



Guidelines for preparation of an internal act for use of official vehicles and for realization of business trips

November 2021

This document has been prepared within the framework of the "Promoting of Transparency and Accountability in the Public Administration" Project financed by the European Union and implemented by a consortium led by PwC. The document has been prepared for the purpose of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption and solely for the purposes and in accordance with the conditions according to EuropeAid/139891/DH/SER/MK.

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Introduction

All state bodies and institutions from the public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia should have an internal act for the use of official vehicles and for realization of business trips. They should determine in a more detailed way the conditions and the manner of using the official vehicles and for the realization of the business trips.

According to this guideline, an internal act means a procedure, policy, rulebook or other relevant document that would be prepared and adopted by the institution in order to define the conditions and manner of use of official vehicles and the realization of business trips.

Official vehicles are all vehicles purchased by the institution, leased or received for use by another state institution. When defining the official vehicles, the institutions should take into account the Decision on the manner of use and maintenance of the official vehicles¹, which entered in to force in September 2021.

Obligations for the institutions:

- To develop an internal act for the use of official vehicles and for the realization of business trips which will standardize the procedure and conditions for driving official vehicles and business trips.
- Introduce a system for monitoring the process of using official vehicles
- To appoint a responsible person for the vehicle fleet of the institution whose obligation will be to monitor the implementation of the internal act for the use of official vehicles and to regularly report on the use of official vehicles.

¹ The decision on the manner of use and maintenance of the official vehicles, Official Gazette of the Republic of Northern Macedonia no. 214/2021

1. Purpose and scope of the internal act

The internal act for the use of official vehicles and for the realization of business trips should be prepared in a way to enable the realization of the following two key goals:

- Purposeful use and management of official vehicles
- Economical and efficient use of budget funds intended for the use of official vehicles and for the realization of business trips

With this in mind, the internal act should define the following positions:

The level of use of official motor vehicles should be limited to what is necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the institution. This restriction should be taken into account in relation to the number of vehicles used by an institution, the number of persons entitled to use official vehicles and the purpose of their use.

Official vehicles should be in function of achieving the goals of the institution, and not for the convenience of officials. Institutions should use public transport whenever it is available and enables rational use of the resources of the institution, taking into account the efficient use of working hours of employees.

Official vehicles may be used exclusively for official purposes and their use for personal needs of officials is not allowed, nor can they be used by other institutions that are not public and established by the state.

In each institution it is necessary in accordance with the systematization to define which officials have the right to use official vehicles and whether the vehicle will be used for official purposes continuously with a driver or users will be entitled to vehicles only for work tasks and business trips, with or without driver.

The use of the official vehicle from the place of residence of the official to the place of work and vice versa is allowed only if it is a way to fulfill the obligations regarding the safety of those persons provided by the relevant legislation.

The model of using the vehicles 24/7 with established monthly limits for fuel consumption is not recommended and it is necessary to keep a more detailed record of the relations in which the official vehicle is used on a daily basis.

Official vehicles may not transport persons who are not employed or engaged in the institution except for the transport of employees in other state institutions, which would be assessed as exercising the competencies of the institution whose vehicle is used or is of public interest, as well as for transport of persons in emergencies or in case of disasters and natural disasters.

Transportation of family members by official vehicles is prohibited, except in cases when they are part of an official delegation.

It is necessary to provide sanctions for the use of an official vehicle for private purposes and other types of violations of internal acts. The content of the internal act should be known to all employees in the institution, but the document should also be made public.

The institution should encourage employees and citizens to report cases in which it has testified, in which non-compliance with the rules and procedures for the use of official vehicles has been found.

Whenever it is appropriate to the nature of the work of the institution, the official vehicles should contain the logo of the institution. In this way, the citizens will be additionally enabled to witness the (un) intended use of the official vehicles.

In order to efficiently and economically use the public resources, it is necessary to categorize the class of vehicles that can be used by officials. The class of vehicles to be used by public officials should be appropriate to the level of the economic situation in the country. Hence, according to the need to demonstrate a high level of integrity and ethics, the "upper middle class of vehicles" should be made available only to highest officials in the country, while for all others to limit the use of "middle class" "lower middle class" and "lower class" vehicles.

The institutions in the internal act should define the conditions regarding the future procurement of vehicles by clearly defining their class, the type of equipment that is allowed and the value limits for each category of vehicles. Institutions when choosing the class of the official car should be guided by the need to efficiently perform the work tasks with priority to choose a lower class of vehicle whenever possible.

The internal act should also define the conditions for the use of private vehicles for official purposes, specifying in detail when it is allowed. According to the systematization in the institutions, it is necessary to introduce hierarchical control of the approval of the expenses, in order to enable checking the justification and accuracy of the data at two levels.

2. Purpose and scope of the system for monitoring and supervising the process of using official vehicles

The monitoring of the use of the official vehicles can be realized through the travel orders and by introducing an information system for supervision and monitoring of the vehicles.

Travel orders should contain:

- ordinal number of the travel order
- car and its license plate,
- place / route of travel,
- name and surname of the driver and / or passengers,
- date, time and condition with departure mileage,
- date, time and condition of arrival mileage,
- purpose of the trip,
- Expenses incurred during the trip (petrol, tolls, parking, etc.)
- signature of the driver and other persons in accordance with the internal acts of the institution.

The data on the movement of the vehicle is filled in by the user of the official vehicle. The vehicle surveillance system can be through the GPS system or the application of a software solution that will enable direct monitoring or rapid entry of data from travel orders and their processing in terms of prevention and detection of possible misuse of official vehicles.

3. Purpose and expectations from the appointment of a person responsible for the vehicle fleet

Institutions should have a designated person responsible for:

- preparation of all forms that will be used in the process of managing and monitoring the use of official vehicles,
- coordination and schedule of use of official vehicles,
- vehicle maintenance,
- monitoring the implementation of the internal act for the use of official vehicles
- regular reporting on the use of official vehicles, etc.

The notifications on the manner of using the official vehicles should be periodic and with dynamics that will be determined by the manager (responsible person) in the institution, guided by the idea that the larger number of official vehicles used by the institution should impose a higher frequency in the reporting. Special focus should be placed on monitoring financial costs. Namely, all costs related to the use and maintenance of official vehicles need to be carefully monitored and within the internal act should be prescribed an obligation for their continuous monitoring. The data that must be part of that record are the kilometers traveled, fuel consumed, average fuel consumption, toll costs, costs incurred from vehicle servicing, registration, insurance, tire replacement, vehicle washing, etc. Careful monitoring of financial costs can be an effective tool for preventing possible misuse of official vehicles in terms of the level of use of personal purposes.

4. Realization of business trips

For overnight business trips in the country and abroad, institutions should use a unified application form for business trip approval, as well as a clearly prescribed procedure for issuing, calculating and paying a travel order with all accompanying documentation to be submitted in connection with the trip.

In order to strengthen the integrity of the institutions, the application forms for business trip approval, in addition to the standard information prescribed by the relevant legislation, should also contain information about the purpose of the trip, but also the benefit of the institution, at the level of each individual member of the delegation.

Business trips should be approved in accordance with the economic principles, efficiency and effectiveness in order to enable representatives of the institution to be part of a larger number of working visits and events in the country and abroad. All trips should contribute to achieving the goals and improving the results of the operation of the institution. In order to use public money efficiently, the institution should take into account the possibility in the internal act to limit the number of members in the delegation for trips abroad.

According to the systematization in the institution, it is necessary to clearly state who are the persons authorized to approve business trips, taking into account that there is a two-tier approval system. A two-tier system of approval should also be applied in the procedures for debt relief with travel bills, which should prevent any attempt for inappropriate and irrational spending of public money.

The internal act of each institution should clearly stipulate that the person who made a business trip, in addition to the travel account for final calculation and approval of expenses, must submit a detailed report on the realization of the trip. The internal act should clearly state who in accordance with the systematization processes is working on detailed reports for the realization of business trips and this information in total should be part of the annual report on the operation of the institution.

At the same time, in order to improve the work of the institutions, it is necessary to prepare an annual review of the number of realized business trips, the persons who realized them, their purpose, the achieved effects and the costs generated by them (airline tickets, hotel accommodation, per diems, etc.). This internal document should serve at the level of the institution to make a cost-benefit analysis to assess the cost-effectiveness of the approach taken by the institution in relation to business trips. Namely, the institutions should be guided by the principle that business trips should be justified and contribute to the improvement of the operation of the institution and they must not be used for "tourist motives".

The internal act should clearly state that all travel officials who make air travel are entitled to economy class tickets. And, in terms of hotel accommodation, it must not be in a category that is higher than 4 stars. The procedure for procurement of airline tickets as well as hotel accommodation is not an obligation of the officials who are sent on a business trip, but of the relevant organizational units for public procurement.

The internal act should clearly state that the receipts for the costs of catering services made during the business trip should be in accordance with the relevant internal act.

Expenses for the use of the minibar, as well as similar restaurant and hotel services for benefits of a personal nature may not be recognized as business expenses.