

Equality

Service principle

Responsibility

Trust

Neutrality

Quality and expertise

Independence

Transparency

Effectiveness

VALUES IN THE DAILY JOB – CIVIL SERVANT'S ETHICS

A handbook for the state administration

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TO THE READER

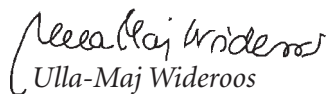
In its decision in principle ‘On state personnel policy line’ of 2001, the Government set the state as an employer the goal that state administration must be value-led and of high ethical standard. The Values to be part of the Daily Job Project completed by the State Employer’s Office was the first phase in implementation of the goals concerning values and ethics outlined in the decision in principle.

The purpose of the present booklet is to serve as a practical guide to exemplary employer function, assist in supervisory duties, and inform state personnel of basic issues attaching to the status of civil servants. In order to maintain our high ethical standards of state administration, the values must be visible as decisions and deeds in everyday work, and thus become consolidated as good operational practices of state administration. Value-led operation also serves to prevent corruption.

The values defined in the decision in principle help to reinforce a unified operational culture within the various state agencies. State administration forms a community with shared ethical principles, both in serving citizens and in functioning as working communities. Operation based on shared values is a fundamental factor in building a culture, and it is implemented through the work of every operational unit. This also entails making the unit’s own values, in line with the shared value base, a part of everyday work.

This publication is intended for use by management, supervisors and personnel in state administration, and as reference material in familiarisation and personnel training.

The publication was prepared by the State Employer's Office under the direction of Ms Kirsi Äijälä, Senior Advisor, Legal Affairs. Members of the Values to be part of the Daily Job Project also contributed to the draft text.



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PART 1 VALUES



INTRODUCTION

Operation of state administration is based on high ethical standards and values.

The values of state administration are built on the value base of a democratic constitutional state and a Nordic welfare society within a globalising environment. The Government has endorsed the values of personnel policy by its decision in principle 'On state personnel policy line' issued on 30 August 2001 (Decision in Principle 2001). One of the objectives of the state personnel policy is consolidation and utilisation of the Government's shared value base and uniform operational culture. Consolidation of the value base and high ethical standards of state administration means that the whole personnel must adopt it as a part of their everyday activities. Identification of the values and understanding their content are prerequisites of good administrative practice and official function.

Uniformity of the values of a Ministry and its administration is the starting point for internalisation of the values in the work of operational units. The values of an operational unit cannot conflict with the shared value base of state administration.

The following will illustrate the content of shared values in state administration. A shared value base also refers to fulfilling the societal function of state administration. Each operational unit has its own basic societal function, which might also be called a value. In this publication, values are mainly described as desirable practices, outwardly visible in implementation of the service function and as signs of a well-functioning workplace community within the operational unit.

The descriptions of the values are not exhaustive, but their purpose is to communicate the core meaning of each value as comprehensively as possible. Some values may also have meanings partially in common. Repetition due to overlapping was deliberately left in the text. In discussions within state administration operational units, the values may be further conceptually elucidated, to enable them to provide the best possible guidance towards good and highly ethical operational models.

Under various international agreements, Finland is committed to fight against corruption in all its public services and functions and also in all its dealings with private sector organisations that are important in this respect. In international comparisons, Finland has been deemed to be a country with very little corruption. One of the aims of this booklet is to ensure that the situation remains as good in the future.

The concepts appearing in the publication may be briefly defined as follows:

A value is an issue or goal regarded as important.

Ethics are principles governing evaluation of goodness of issues and rightness of actions.

Morality is an individual's commitment to certain values and principles.

Civil service ethics refer to the values and principles of state officials and authorities.

VALUE BASE OF STATE ADMINISTRATION

The values that form the shared foundation of state administration are

- effectiveness
- transparency
- quality and expertise
- trust
- service principle
- impartiality and independence
- equality
- responsibility

EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness means efficient and economical activity. The functions of state administration are carried out in an efficient manner. It is the duty of everyone in public service to ensure that their activity is productive and that resources are used, maintained and developed efficiently.

Civil service management bears particular responsibility for this. Activity and standards of service must be competitive both within state administration and in comparison with other organisations. When evaluating effectiveness, impact on society is taken into particular consideration.

In a workplace community, effectiveness is emphasised in the official's duty to perform his or her work assignments appropriately and without delay, and to follow orders regarding supervision and surveillance. Superiors ensure that everyone knows what is expected of him or her at work. The most senior civil servants have a specific responsibility for reaching their units' performance targets.

TRANSPARENCY

The principle of public knowledge means that our activities are open in relation to citizens. We serve the citizens' needs for knowledge and information. Transparency provides citizens with an opportunity to control our activities.

The principal rule is that documents in possession of the authority are public. Exceptionally, documents may be secret, if they have been decreed to be kept confidential for particular reasons by law. In order to ensure that transparency is implemented, it is the duty of the authority to ensure appropriate availability and accessibility of documents and information systems and associated data.

A state authority takes care to proactively and adequately disseminate information on matters under processing and decisions it has made. Transparency dissipates prejudices. Through proactive dissemination of information, citizens are provided with intelligible information about official activities.

Communication by state administration plays a part in creating the conditions for a functional democracy, as well as for fulfilment of citizens' rights and operation of businesses. In state administration, too, communication is a tool of leadership and productive action. The central functions of communication in state administration are provision of information and advice, and creation of preconditions for participation in societal debate and decision-making.

In a workplace community, transparency is a part of good work culture. The starting point is ensuring effective communication and dissemination of information. Open and constructive discussion of work-related issues and problems that have arisen promotes solutions. Innovations are created when divergent opinions are permitted. However, once decisions are made, everyone is expected to commit to them. Giving and receiving feedback is a part of transparency.

QUALITY AND EXPERTISE

State administration operational units and the services they provide are of high quality and the personnel is professionally competent. Services are usually targeted directly at citizens, as is the case e.g. with tax offices, the police and employment services. Quality of activity in other contexts may mean e.g. careful legislative drafting or drafting of a decision. The language used in documentation and decisions should be clear and intelligible.

It includes using the necessary documentary material in drafting, and adherence to the principles relating to hearing other authorities and citizens. Decisions are justified by referring to legislation or other regulations.

High standard of work or service requires solid expertise from personnel and an ability to lead from management. To this end, at the time of selection of state administration personnel and during the course of the employment, training and professional competence to improve task fulfilment are stressed, as well as increasingly co-operative and interpersonal skills. In the civil service selection process, the grounds for appointment are *skill, ability and proven civic merit*, as stipulated in the Constitution. In the selection of both civil servants and employed personnel, the aim is to find the best and most able person for each position.

TRUST

In our own work, we safeguard the trustworthiness of public service, so that citizens' trust in the impartiality and independence of public service activities is preserved. We discharge our duties in compliance with legislation and principles of good administrative practice. Our operation must also be seen to fulfil the requirements of good administrative practice in the eyes of an external evaluator.

In the various operational units of state administration, trust is a contributing factor of a good working atmosphere, which together with open interaction creates the conditions for high standards of operation.

Trust in state administrative activities is ensured by the following general conduct guidelines:

- A civil servant does not accept a financial or other benefit, if it might weaken trust in the civil servant or the authority. Trust may be put at risk, even if the financial or other benefit does not actually affect the official function, if it may in outsiders' eyes look as if it might influence it. The monetary value of the prohibited benefit has not been defined. In individual cases, the issue is resolved taking into consideration the official's position in the organisation, his or her duties, the kind of benefit in question, whether it is repeated, and other circumstances surrounding the act.
- Any secondary occupation engaged in by a civil servant requires either permission from or disclosure to the relevant authority. An official may engage in a secondary occupation only if it does not jeopardise trust in his impartiality in discharging his or her official function.

The most senior management in state administration is under more stringent obligation in terms of trust than others. A civil servant in this group may be dismissed on slighter grounds than other officials, if trust in his or her activities has been lost. Trust is further safeguarded by the duty of highest civil servants to declare their financial and other commitments both before appointment to a post and during his or her term in office.¹

¹ Among senior civil servants are: departmental heads of ministries, equivalent and higher officials, the Chancellor of Justice, the Deputy Chancellor of Justice, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Prosecutor-General, and heads of other offices controlled by ministries and subject to separate decree.

SERVICE PRINCIPLE

The state operational units serve citizens, enterprises and communities. In addition, they co-operate with various networks and provide services for other authorities. Our prime duty is to serve society by discharging public duties. In this capacity, we operate for the public good, and do not pursue our own individual benefit.

State administration is funded by taxes paid by citizens, which affords the service principle a concrete content. The aims are high standards, effectiveness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of services. State offices gather client feedback ever more frequently, and regularly evaluate or commission evaluations of the quality of their services.

The civil servant ensures availability of appropriate guidance in use of public services and in matters being processed by authorities. The service principle embodies the requirement of appropriate conduct.

In the workplace community, good manners and conduct are part of a good workplace atmosphere, as well as showing respect for others.

IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

In accordance with the principle of **impartiality**, initiation of an administrative action and decisions given in an administrative matter must always be objectively and accurately justifiable in terms of factual content. This means that our decisions must be grounded in facts and the facts are impartially assessed. During the process of resolution of the matter, we must provide the various parties an opportunity of expressing their own views.

Independence refers particularly to the principle of conformity to law in state administration. In our duties, we comply with laws, regulations and other norms. We prepare and decide cases without preferential emphasis on the benefit of some individual person, business or community at the expense of the common good. The importance of independence is particularly emphasised in the duties of e.g. the judge and the prosecutor.

In our official function, we treat all citizens as equals. When a matter under consideration involves an issue that may cause impartiality to be jeopardised, the official is disqualified and cannot deal with the matter.

The employer treats all civil servants equally and does not discriminate against anyone in making official appointments or during the term in office. Prohibition of discrimination means that the authority must not unjustifiably place anyone in a different position from others for reasons of his or her origin, nationality, religion, gender, age or political or trade union activity, or any other comparable reason. If it is necessary to deviate from the rule, a justifiable reason must exist.

Within the workplace community, our conduct must be commensurate with our position and duties. We do not accept financial or other benefits that jeopardise independence. The principle of continuous employment ensures implementation of independence in practice. It means that the period of employment is deemed to continue without a break, if dismissal of an official or termination of the employment has taken place without legal justification.

EQUALITY

We treat all citizens equally. No-one is placed in a different position from others without justifiable reason. The requirement of equality in Finland also refers to equality of domestic languages, so that everyone is entitled to receive services in his or her mother tongue. The principle of equality reflects the duty of authorities in relation to citizens, and demands that all citizens are treated equally. In making decisions, similar cases must lead to similar decisions.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men contains provisions for implementation of equality between the sexes. The purpose of the Act is to prevent discrimination on grounds of gender and to improve the status of women particularly in the area of employment. The public authority has a general duty to promote equality between the sexes.

- In setting up state administration agencies, committees, advisory boards etc., members of both sexes must account for at least 40%.
- In personnel selection, the main rule is that no-one may be given preference on grounds of gender, but qualifications, competence and suitability for the post must be the deciding factors.

RESPONSIBILITY

Citizen's trust in the activities of the authorities and civil servants is related to the responsibility of an official for the legality of his or her actions. This responsibility means that the official assumes liability for the legality of his or her official actions.

He or she is also liable for any decision made by an organ or institution with a number of members, if he or she has supported the decision. The presenting official is liable for the decision made on his or her presentation, unless he or she has lodged his or her dissenting judgement of the decision.

In practice, an ever more important form of responsibility is accountability. It is indicated in the management relationship between the ministry and the department or agency it controls, and in setting targets and monitoring results within the agency. An essential part of a system of management by results is monitoring and evaluation of the results. Every official is responsible for reaching his or her performance targets.

Within a workplace community, responsibility is also implemented by boldly tackling problems before they become magnified.

VALUES AS OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

The conclusions and proposals of the Values to be part of the Daily Job Project

The conclusion of the Values to be part of the Daily Job² working group in a nutshell is that incorporating value-steered activity and management into everyday work calls for a conscious investment in promoting the matter in numerous sub-areas of personnel policy. Each unit must itself go through its own process and thereby gain a common understanding of the practical significance of the values in their work. The unit's values steer its activity and take precedence over the individual's values in conflicting situations at work. Once the values steer the activity and have been internalised, the activity also meets a high ethical standard. Implementation of values also requires individuals to know what their role in the work organisation is and how they can implement the values in their own work.

The results of the project comprise presentation of the benefits of the value debate and of tools suitable for managing the value process with, the working group's conclusions and proposals and the good practices of the departments participating in the project for putting the values into practice.

The unit's measures and responsibilities

The working group's conclusions and proposals are divided into three parts:

1. Values as a tool of management
2. Values as an official's moral code
3. Monitoring implementation of values

1. Values as a tool of management

Implementing the values in the activity means that they are used as a tool of management. This calls for directors and foremen to commit themselves solidly to activity according to the values. The working group has gathered its proposals and conclusions into a list of measures. It presents the matters

² Ministry of Finance, September 11, 2002–December 31, 2003

that are the minimum required for incorporating the values into practical activity, to steer the activity.

- Definition of values means a value debate that gives the entire personnel an opportunity to participate and be heard. It also means designating the unit's values and assigning them a uniform significance in the unit's work.
- Values are incorporated into management by results. Values are involved in the control of the administrative sector comprehensively. The values of the ministry and the subordinate department are incorporated into the annual result discussions between them.
- Values and ethics are part of the development of management and personnel. The significance of the common value basis of the state administration as well as exercises and discussions relating to ethical procedures are core areas.
- Work atmosphere surveys are put to use. Working atmosphere surveys provide information on management and the well-being of personnel at the time they are conducted. Questions relating to the implementation of values help in long-term monitoring.
- Values are included in result and development discussions. Personal annual result and development discussions contain a section in which the official/employee and foreman both assess each other's activity according to the values.
- Directors are assessed. The directors' example furthers implementation of values. In the assessment of directors, values can be linked to overall assessment.
- The new remuneration system reacts. The department's values are also taken into account when building up the departments' new remuneration systems. Applying the systems in practice helps foster activity according to the values in the departments.
- Values are involved in the choice of personnel. The state administration's common and the unit's own value basis are one subject in the structured interview held in connection with recruitment.
- Ethical problems are resolved. Discussion about ethical issues that arise is open. The electronic discussion board, the group assisting management and also public relations are means of resolving ethical problems.
- Activity contrary to values is interfered with. The significance of values is manifested in actions. Strengthening of values calls for conduct ac-

ording to them to be fostered. Credibility requires activity contrary to values to be interfered with as part of normal management and foremen's work.

2. Values as an official's moral code

- Crystallising the unit's values and their practical significance into a moral code fosters internalisation of values. One example of a moral code is a map of rules with a brief description of the content of the value and also a list of practical procedures describing the visibility of each value in practice.

3. Monitoring implementation of the values

- Implementation of values is monitored in everyday work and individuals can provide their colleagues with feedback. The section on implementation of values in practice to be attached to the annual report strengthens monitoring. Various barometers as well as self-assessment of the quality system also act as monitoring tools.

Central (State Employer's Office) measures and responsibilities

1. The State Employer's Office's personnel policy barometer will include a question about monitoring of implementation of the values: Should implementation of the values be measured in a) foremen's work and management, b) in the work of all officials?
2. The working group's final report together with pilot annexes and a booklet containing the state administration's values and ethical principles, published at the same time, will be distributed to departments. The results of the project will be presented at suitable forums in collaboration with the pilots.
3. The State Employer's Office will assess the effectiveness of the project as regards both the pilots and more broadly:

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PART 2 CIVIL SERVICE ETHICS



RIGHTS AND DUTIES ATTACHED TO THE STATUS OF CIVIL SERVANTS

Job profiles of State jobs, work communities and the terms and conditions employment relationships must be made attractive. In jobs of permanent nature, permanent contracts should be used.
(Decision in Principle 2001)

Implementing the values in the activity means that they are used as a management tool. When values steer activity and have been internalised, the activity also meets a high ethical standard. Implementation of values also requires individuals to be aware of what their role in the work organisation is and how they can implement values in their own work.

Those civil servants who answered in the questionnaire survey in 1998 (Civil Service Ethics, Ministry of Finance 8/2000) felt that definitely the most important individual measure having an effect on civil service ethics is ***the example of the management***. With its own conduct, the management provides the standards which in time will penetrate the entire organisation. The other measures were displaying values, information, training and code of conducts.

The following summary of the rights and duties attached to the status of civil servants is mainly based on the provisions of the State Civil Servants Act. Issues related to the authority as an employer are under duties of managers and supervisors right at the beginning. They are followed by duties of all civil servants that also apply to managers and supervisors.

The policies are general for all state agencies and organs, and are in the main directly applicable to both civil servants and employees.

Manager and supervisor...

- **treats all personnel equally.** He or she does not unjustifiably place anyone in a different position from others for reasons of his or her origin,

nationality, religion, gender, age or political or trade union activity, or any other comparable reason.

- The principle of equal treatment is evident in all activities of the workplace community: as fair division of work, respect and caring for the individual, application of shared game rules to everyone, provision of feedback, and intervention in problems.
- **allows everyone the freedom to join or not join a union or to leave it.**
 - The constitutional right of citizens to unionise is also applied in state administration workplaces.
 - If membership of a union may cause disqualification in official duties, the matter is discussed and the necessary decisions made.
- **ensures that everyone receives the benefits and rights resulting from the position in such a form as he or she is rightfully entitled to them.**
 - Remuneration is determined by a) how demanding the duties are, according to fair evaluation and b) on the basis of personal performance, of the evaluation of which everyone has the right to receive an explanation.
 - Other benefits and rights are granted to everyone in such ways as the law prescribes, or set out in collective bargaining contracts on civil servant salaries or other contracts.
 - Everyone has the right to bring a question or query on this issue to the attention of the employer, and to receive a justified explanation or decision in the matter.
- **ensures that occupational health and safety issues are adequately covered.**
 - Occupational safety particularly means that the work environment is safe and tools and equipment suitable for their purpose.
 - Labour protection also means immediate intervention in cases of bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour.

The Ministry and the individual operational unit, as authorities, are responsible for ensuring that the values outlined in Part 1 form a salient part of the direction and practical work of the administrative sector. The aim is functioning of an ethically high standard which excludes corruption.

Any suspected corruption within operational units must be reported to the authority.

Civil servant...

- **carries out his or her duties competently and without delay.**
 - A civil servant's job description is defined on the basis of the functions of the agency or office, and may change with time, along with its functions.
 - Superiors are responsible for agreeing on personal targets and duties in annual productivity and career development reviews.
 - Feedback from the superior promotes appropriate discharge of duties.
 - Everyone is responsible for requesting information from superiors, if the job description of expectations attached to performance are unclear.

- **complies with supervision and regulatory requirements.**
 - A superior is responsible for management and supervision of work through allocating tasks and monitoring their progress.
 - Regulatory requirements consist of rules on working hours, annual holidays and official journeys that are common to all, and other separately defined game rules.
 - The basic assumption is that everyone follows the same rules, unless otherwise agreed with an individual person.

- **conducts himself or herself in a manner commensurate with his or her position and duties.**
 - Good conduct and manners raise the quality of public services and is characteristic to them.
 - Every civil servant represents his or her own agency or office and at the same time the whole government in the eyes of citizens.
 - In the workplace community, good manners contribute to a good atmosphere.
 - Different tasks set different demands, with which the personnel in each office is familiarised.

- The position of a civil servant may place specific demands on behaviour also in leisure time.

- **does not demand, accept or receive financial or other benefit, if it might weaken trust in the civil servant or the authority he or she represents.**
 - A civil servant serves the common good of the government and refrains from pursuing his or her own individual good at the expense of common good.
 - A benefit jeopardising trust in official functions may manifest in a way that the benefit may cause an outsider to cast doubt on the impartiality of the action.
 - Every government operational unit should discuss ways of preventing jeopardisation of trust and procedures in unclear situations.

- **is not active in a civil personnel organisation or union in such a position that the activity is in conflict with official duties, if the duties include representing the government as employer (civil servant employer).**
 - Civil servants representing the employer have been laid down in a decree.

- **notifies the employer a) if he or she wishes to engage in a secondary occupation in his or her free time; b) seeks the employer's permission for the secondary occupation, if it would require using working time.**
 - A secondary occupation is a remunerated job or position unrelated to the official duties that the civil servant has the right to refuse.
 - A secondary occupation may also be practising a profession or trade or running a business.
 - A secondary occupation must not cause disqualification in customary official duties and it must not adversely affect discharge of official duties.

- **on request, provides the employer with information regarding health issues associated with the discharge of his or her duties.**
 - The aim is that personnel in state administration workplaces is fit for work and that fitness for work is maintained.
 - It is the superior's responsibility to ensure that problem situations related to fitness for work are addressed and that assessment of fitness for work is initiated as quickly as possible.

- In situations related to alcohol misuse, an offer of treatment without delay is to everyone's advantage.
- **at the employer's request, consents to checks and examinations for assessment of his or her state of health, when it is necessary in order to ascertain fitness for discharging his or her duties.**
 - Assessment of fitness for work is facilitated by its initiation at an early stage and by the civil servant, his superior and the occupational healthcare doctor together discussing the matter.
 - Assessment of fitness for work, as demanded by the situation, shows that the employer cares for its personnel.
 - Assessment is also beneficial for the civil servant himself or herself.
 - The assessment costs are borne by the employer.
- **does not disclose the content of a document subject to secrecy or any matter subject to confidentiality as stipulated by law that has come into his or her knowledge during his or her employment with the authority.**
 - The duty of confidentiality continues even after the individual has left the employment with the authority.
 - If the individual moves from state administration to private employment, he or she is bound by the duty of confidentiality which also ensures impartiality.

WHAT IF ALL IS NOT WELL...

- Discussion is the key to resolution of unclear situations and problems and clearing up misunderstandings.
- Transparency is implemented when every member of the workplace community is able to participate in discussion concerning himself or herself, regardless of his or her position.
- A good superior listens and gathers information on the facts before making a decision.
- A good superior provides justification for the decisions he or she makes.

Informal warning

- In case of problems in discharging official duties that cannot be resolved through discussion, a superior may give the individual a verbal or written informal warning.
- The purpose of the warning is to show the reprehensibility of the action or neglect and to inform the individual of behaviour required by the employer after the warning.

Written warning

- It may be given, if the civil servant breaches or neglects his official duties.
- It is more serious than an informal warning but less serious than dismissal.
- Reasons may be e.g. neglecting to comply with set working hours or inappropriate conduct.
- A written warning gives the official an opportunity of improving his or her conduct.
- If the reprehensible activity continues, a written warning is recommended before dismissal.
- The employee may appeal against the decision.

Dismissal for reasons deriving from the civil servant

- Dismissal for reasons deriving from the civil servant demands a particularly serious reason.
- The position and duties of each civil servant are taken into consideration when assessing grounds for dismissal.
- The period of notice of dismissal is determined by the collective bargaining contract on civil servant salaries.
- The employee may appeal against the decision.

Termination of civil service relationship

- Immediate cancellation of a civil-service relationship may be considered, if a civil servant seriously breaches or neglects his official duties.
- Termination is effected without prior notice.

- Appeals to the grounds of termination must be lodged within two weeks from the date on which the employer is notified of the grounds.

The State Civil Servants Act aims to ensure that state administrative duties are discharged productively, competently and in compliance with legal protection requirements, as well as to safeguard the civil servant's rightful position in relation to his or her employer. The prerequisites of implementation of these aims are that state operational units are functional as workplace communities, and that management is professional and exemplary. The operation of state administration workplace communities is founded on appreciation of shared values and on their application in practical work and in the conduct of every individual. Open discussion and early intervention in problem situations create the best conditions for productive operation that values all members of the workplace community and treats them as equals. Good operation also leads to state administration units becoming ever more competitive employers.

SOURCES AND LINKS

* State Civil Servants Act (750/94)

* Values to be part of the Daily Job – The experiences of pilot organisations and conclusions of the working group
Ministry of Finance, 2005

* Civil Service Ethics

A study of the grounds of civil service ethics, its present state and areas of development

Ministry of Finance Working Papers 8/2000

<http://www.vm.fi/vm/liston/page.lsp?r=89879&l=en&menu=3433>

* On state personnel policy line

Government decision in principle 30.8.2001

<http://www.vm.fi/vm/liston/page.lsp?r=3642&l=en&menu=3433>

This booklet outlines the shared values of state administration, as well as the fundamental principles of the position of civil servants and management from the perspective of maintaining ethically high standards in all their activities. The shared values were defined in the Government decision in principle On state personnel policy line issued in 2001.

This publication is intended particularly to help state agencies and operational units in converting the values and ethical principles of the civil service into pragmatic operational models and practices. It is recommended for distribution to superiors and personnel, and for use as material in familiarisation and training.



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