

# SALARY SYSTEM OF THE POLICE OFFICERS IN MONTENEGRO

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**Abstract:** The objective of the paper is to analyse the pay and benefit system of the police officers in Montenegro. The paper assesses the salary system against the standards laid out in the SIGMA/OECD Principles of Public Administration (2014) – legal regulation, fairness, transparency and competitiveness. The author concludes that in spite of relatively well-defined legal framework, the fairness of the salary system is not ensured, due to an absence of job evaluation methodology, which would provide criteria on how to classify an individual job to a certain rank. The salary levels of the police officers are quite competitive to the levels in the civil service and also comparable to those in the general labour market. However, in the absence of a more detailed review of the data on salary levels in the private sector, it is difficult to properly assess the external competitiveness of the system, which should be the subject of additional research.

**Keywords:** salary system, remuneration, police officers, Montenegro

## INTRODUCTION

The systems of salaries and remuneration of civil servants have always attracted the attention of both practitioners and legal theorists. Hegel argued that civil servants should be adequately paid for their work, in order to create a professional and competent administration, which will be able to effectively perform public affairs above political interests (Hegel & Knox 1957: 294). Bentham, on the other hand, in accordance with the utilitarian philosophy of the state and law, cared more about the costs of public administration, emphasized the importance of honorary work and considered ways to minimize the costs set aside for salaries in public administration (Bentham, 1962). Discussions about the salary systems continue to this day through these views of the two great philosophers.

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One of the key arguments for the existence of an appropriate system of salaries for civil servants is that low salaries pose a high risk of developing corruption. Thus, for example, an analysis of individual salary levels conducted in Ukraine in 2006 showed that civil servants, through corrupt practices and bribery, on average only compensated for the difference between the earnings they could earn in the private sector and the salary levels they received in the public sector (Gorodnichenko & Sabirianova Peter, 2006). This shows the importance of the competitiveness of the public sector employees' salaries with the employees in the private sector.

The contemporary literature, however, increasingly emphasizes that the risk of corruption is not only in the average level but also in the absence of consistency and fairness of the salary system. Thus, for example, a survey conducted in 2011 in the state administration of China, in which the dramatic increase in corruption occurred simultaneously with a large increase in the salaries of civil servants, showed that the increase in the total level of salaries is no guarantee for reducing corruption (Gong & Wu, 2012). In the similar vein, the research conducted in Ghana in 2015, showed that doubling of the police officers' salaries, instead of decreasing petty corruption, significantly raised the police efforts to collect bribes and increased the bribes value (Foltz & Opoku-Agyemang, 2015).

Despite the importance of the topic, there is a scarcity of the academic research regarding police officers' salaries in general. A valuable contribution to the broader topic of salaries in the public sector was given by a comparative study conducted in 2012 in Europe and North America, led by Brans and Peters (2012). This research is a "continuation" of an earlier study on the salaries of officials, which was conducted in 1994 (Hood & Peters, 1994). Both studies, however, focus on the salaries of high-ranking public officials, but do not cover the police officers positions. Meyer-Sahling also dealt with the topic of civil servants' salaries, as part of two studies on the development of civil service systems in Central and Eastern Europe and Southeast Europe, which were conducted under the auspices of Sigma (Mayer - Sahling, 2019; 2012), but also did not focus on the police.

Salaries of the police officers in Montenegro have, up to now, not been subject of a special research. The topic of salaries of civil servants in the countries in the region was recently dealt with from the legal aspect by Zorica Vukašinić Radojičić (2013) and Rabrenović (2019), but neither of them paid separate attention to the police salary systems. The salary system of civil servants of Montenegro was analysed only within SIGMA/OECD monitoring reports, but again without special emphasis on the police (SIGMA/OECD, 2017a).

The aim of this paper is to shed a light on the salary system of the police officers of Montenegro, which would be assessed against the European principles set out in the SIGMA/OECD Principles of Public Administration (2014). For this reason, the analysis starts with the review of the principle 6 on public servants' salaries of the chapter on Human Resources Management and Public Service of the SIGMA/OECD principles, which serve as a benchmark for assessing the quality and fairness of the police officers' salary system. The central part of the paper examines the classification system of the police officers and the salary structure. Finally, the paper examines the competitiveness of the police officers' salaries with the civil service and the general labour market.

## SIGMA/OECD PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - PUBLIC SERVANTS SALARIES/REMUNERATION

Due to national specificities, the area of human resource management, which includes public servants' salaries, is normally excluded from the scope of international conventions or the EU *acquis commu-*



*nautaire*. It may, however, be argued that this area is governed by *soft acquis*, comprising shared standards of the EU member states and affecting indirectly the development of the national law (Keune, 2009). Though not legally binding, these standards have significant practical effects on the aspiring countries, given that the European Commission assesses their progress against such standards.

To provide a more detailed elaboration of the Commission's human resource management requirements, SIGMA<sup>2</sup> drew up a document entitled "Principles of Public Administration" (2014), which focuses on several public administration areas, one of them being the public service and human resource management. The basic standards in this area, which also includes the public servants' salaries (remuneration) are defined in a rather detailed manner in line with the good European practices in the human resource management area. SIGMA has also developed Methodological framework for the Principles of Public Administration (2017), which outlines the methodology for assessing the European standards and contains the indicators, which measure the development progress.

The basic SIGMA principle regarding public servants' remuneration is a requirement that all key salary system elements be established by the law. Legal regulation is important for ensuring the stability, impartiality and integrity of the work of public servants. SIGMA recommends that the legal regulation of the civil servants' salary system includes: a classification based on job classification, an overall list of civil servants' salary supplements and other benefits (e.g. family members' allowances, education, sickness benefits, maternity leave or injuries at work), the relationship between the basic salary and the variable part of the salary, etc. (SIGMA/OECD, 2014: 51).

The second key principle is the fairness of the salary system. It assumes that equal pay should be given for equal work. This means that the level of salary of a particular job should correspond to the level of responsibility, complexity and importance of the job in the public administration system. In order to implement this principle, each job should be subject to job evaluation (in SIGMA's terminology – *job classification*).

Finally, key principles that SIGMA promotes are the principles of transparency and competitiveness of the salary system. The transparency should be ensured by reducing the degree of discretion in determining the level of salary of a civil servant, as the existence of a large number of salary supplements provides a basis for excessive managers' discretionary (SIGMA/OECD, 2014: 51). The salary system should also be competitive with other parts of the public sector and also in relation to the private sector, so that the public service would be able to attract and retain staff with the appropriate knowledge, skills and motivation to do the job (SIGMA/OECD, 2014: 51).

## ASSESSMENT OF THE MONTENEGRIN POLICE OFFICERS' SALARY SYSTEM – LEGAL REGULATION AND FAIRNESS

The classification of the positions of the police officers in Montenegro is established by Article 88a of the Law on Internal Affairs (Official Gazette, Nos. 44/12, 36/13, 1/2015, 87/2019), which is in line with the SIGMA Principles. The Law includes detailed classification of posts, which comprises two

2 Having recognized the importance of well-regulated and organized state administration for compliance with membership requirements in all sector areas, in 1992 EU and OECD founded SIGMA - *Support for Improvement in Governance and Management*. This programme aims at supporting public administration reform activities of (potential) EU candidate countries. SIGMA, largely financed through EU PHARE, represents one of the main European Commission's instruments for promoting the development of public administration capacity in Central and Eastern Europe, and providing technical assistance to candidate countries.



separate, but closely related systems. The first system (level 1) applies to posts requiring police work experience/police education, while the second (level 2) applies to the ranks which do not require police education/experience.

The ranks of the police officers (which require police education/work experience) include four groups of jobs, which are mainly classified in accordance with the educational requirements (see table 1). The first two groups of jobs/ranks require university education and from 1 to 10 years of work experience in the police. The third group of jobs requires college education, which includes graduates of the Police Academy, who obtain college education after their graduate from the Academy. Finally, the fourth group of jobs requires high school education and from 1 to 5 years of police-related experience.

Table 1. Ranks of the police officers which require work experience in the police - minimum education and years in service requirements (level 1)

| Group of jobs | Rank                            | Education and years in service requirements                 |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---|
| I             | Chief police inspector          | University degree and 10 years of police work experience    |
| I             | Higher police inspector I class | University degree and 8 years of police work experience     |
| I             | Higher police inspector         | University degree and 6 years of police work experience     |
| II            | Independent police inspector    | University degree and 4 years of police work experience     |
| II            | Police inspector I class        | University degree and 3 years of police work experience     |
| II            | Police inspector                | University degree and 2 years of police work experience     |
| II            | Junior police inspector         | University degree, induction period completed               |
| III           | Higher police surgeon I class   | College degree (Police academy), five years of work exp.    |
| III           | Higher police surgeon           | College degree (Police academy), three years of work exp.   |
| III           | Police surgeon                  | College degree (Police academy), induction period completed |
| IV            | Senior Police Officer I class   | High school education, five years of police work experience |
| IV            | Senior Police Officer           | High school education, three years of police work exp.      |
| IV            | Police Officer                  | High school education, induction period completed           |

Source: Article 88a of the Law on Internal Affairs.

Although the ranks of the police officers are determined by the law, there are many inconsistencies in how they are assigned to the police officers in practice. The key problem is that individual jobs are described in the Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Systematisation and are linked to ranks without transparent criteria, which may result in the situation where jobs which have higher levels of complexity and responsibility are linked to lower ranks and *vice versa*. This goes against the SIGMA standards, which require that the pay system is fair and based on job classification methodology.

The introduction of the job classification methodology requires well-defined job descriptions, which would provide the basis for fair classification of posts into ranks (Rabrenovic, Vljakovic & Ahmetovic, 2016). The current job descriptions, presented in the Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Systematisation of Posts of the Police Administration (2019), include both specific and generic information about the positions, and do not provide sufficient level of information which would be necessary for fair classification of posts. Over the past year, the Police Administration has recognised these deficiencies and started revising the job descriptions of the police officers, which should be published in a special catalogue of the police officers' positions, which is expected to be finalised by the end of 2020.



If we take a look at the level 2 ranks of the police officers, which include the posts that do not require the police work experience, we can see that it includes only the posts requiring university education (Table 2). All level 2 jobs require university education and between two and ten years of work experience.

Table 2. Ranks of the police officers which do not require police education/work experience – minimum education and years in service requirements (level 2)

|    | Rank                          | Education and years in service requirements       |
|----|-------------------------------|---|
| I  | Chief police advisor          | University degree and 10 years of work experience |
| I  | Higher police advisor I class | University degree and 8 years of work experience  |
| I  | Higher police advisor         | University degree and 6 years of work experience  |
| II | Independent police advisor    | University degree and 4 years of work experience  |
| II | Police advisor                | University degree and 2 years of work experience  |

Source: Article 88a of the Law on Internal Affairs

If we, however, analyse the number of people who hold these ranks, we can see that it is rather low, which questions the need for this special kind of police ranks. For example, in 2018, only 0.7 % of all police officers (28 people) held the rank of the level 2 classification (Government of Montenegro, Human Resources Management Strategy in the Police Administration, 2019-2024). Although the number of police officers at the level 2 classification may be higher at the moment, the question of the necessity of this separate job classification still remains valid.

The salary principles of all public sector employees, including the police officers, are also governed by the Law, which is in line with SIGMA standards. The key piece of legislation regulating the public servants' salaries is the Law on Salaries of Public Sector Employees (Official Gazette Nos. 16/2016, 83/2016, 21/2017, 42/2017, 12/2018, Const. Court Decision 42/2018 and 34/2019). The Law was adopted for the purpose of increasing transparency and harmonising wages for similar jobs throughout the public sector, along with motivating employees to perform better at work (SIGMA/OECD, 2017a). The Law stipulates coefficients for calculating the base salary for all civil service positions, judges and prosecutors, but, interestingly, not for the police officers. The only exceptions are the positions of the Police Director and the Assistant Police Director, whose coefficients are determined by the Law.

The levels of salaries of the police officers are governed by the Decree of the Groups of Jobs and Coefficients for the Salaries of the Police Officers (Decree on the Group of Jobs and Coefficients for Salaries of the Police Officers, Official Gazette No. 16/2016). The Decree stipulates the coefficients of both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level of ranks of the police officers.

## SALARY STRUCTURE, TRANSPARENCY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF THE POLICE OFFICERS' SALARY SYSTEM

The salary of all public sector employees, including the police officers, comprises of four key elements: the basic salary; separate part of salary; allowance to the basic salary and variable part of the salary. The basic salary of the police officers is calculated by multiplying the coefficient stipulated in the Decree and the coefficient value, which is determined by the decision of the Government of Montenegro (Decision on the Value of the Coefficients for the Year of 2020, Official Gazette No. 37/2020). The



separate part of the salary includes meals and vacation allowance, which amounts to 70% of the value of the coefficient determined by the Government (Article 13 of the Law on Salaries of Public Sector Employees). The salary allowance category includes the following: allowance for working during night and state holidays and overtime work; allowance for some specific jobs; special allowance; years in service allowance; and readiness allowance (Article 15 of the Law on Salaries of Public Sector Employees). Years in service allowance is determined by the Branch Collective Agreement for the area of public administration and justice (Official Gazette No. 18/15) and amounts to 0.5% of the basic salary per each year in service up to 10 years of experience; 0.75% of the basic salary from 10 to 20 years of experience; and 1% of the basic salary per year after 20 years in service. Finally, the variable part of the salary is paid based on the employee performance.

It is relatively easy to calculate the gross salary levels of the police officers (without allowances and bonuses) which are presented in the Table 3. The table shows that the coefficients of the ranks of the police officers which require police education/experience (e.g. chief police inspector) are equal to the coefficients of the police officers who do not require police education/experience (e.g. chief police advisor) and so are their salary levels.

Table 3. Gross salary levels (basic salary + separate part of salary) of the police officers, without allowances and bonuses

| Police officers ranks                                      | Coefficient | Coefficient value (EUR) - gross | Gross basic salary (EUR) | Separate part of salary - meals and holiday allowance (EUR) | Gross basic and separate part of salary (EUR) without allowances and bonuses |
|--|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| Police Administration Director                             | 16.43       | 90                              | 1710                     | 63  | <b>1542</b>  |
| Police Director Assistant                                  | 13.83       | 90                              | 1440                     | 63  | <b>1308</b>  |
| Chief police inspector<br>Chief police advisor             | 10.87       | 90                              | 978                      | 63  | <b>1041</b>  |
| Higher police insp. I class<br>Higher police adv. I class  | 9.83        | 90                              | 885                      | 63  | <b>948</b>   |
| Higher police inspector<br>Higher police advisor           | 9.57        | 90                              | 861                      | 63  | <b>924</b>   |
| Independent police inspector<br>Independent police advisor | 9.3         | 90                              | 837                      | 63  | <b>900</b>   |
| Police inspector I class<br>Police advisor I class         | 8.64        | 90                              | 778                      | 63  | <b>841</b>   |
| Police inspector<br>Police advisor                         | 8.1         | 90                              | 729                      | 63  | <b>792</b>   |
| Junior police inspector                                    | 7.84        | 90                              | 706                      | 63  | <b>769</b>   |
| Higher police surgeon I class                              | 7.31        | 90                              | 658                      | 63  | <b>721</b>   |
| Higher police surgeon                                      | 6.78        | 90                              | 610                      | 63  | <b>673</b>   |
| Senior police officer I class                              | 6.05        | 90                              | 545                      | 63  | <b>608</b>   |
| Senior police officer                                      | 5.93        | 90                              | 534                      | 63  | <b>597</b>   |
| Police officer   | 5.84        | 90                              | 526                      | 63  | <b>589</b>   |



The levels of the police officers' salaries, however, are not accessible to the wider public, as there are no data related to the salary levels available at the Police Administration website. Furthermore, criteria and procedures to award the variable pay (bonuses) are also not sufficiently transparent. The Government Decision on the Variable Part of the Salary (Official Gazette No. 32/16) sets forth only that the person entitled to make the decision on the variable pay will decide on the fulfilment of conditions and on the amount in each case. This results in a high level of managerial discretion in affecting the total reward of public sector employees (SIGMA/OECD, 2017a: 68).

There, however, appear to be relatively few jobs in the Police Administration eligible for special allowance and variable pay. According to the Government's Special Allowance Decision (Official Gazette Nos. 061/16, 065/17), special allowance, amounting up to 45 per cent of the basic pay, may be granted to police officers working in the police unit formed under the Law on the Special State Prosecutor's Office and those working in the Special Antiterrorist Unit, Special (anti-riot) Unit and the Antiterrorist Inspection Group; in the case of the last three units it may go up to 10 per cent of the salary. The Government's Variable Pay Decision sets out that variable portion of salary, amounting to 50 per cent of the previous year's average salary in Montenegro and paid quarterly or semi-annually, may be granted for exceptional results and quality of work. In the Police Administration, variable salary components range from 30 to 50 per cent of the average salary and, in most cases, are paid once in a year.

Finally, it is interesting to assess "internal competitiveness" of the police officers' salaries - compare the salary levels between the police officers and the civil servants in Montenegro. Although it is difficult to make a direct comparison of jobs in the police and in the civil service, as the police work engages higher level of responsibilities especially regarding carrying and handling of weapons, it is still useful to see the differences, which are presented in the table 4 below.

Table 4. Comparison of levels of salaries of the police officers and civil servants

| Police officers ranks  | Gross basic and separate part of salary (EUR) without allowances and bonuses | Civil servants ranks              | Gross basic and separate part of salary (EUR) without allowances and bonuses | Share of civil servants' salary levels vs. police officers' salary levels |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Police Director  | 1542   | General Secretary in the Ministry | 1463   | 95%   |
| Police Director Assistant  | 1308   | General Director in the Ministry  | 1463   | 112%  |
| Chief police inspector<br>Chief police advisor                   | 1041   | Independent advisor I             | 729  | 70%   |
| Higher police inspector I class<br>Higher police advisor I class | 948  | Independent advisor II            | 711  | 75%   |
| Higher police inspector<br>Higher police advisor                 | 924  | Independent advisor III           | 693  | 75%   |
| Independent police inspector<br>Independent police advisor       | 900  | Higher advisor I                  | 648  | 72%   |
| Police inspector I class<br>Police advisor I cl.                 | 841  | Higher advisor II                 | 612  | 73%   |



|                                    |     |                    |     |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Police inspector<br>Police advisor | 792 | Higher advisor III | 594 | 75% |
| Junior police inspector            | 769 | Advisor I          | 558 | 73% |
| Higher police surgeon I class      | 721 | Advisor II         | 522 | 72% |
| Higher police surgeon              | 673 | Advisor III        | 495 | 74% |
| Senior police officer I class      | 608 | Independent clerk  | 432 | 71% |
| Senior police officer              | 597 | Higher clerk       | 405 | 68% |
| Police officer                     | 589 | Clark              | 378 | 64% |

The comparison shows that police officers' salary levels are around 30 per cent higher than the salaries of civil servants, with only one exception. The exception is the salary of police director assistant, which is 12 per cent lower than the comparator post of the general director in the ministry.

Higher salary levels of the police officers are certainly an important factor for the Police Administration to attract staff from other parts of the civil service, especially given that the level 2 of the police officers classification does not require any police education/experience. Anecdotal evidence shows that the Police Administration has indeed attracted a number of staff from the Ministry of Interior, during the process of the dissolution of the Ministry of Interior which occurred in 2019, when the Police Administration became an independent Government body.

When the salaries of the police officers are compared to the salaries of the general labour market, the level of their competitiveness, on average, appears to be good. However, due to the scarcity of data and analysis on private sector wages, comparison between salaries in the public sector and salaries in the general labour market can only be made based on the average gross monthly salaries, without controlling for the variables of qualification or level of responsibility (SIGMA/OECD, 2017a: 68). As the average salary in the average labour market in June 2020 was 787 (MONSTAT, 2020), while in the police it was 906 EUR, it may be argued that, on average, police officers' salaries are competitive to those in the general labour market.

In spite of the general external competitiveness of the police officers' salaries, the police may have a problem to attract personnel for carrying out complex technical jobs. This is especially relevant in the case of jobs that the labour market values higher than the public authorities (for example, engineers specialised in IT, telecommunications, electrical engineering, electronic engineering experts, etc.). Outflow of these qualified staff could be a major challenge for the police organisation, particularly from the aspect of its development needs in the future and the ever-growing complexity of the police work.

## CONCLUSION

The key conclusion of this analysis is that the current legal framework on salaries of the police officers in Montenegro is generally in line with the European principles. The main salary system principles and elements, including the salary classification, the complete list of variable elements of salary and the relation between the fixed and variable salary, are established in law to ensure coherence.



The salary system, however, does suffer from two key weaknesses. The first one is the absence of transparent criteria, which would provide a basis for assigning an individual job to a proper rank (i.e. job evaluation methodology) and weigh the differences in complexity and responsibilities of a variety of the police jobs. The second is the absence of sufficient level of transparency. Although the amount of allowances and discretionary payments is not high, the data on the police salary levels are still not accessible to the wider public, which has an adverse effect on ensuring the transparency principle.

The findings of the paper show that the salary levels of the police officers are quite competitive to the levels in the civil service and also comparable to the general labour market. This should provide the police quite a solid ground to attract and retain quality personnel. However, in the absence of a more detailed analysis of salary levels in the private sector it is difficult to talk about actual external competitiveness of the salary levels, especially for complex technical positions which are deficient at the labour market. For this reason, it would be very useful to conduct a further research on comparing the salary levels in the police and the private sector, in order to ensure that the Montenegrin police service is able to attract and retain the best personnel that would be able to handle ever increasing police challenges of the 21st century.

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