

# Competences of public administration employees in the face of the challenges of the Green Deal

Kompetencje pracowników administracji publicznej wobec wyzwań Zielonego Ładu

**Słowa kluczowe:** kompetencje, administracja publiczna, Zielony ład.

**Streszczenie:** Wyzwania związane ze zmianami klimatycznymi, degradacją środowiska i zrównoważonym rozwojem stają się coraz bardziej palące. W odpowiedzi na te problemy Unia Europejska wprowadziła ambitną strategię znaną jako Zielony Ład. Celem tej strategii jest przekształcenie gospodarki europejskiej w bardziej zrównoważoną i przyjazną dla środowiska. W ramach Zielonego Ładu spośród wszystkich grup zaangażowanych w przekształcanie kontynentu pracownicy administracji publicznej odgrywają kluczową rolę w realizacji i wdrażaniu polityk związanych ze zrównoważonym rozwojem. W artykule omówiono pokrótce kompetencje, jakie powinni posiadać pracownicy administracji publicznej w kontekście wyzwań Zielonego Ładu, skupiając się na wynikach prac nad ogólnoeuropejskim podręcznikiem kompetencji opracowanym w ramach projektu Capable – Budowanie potencjału administracji publicznej w obszarze renowacji budynków użyteczności publicznej.

**Key words:** competences, public administration, Green Deal.

**Abstract:** The challenges of the climate change, environmental degradation and sustainability are becoming ever more pressing. In response to those issues, the European Union has launched an ambitious strategy known as the Green Deal. The aim of this strategy is to transform the European economy into a more sustainable and environmentally friendly one. Within the Green Deal, public administration employees play a key role in the implementation and enforcement of policies related to sustainable development. This article briefly discusses the competences that public administration employees should have in the context of the Green Deal challenges, focusing on the results of the work on a pan-European Competence Manual developed by the Capable project – Capacity building for public administration in the area of public building renovation.

## Foreword

The challenges of climate change, environmental degradation and sustainability are becoming increasingly pressing. In response to these issues, the European Union has launched an ambitious strategy known as the Green Deal. The aim of this strategy is to transform the European economy into a more sustainable and environmentally friendly one. Within the Green Deal, of all the groups involved in

transforming the continent, public administrators play a key role in implementing and enforcing sustainable development policies.

Article 5(1) of the Energy Efficiency Directive requires Member States to renovate annually at least 3% of the total floor area of the buildings they own and occupy that do not meet minimum energy performance requirements. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that Member States meet at least the minimum energy performance requirements set out in Article 4 of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive<sup>1</sup>. The package of EU regulations adopted in 2018 also includes Directive (EU) 2018/844 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings and Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency:

1. Each Member State shall establish a long-term renovation strategy to support the renovation of the national stock of residential and non-residential buildings, both public and private, in order to ensure high energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the building stock by 2050, enabling the cost-effective transformation of existing buildings to near-zero energy consumption;
2. In their long-term renovation strategies, each Member State shall establish a plan with actions and nationally defined measurable progress indicators in order to achieve the long-term objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Union by 80–95% compared to 1990 levels by 2050, ensuring high energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the national building stock and enabling the cost-effective transformation of existing buildings into nearly zero-energy buildings. The Action Plan shall include indicative milestones for 2030, 2040 and 2050 and specify how they will contribute to the achievement of the Union's energy efficiency targets as set out in Directive 2012/27/EU.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the above, and the commitment to reduce energy consumption in the public finance sector by 10%, the role of public administration staff becomes particularly important and sets an example for the rest of society<sup>3</sup>.

The handbook defines the scope of the content of the transnational competences, which aims, *inter alia*, to provide public authorities with examples of identified challenges, lessons learned from good practices and a description of the key competences needed to effectively address the renovation of the public building stock. It raises awareness of policies and initiatives to improve energy efficiency and decarbonisation targets. It also aims to facilitate collaboration with all stakeholders in the renovation of public buildings.

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/?uri=celex:32010L0031>.

<sup>2</sup> Energy efficiency in years 2011–2021, GUS, Warszawa 2023.

<sup>3</sup> In the Masovian Voivodeship alone, for example, public administration buildings account for 13% of all buildings. („Badanie efektywności energetycznej budynków administracji publicznej (rządowej i samorządowej)”) Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2020.

In order to provide the best materials, the handbook was developed through desk research in all partner countries, consisting of a review of available literature and other sources in the field of local technical, legal and financial studies related to the renovation of public buildings.

Pan-European policies, relevant directives and regulations such as EPBD, EED, Energy Performance Certificates and their implementation in the partner countries were also analysed. An important element is the conclusions drawn from meetings and interviews with stakeholders in the field of building renovation. These interviews were conducted not only with representatives of public administrations, but also with contractors.

All these activities were aimed at identifying key skills for public administration staff in the building refurbishment process, but also at developing a path of understanding between the technical contractors.

Detailed material on these analyses is available as an annex to the handbook.

In this article we will discuss the issue of competences that public administration employees should have in the context of the challenges of the Green Deal, focusing on data collected during the work on the pan-European Competence Handbook produced as part of the Capable project – Building the capacity of public administration in the area of renovation of public buildings.

## **Main features of the Handbook**

The aim of the handbook is to create a useful tool for public authorities, containing a wide range of good practices identified in the countries of the CAPABLE project consortium, such as Italy, Greece, Poland and Slovenia, at different administrative levels, i.e. central, regional and local. The main thrust of the handbook is to focus on the key competences that need to be acquired in order to effectively address the challenges of renovating public buildings.

The material compiled reviews the current legal framework and discusses the activities undertaken and training available in the CAPABLE project countries. The report also draws important conclusions and recommendations that should be taken into account when developing training projects for staff responsible for managing the renovation of public buildings.

The examples presented in the handbook are intended to illustrate successful policies and practices that have been successfully implemented in the countries mentioned. The aim is to provide the reader with practical guidance that can be used in the planning and implementation of public building renovation activities.

This handbook has been developed taking into account available data and analysis. As a result, it is an important source of information for public administration staff and other parties involved in the renovation of the public building stock who wish to improve the quality of this renovation and increase the efficiency of activities in this area.

## Challenges and barriers to the implementation of strategies for the renovation of the public building stock

Strategies related to the renovation of public buildings have been identified on the basis of a review of studies and documentation available at the time of writing, analysis of studies, meetings of working groups with representatives from the construction industry, the education sector and the administration.

Urban regeneration strategies play a key role in ensuring long-term planning and Member States will only be able to achieve energy savings targets if these strategies are implemented at city and regional level.

Such EU strategies include the EPBD<sup>4</sup>, EED<sup>5</sup>, Energy Performance Passports, Energy Performance Certificates, Digital Building Logs, Smart Readiness Indicators and their application at national, regional and local level<sup>6</sup>.

In this context, representatives from the project partner countries identified several political, institutional and organisational barriers and challenges that significantly hinder the smooth implementation of planned renovations in line with these policies. At the same time, these challenges and barriers are a common denominator in all partner countries, apart from local and regional considerations related to different legislative pathways:

- Challenges related to the interpretation of existing legislation.
- Lack of administrative and political support.
- Inadequate tools and information, and lack of up-to-date and adaptable training on energy efficiency.
- Lack of administrative staff and the need for continuous training.
- Complexity and over-complication of procedures.
- Limited knowledge of sustainable building materials and regulations for their use.
- Limited knowledge of and access to financial instruments to support renovation.
- Limited project management and financial expertise.
- Poor coordination, dilution of responsibilities and inertia in decision making, leading to difficulties in decision making in public institutions.
- The lack of a balanced relationship between the contractor and the public authority, and the misunderstandings that result.
- Lack of a common and shared good practice base, tools and networks to facilitate the refurbishment challenge.

<sup>4</sup> Directive on the energy performance of buildings.

<sup>5</sup> Energy Efficiency Directive.

<sup>6</sup> The digital construction log is a common repository of relevant building data. Facilitates transparency, trust, informed decision-making and information exchange in the construction sector, between building owners and users, financial institutions and public authorities – <https://www.constructionproducts.eu/publications/digital-building-logbook/>.

As a result of the barriers identified, there is an increasing need for capacity building of public authorities to share lessons and experiences from good practice and to address key skills needs related to the renovation of public buildings. It is also important for public authorities to lead by example through early implementation of energy efficiency improvements. A capacity building programme for public administration staff involved in building renovation should cover institutional, legal and technical areas.

### Competence of public sector staff

In the context of changes in civilisation, awareness and education, it is essential that the public sector is prepared for the anticipated changes in the construction industry, which will have a direct impact on the achievement of the refurbishment targets set by the Green Deal challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals.

As predicted by the authors of the report 'Industry Human Capital Balance – Construction Industry. Summary report of the first edition of the research carried out in 2020–2021<sup>7</sup>, the use of IT systems, the digitisation of documentation, the need to develop skills related to the state of the law, data analysis and, consequently, how to recruit new employees and train existing ones will become commonplace in the next five years. The identified barriers also point to the necessary direction of competence development of public administration employees involved in the renovation.

The research identified skills that should be emphasised in possible competence development training for public administration employees in the following areas:

- Understanding of the institutional, legal and policy framework for the renovation of public buildings, both at national and EU level.
- Knowledge of energy efficiency standards and circular economy principles.
- Ability to carry out green public procurement procedures, including initial assessment, assessment of technical documentation (energy audit) and renovation specifications.
- Knowledge of thermal insulation materials and energy labelling.
- Understanding of energy systems using renewable energy equipment.
- Knowledge of new innovative technologies such as photovoltaic (PV) panels or heat pumps, digitalisation processes (e.g. BIM)<sup>8</sup>, construction software or the use of LIDAR<sup>9</sup> technologies.
- Knowledge of conservation work and the principles of structural modernisation of monuments and historic buildings.

<sup>7</sup> Górecki J., Kuźma K., Socha Z., Terlikowski W., Wróblewski J. (2021), *Branżowy Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego – branża budowlana*. Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa.

<sup>8</sup> *Building Information Modeling*.

<sup>9</sup> A method of measuring distances by illuminating them with laser light. It can be used, for example, to create 3D models of cities.

- Introduction to the D.N.S.H<sup>10</sup> principle and C.A.M<sup>11</sup>. requirements.
- Ability to manage project, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and budget issues.
- Understanding of funding opportunities, including EU sources, specific tenders for regional and national funds, and systems for attracting private sector investment.

The introduction of appropriate training in the above areas will enable public administration employees to acquire the necessary skills and, which will contribute to more effective knowledge renovation of public buildings and the implementation of mandatory energy efficiency goals.

## Conclusions

In developing this handbook, particular attention has been paid to the importance of developing soft skills such as interpersonal communication, teamwork, conflict resolution and analytical skills. It is worth noting that in order to adequately meet the needs of people with different profiles and roles, it may be necessary to provide individual and tailor-made training at different levels of education and practice.

It is strongly recommended to include a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge. To this end, case studies, descriptions of real professional situations and presentation of best practices should be included. Such a holistic and interdisciplinary mode will allow for a comprehensive transfer of information and enable the practical application of the acquired knowledge in different contexts.

Decarbonising public buildings and improving their energy efficiency are ambitious goals that face many challenges. The research carried out by the project partners has revealed the existence of diverse and numerous barriers that need to be overcome in order to achieve these goals, in line with the assumptions of the Renovation Wave.

Interviews with representatives of stakeholder groups involved in the renovation of public buildings paint a picture that confirms the need for significant changes to complex procedures and policy incentives. There is also a need for a significant change in environmental awareness and approach to building maintenance and management, as the lack of information and detailed knowledge about energy efficiency and the 2030 targets places a significant burden on public administration and its resources.

With regard to public authorities, significant differences were found in the level of knowledge between central and regional authority staff, as well as its superficiality. In addition, there is a shortage of suitably qualified civil servants and an ageing workforce at all levels of government in all partner countries.

Public administration staff should have a thorough understanding of the Green Deal strategy, its objectives, actions and timetable. They should be aware of the

<sup>10</sup> Do not significant harm.

<sup>11</sup> Minimum Environmental Criteria.

key issues related to sustainable development, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

They should have knowledge of project planning and management fundamentals to effectively coordinate Green Deal initiatives. They should be able to independently develop implementation strategies, set targets, monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of sustainable development measures.

As such, they will also need to work effectively both internally and with external stakeholders. In the context of the Green Deal, it is important to build partnerships with businesses, NGOs, local communities and other institutions to achieve the desired sustainable development goals. The emerging new economic model, based on sustainable development and climate change objectives, requires public administrations to continually develop their knowledge of about the economics of sustainable development and the benefits of such an approach.

They need to understand the economic mechanisms, such as fiscal instruments, subsidies or carbon markets, that can be used to promote activities related to the Green Deal.

This includes the ability to monitor progress towards targets and systematic reporting. This requires the ability to analyse data, manage information and produce clear reports for interested parties.

Public administrators therefore have a key role to play in achieving the objectives of the Green Deal at a pan-European level. Their skills should include in-depth knowledge of the strategy's policies and objectives, project planning and management skills, collaboration and communication skills, an understanding of the economics of sustainable development, and the ability to monitor and report on progress. Only with the appropriate skills will public administrators be able to make an effective contribution to the transition to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly Europe and to raise awareness of the need to strive for the goals of sustainable development.

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