Workforce mapping in the Israeli Civil Service to prepare the Future of Work

This case study was prepared in the context of OECD research on the Future of Work in 2020-2021. The case study focuses on a forward-looking pilot project developed by the Israeli Civil Service Commission. The project developed a methodology to identify roles and functions across the civil service at risk of substantial change due to automation, digitalisation, and changing skills requirements. This enables line Ministries and agencies to understand where and how change may affect their workforce. They can then develop more targeted and evidence informed workforce management strategies.
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Introduction

In 2017, the Israeli Civil Service Commission began a project to identify roles and functions across the Israeli civil service at risk of substantial change due to automation, digitalisation, and changing skills requirements. The purpose was to develop a methodology to enable line Ministries and agencies to understand where and how broad labour market, technological and socio-economic changes could be expected to affect their workforce. The CSC developed a two-stage approach.

First, the CSC built a workforce mapping model based on human capital research and existing people analytics data held by the CSC. The outcome was an Excel-based tool that enabled the CSC to classify jobs in individual Ministries and line agencies on a three-point scale according to their risk of change. Jobs classified as substantial risk of change or even elimination were flagged as ‘red jobs’.

Second, the CSC worked with Ministries on the results of the mapping to develop workforce management strategies, especially for ‘red jobs’. The goal was to move away from a passive strategy of attrition (workers retiring) toward a more proactive engagement with affected staff focusing on up-skilling, re-skilling and mobility to other areas of the civil service.

Over time, the project is expected to provide greater clarity to the leadership of the Israeli public sector on how their staff and organisations will be affected by change. Developed initially as a pilot with the Immigration Authority and the Tax Authority, the project has strong potential to be expanded to other areas of the civil service. This case study captures the steps involved in launching the project. It outlines the methodology involved and discusses the success factors and lessons learned that could apply to other OECD members.

Background to the project

This project built on several years of workforce planning by the Israeli Civil Service Commission. It represents a bridge between changes that were intuitively felt but not yet empirically mapped (at least in the context of the Israeli public sector) and a more future-oriented, data-driven, and client-oriented approach to workforce planning. From the beginning, the CSC drew on existing workforce data to emphasise the urgency of the project.

The CSC identified three main stakeholder groups whose buy-in was crucial to launching the pilot. First, the Ministry of Finance was focussed on the cost element of excess or underutilised workforce capacity. It primarily saw the issue as a challenge to be addressed through tools such as redundancy packages. Second, line Ministries and agencies were broadly aware of the impact of changes on their workforce, but were unsure of how to proceed other than through a natural process of attrition through retirement of workers whose skills were of diminishing value. Finally, key stakeholders in the Civil Service Commission itself were important to bring on board.

Each of these groups had distinct concerns and perspectives that the pilot project was designed to address. The CSC was also keenly aware of the need to engage with Israel’s powerful public sector unions. In this sense, one of the key insights to developing the pilot project was that it should be framed as much as a cultural and change management exercise as a substantive policy reform effort.
The initial stages of the pilot were designed as a ‘proof of concept’ and funded from existing resources. The CSC selected the Immigration Authority and the Tax Authority as pilot Ministries based on the following criteria:

- Likely impact of automation and new technologies on Ministry functions and tasks
- Buy-in from senior leadership and support from the Human Resources department
- Headcount (on the assumption that more staff meant a greater potential for change)

**Getting the project off the ground**

**Mapping**

The first step was to identify partners inside the Tax Authority as well as ‘veto-wielders’, or people with blocking power. The CSC considered launching the project with a large conference involving multiple stakeholders, but decided instead to start small in order to build an evidence base before substantial communication. This was also partly due to alleviate Ministries’ concerns about alarming staff and unions before the project reached maturity.

Early on in the pilot, the CSC decided to focus on skills rather than on roles. This meant asking managers in the Immigration and Tax Authorities to articulate what skills underpinned roles across their workforces. The CSC worked with Lotem, an Israeli consulting company, to carry out background research to develop the framework used. Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.1. Skills model for examining the effect of automation in the Israeli Civil Service

Source: Israeli Civil Service Commission

shows the skills model they developed, based on (Benedikt Frey and Osborne, 2017) and other background research.
In the Tax Authority, the skills model was applied in two stages. First, a small team took a range of positions and assigned a rank to each skill involved in that position. Then, a workshop was held with senior managers to understand the position in more detail, especially how these skills were being used in their teams and departments (see skills model in Figure 1). Using an online questionnaire, managers rated the level of complexity of each skill as it related to the position, as well as the frequency of its use on a four-point scale. In parallel,
staff assessed their own position using the skills model on a five-point scale. Overall, this involved 23 distinct roles across nine job families. The results were displayed on a matrix as shown in Figure 2. A similar process was followed for the Immigration Authority.

**Figure 2. Matrix for manager’s assessments of staff role complexity**

![Matrix for manager’s assessments of staff role complexity](image)

Source: Based on material provided to the OECD by the Israeli Civil Service Commission

The first phase of mapping also included a component examining how digitalisation affected existing and emerging roles. The mapping isolated the discrete tasks this involved as well as the skills that underpinned these tasks. Using a ‘traffic-light’ framework, the CSC ran a workshop where participants were asked to identify roles in which the scope changed significantly or where roles could be consolidated in terms of skills and processes.

**Figure 3. Stages of mapping the effect of digitalisation on roles**

![Stages of mapping the effect of digitalisation on roles](image)

Source: Based on material provided to the OECD by the Israeli Civil Service Commission

**Toward solutions**

The purpose of creating a list of ‘red jobs’ was to make it easier to identify what parts of the civil service should be prioritised for specific initiatives to mitigate the effect of automation, such as up-skilling, re-skilling, and mobility to other parts of the public service. A secondary consideration was that the list of red jobs could serve to inform other workforce development issues, such as recruitment, succession planning, and pay reform – as well as engagement with unions on these and other issues.
Once the list of red jobs was finalised for the Immigration and Tax Authorities, the focus of the pilot turned to what to do with this list. One of the key findings for the CSC was that while the list was useful as a basis to move toward solutions, it was also highly politically sensitive. Without appropriate communication and consultation, the pilot Ministries expressed concerns that unions would strike over fears of job losses, or that the Ministry of Finance would use the list as a reason to cut their budget.

As a way to overcome these concerns, the CSC contacted a bank which had gone through a similar exercise previously. This engagement was to demonstrate that workforces with considerable percentages of jobs at risk of automation are not necessarily doomed. Engaging with an external partner helped build trust between the CSC and the Ministries and shift

**Success factors**

- Importance of having and using existing workforce data to build a business case
- Getting stakeholders on board beforehand – consensus building and regular dialogue, not just when there is a problem.
- Having a champion inside the Ministry convinced of the business case and willing to convince others
- Background research from a variety of sources to complement internal data
- Doing what the client wants – can’t impose a vision without taking the time to build trust.
- Awareness of political sensitivity: workforce mapping is not a dry academic exercise, it has a real impact on people’s lives and performance. Need to be sensitive about communication
- Resources need to follow at some point in order to deliver on the promise of solutions and go beyond highlighting the need.

**Conclusions**

At the time of drafting this case study, the CSC’s focus was on (i) accelerating work on the solutions to roles identified on the red list and (ii) on expanding the pilot project to a wider range of Ministries. On the first issue – moving toward solutions – the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic interrupted the rhythm and frequency of meetings which had helped to build and maintain a sense of urgency during the mapping phase.

The pilot project demonstrated that hard-to-quantify megatrends such as automation and digitalisation can be translated to a workforce development setting and presented in an accessible way for senior leaders, managers, and external stakeholders such as unions. The mapping tool is a concrete success that has the potential to be used in a variety of contexts.