a Diverse Public Administration and Effectively Responding to the Needs of a more Diverse Workforce.pdf.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate and Network on Public Employment and Management, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service". GOV/PGC/PEM(2009)1/FINAL (2009).

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration and Effectively Responding to the Needs of a More Diverse Workforce. 2015 EUPAN Survey* (2015). Available at https://www.eupan.eu/wp-

³ OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service".

⁴ OECD, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration*.

⁵ See Sergio Fernandez and Hongseok Lee, "The transformation of the South African Public Service: exploring the impact of racial and gender representation on organizational effectiveness", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 54, No. 1 (2016), pp 91-116.

⁶ Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall and Laura Sherbin, "How diversity can drive innovation", *Harvard Business Review*, December 2013. Available at https://hbr.org/2013/12/how-diversity-can-drive-innovation.

⁷ OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service".

⁸ See Sonia Ospina, "Managing diversity in civil service: a conceptual framework for public organizations", in *Managing Diversity in the Civil Service*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IOS Press and Ohmsha, 2001).

⁹ OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service".

¹⁰ "Realizing the SDGs in post-conflict situations: challenges for the State", chapter 7 in *Working Together – Integration, Institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals,* World Public Sector Report 2018 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.H.1).

¹¹ See Ospina, "Managing diversity in civil service" and OECD, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration*.

¹² The World Bank's World Bureaucracy Indicators (WWBI) dataset on public sector employment and wages is notable for covering 114 countries and includes information on gender, age, and education level. Available at https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/worldwide-bureaucracy-indicators.

¹³ Zahid Hussain and others, *Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2019). Available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/249891549999073918/Innovating-Bureaucracy-for-a-More-Capable-Government.

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Gender Equality in Public Administration* (New York, UNDP, 2014).

¹⁵ Zahid Hussain and others, *Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government*.

¹⁶ The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).

¹⁷ Zahid Hussain and others, *Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government*.

¹⁸ Zahid Hussain and others, *Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government*.

¹⁹ OECD, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration*, p. 14.

²⁰ OECD, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration* and OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service".

²¹ Other issues could also be examined to gain a broader perspective of the state of diversity, such as reports of discrimination or harassment and surveys of employee inclusion and well-being.

²² OECD, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg-Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and European Public Administration Network, *Managing a Diverse Public Administration*.

²³ Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011, as amended to 2013, Article 16, in UN Women, Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database. Available at https://constitutions.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/south-sudan.

²⁴ Data compiled by ILO and UNDESA, in United Nations, *UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development 2018:* Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities (Advance Unedited Version) (New Yo, United Nations, 2018).

²⁵ OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service", p. 21.

²⁶ OECD, "Fostering Diversity in the Public Service".

²⁷ Mitchell F. Rice, "Teaching public administration education in the postmodern era: connecting organizational culture to diversity to social equity", in *Diversity and Public Administration: Theory, Issues and Perspectives*, Mitchell F. Rice, ed. (Armonk, New York and London, M.E. Sharpe, 2010).

²⁸ See https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/.

²⁹ Inside Policy, "An Evaluation of the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy: Final Report", prepared for the Australian Public Service Commission, 10 January 2019. Available at https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/apsc catsies evaluation report final.pdf.

³⁰ R. Cameron and C. Milne, "Representative bureaucracy in the South African public service", *African Journal of Public Affairs*, vol. 4, No. 2 (September 2011).

³¹ Gov.UK, "Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard", Guidance, updated 11 September 2019. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-diversity-inclusion-dashboard/civil-service-diversity-and-inclusion-dashboard.

³² Gov.UK, "Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard".

³³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, "Resolutions and Decisions of the Economic and Social Council," E/1990/90 (1990) and *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing*, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para 182.

³⁴ See https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/responsive-and-accountable-institutions/GEPA/.

³⁵ See (in the order listed above): https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_316815/lang--en/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/infostories/stories/stories/employment/the-win-win-of-disability-inclusion#the-benefits-of-inclusive-workplaces; https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_103324/lang--en/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/declaration/info/publications/eliminationofdiscrimination/WCMS_340481/lang--en/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_481575/lang--ja/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_481575/lang--ja/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_701767/lang--en/index.htm;

https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS 700953/lang--en/index.htm.

³⁶ See https://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/paper-fostering-diversity-public-service.pdf; https://www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm. Also, a report on diversity statistics in the OECD: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/89bae654-en.pdf?expires=1570731104&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=CA48555563CE4DCAB74AB199FBAF29FD.

³⁷ See https://www.osce.org/hcnm/ljubljana-guidelines.