

# Senior Executive Service System

Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública



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**Organisation:** Senior Executive Service System

**Country:** Chile

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Human Resources, Organisational Design

**Launched in:** 2004

**Overall development time:**

48 months

**Link to the innovation's website**

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# Description

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The Senior Executive Service System (SESS) aims to modernise public management. The SESS works as a filter, selecting the most suitable candidates for specific public senior executive positions, but leaving the final decision to the political authority. This reform of the State of Chile transformed the Recruitment and Selection of Senior Public Management Posts. Before this innovation the most relevant positions were directly appointed by the political authority, without a public selection process. Now, the National Civil Service promotes and contributes to modernising the State and improves the strategic management of public administration.

A typical selection process takes around three months, beginning with the publication of the vacancy in the media. A consultancy company commissioned by the Council analyses the curricula of the different candidates and prepares a shortlist for selection by the Council or a selection committee. The Council for Senior Executive Service (CSES, Consejo de Alta Dirección Pública) is in charge of guaranteeing the transparency, confidentiality and non-discrimination of the selection process. The council is chaired by the director of the Chilean Civil Service Agency and is formed by four members proposed by the President of the Republic and approved by the Senate.

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## Why the innovation was developed

In 2003, the Chilean government unanimously developed a joint agenda for state modernisation together with all political forces (political parties of the opposition, NGOs, civil society). The agenda is focused on transparency and growth promotion and also established Law 19882, ("Ley de Nueva Política de Personal de los Funcionarios Públicos"), including: a) Creation of a Senior Executive Service System (SADP/SESS), b) Creation of a National Civil Service Agency (SC), c) Modernisation and professionalisation of civil servant careers.

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## Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve effectiveness

- Assure that the country's public services are headed by professionals selected through a transparent state-of-the-art recruitment process.
  - Ensure transparency and good governance.
  - Establish clear strategic commitments and management goals for Public Senior Executive.
  - Ensure appropriate compliance verification means.
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## Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- Public authorities (president, ministers, heads of agencies) can choose among highly qualified applicants for vacancies.
  - The provision of public goods and services is indirectly assured through the professionalisation of central government senior executive teams with 271 SESS competitions being realised per year.
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## Existing similar practices

### Australian Public Service Commission

In other countries' public administrations  
Australian Government

The establishment of the Senior Executive Service (SES) in 1984 sought to create a wide service strategic leadership in ideas, management, and ethics in accordance with the Westminster principles and conventions of public administration as they operate in the Australian model of government.

<http://www.apsc.gov.au>

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### State Services Commissioner

In other countries' public administrations  
New Zealand Government

The office of State Services Commissioner (the Commissioner) is central to New Zealand's politically neutral, professional and permanent Public Service. The current office of State Services Commissioner descends directly from that of the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission was established in 1912 to employ all public servants, thus protecting the Public Service from political interference and enabling the preservation of the political neutrality of the Public Service.

<http://www.ssc.govt.nz>

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# Results

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## Efficiency

Reduction in the duration of the selection process from 116 to 81 days through adaptation within the SESS system.

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## Effectiveness

55% of new appointees have not held the post previously.

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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

- Increase in women's participation: 22% of applicants and 32% of appointees are women (compared to 15% of female managers in private sector).
  - Increased participation of private sector professionals: 59% of applicants and 18% of appointees are from the private sector.
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## Other improvements

- Merit based system assures more efficient delivery of goods and services to citizens.
- Growth of public credibility has also been proven by the expansion of SESS's scope of application, by the high number of applications and the low level of complaints.
- Now the System is perceived as a source of legitimacy for appointees.
- The suitability of Senior Executive Servants selected through the System has been recognised by public authorities.

# Development

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## Design

In 2003, the initiative was born in response to the excessive number of freely designated high ranking officials in Central Government, with the final purpose of dealing with allegations of corruption at senior levels.

At its conception, the SESS was designed based on international experience. In particular, the experiences of OECD countries like Australia and New Zealand were highly influential in the design of the Chilean model, through the analysis of its laws, its institutions and the functioning of these.

Design time: 30 months

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## Testing

The gradual implementation of SESS allowed for the monitoring of risks in the process such as the possible abuse by the competent authorities to declare a failed official selection process, instead appointing their own preferred candidate. It proved necessary to reduce the duration of the newly introduced merit-based SESS selection processes. In the beginning, they extended far over the extensive timeframe.

Testing time: 6 months

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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Introduce standard procedures such as an online application system.
- Implementation of a private-public partnership with head hunting companies.
- Selection of Council's representatives.

### Resources used:

- Expenses for head hunting companies.
- Publication of job offers in the media.
- Remuneration of Council members.
- Professional staff involved in the process.
- Office space used by Chilean Civil Service Agency.
- Support Services.

Implementation time: 6 months

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## Diffusion

System began to operate gradually according to Law 19882. New governmental services have been included in the system through special legislation (i.e. Judges of Environmental Courts Judges of Customs and Tax Courts) and several motions are pending in Congress aimed at introducing SESS also on a regional and municipal level.

Diffusion time: 6 months

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## Challenges and solutions

- To improve salaries in certain areas through legal changes and increased allocation of public management.
- To strengthen and support senior executive servants along the whole human resources cycle, which includes recruitment and selection, training, development and dismissal. The main solution to this point has been provided by improvement of human resources cycle of Senior Public Executives through a better job induction and technical support in planning their management.
- To improve the performance assessment process and performance agreements, especially with measures to improve transparency and time in each stage of the process.
- To assess outcome of the System, by creating a unit of study in the Civil Service and permanent results analysis.
- To introduce legislative improvements aimed at:
  - Expanding the scope of application.
  - Reformulating the Council structure and organisation.
  - Improving procedures.
- To create tools to deal with changes in the political conduction of the country. This has been addressed especially through a bill recently submitted to Parliament by the President of the Republic.

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## Partnerships

### Finance Ministry (DIPRES)

Other Public Sector

The system contemplated a monetary incentive for the appointees, in which the Finance Ministry (DIPRES) has an important role.

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### Head hunting companies

Private sector

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### The World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank

Other

During the design, implementation and development of the system, several international entities and organisations such as the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank were involved and collaborated with the Chilean government.

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# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

The main considerations to take note of are:

- Time of response.
  - To avoid the abuse of the competent authorities to directly appoint their preferred candidate without a selection process taking place.
  - The personality of the interim officer.
  - To take advantage of the tools to measure performance of the appointed officer.
  - Search for reasonable stability in the second level of hierarchy.
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## Conditions for success

The most important aspects for the success of this innovation are:

- Design and implement innovation taking into account successful experiences of developed countries.
  - Conduct adequate dissemination of the principles underpinning innovation and its relevance to the country's development.
  - Implement the ongoing review of its implementation, identify areas for improvement and take steps to hone their innovation.
  - Enter legal changes to improve its performance.
  - Maintain relationships with other countries that have implemented this type of innovation, management area permit incorporating diverse analysis and innovation improvements.
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