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AFTER THE SURNAME CHANGES: FROM SCATTERED PROCEDURES TO A UNIFIED LIFE-EVENT SERVICE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Life events are the moments when citizens face the most frequent and complex interactions with the administration. This is why the OECD Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services (2024) and the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration, against which Serbia's accession progress is assessed, require services to be organised around life events and co-created with users. Despite progress such as the eBaby service, many life events in Serbia still require citizens to obtain services one institution at a time. Changing one's last name after marriage or divorce is one of them: it triggers more than a dozen separate, uncoordinated procedures, with no unified service to connect them.

This affects a large number of people every year. In 2025, more than 29,000 marriages were concluded and over 10,000 divorces recorded, a large share of them involving a last name change. The burden falls in a large majority of cases on women – between 2000 and 2018, only 2,356 men took their wife's last name – which makes a unified service a gender-responsive public service as well.

In the worst-case scenario analysed in this brief, re-establishing one's identity requires five procedures for personal documents, one for registering a new residence, seven for data in registers and databases, and a "hidden" fourteenth: updating the eGovernment Portal account, without which most other online services remain out of reach. Only six of the 14 procedures can currently be completed online without a visit, and four only partly; the ID card, passport and vehicle registration certificate each require at least two visits to a police station; and fees, paid separately, total more than 14,000 RSD. Even finding out what you need to do is difficult: the Portal's life event section only links to appointment scheduling, lists only four of the five documents in its part on marriage and says nothing about fees. Moreover, citizens' obligations are spread across at least ten legal acts, with no official guidebook.

A focus group with six women and in-depth interviews with five showed how this plays out in practice: lack of coordination between institutions, repeated visits, carrying documents between institutions although the law obliges institutions to exchange them, and reliance on blogs and lawyers' websites in the absence of clear instructions. All of this comes at an emotionally and financially demanding moment, in a change experienced as deeply identity-related.

To address these problems, the WeBER Policy Lab brought CEP together with the Public Policy Secretariat, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Office for IT and eGovernment. At a design thinking workshop in May 2025, the participants co-created two prototypes – a unified e-service on the Portal and a unified request form for one-stop shops – and agreed that any solution must be accompanied by an authoritative guidebook for citizens, in print and digital form and written in simplified language. Although the research, the co-created design and donor resources were in place, testing and production have been postponed due to the prolonged political crisis.

Building on this work, the brief proposes two unified services, for personal documents and for data in registers, delivered online through the eGovernment Portal and physically through one-stop shops. The recommendations focus on:

- establishing both online and offline services based on the Policy Lab prototypes;
- updating the eGovernment Portal account automatically as soon as the new ID card with an electronic certificate is issued, while allowing users to start the service with their existing credentials;
- standardised requests requiring only basic information from the citizens, with a single itemised payment order, status tracking and SMS confirmations;
- strengthening inter-institutional data exchange and the application of the once-only principle;
- production of an official guidebook, "You have changed your last name – what now?", staff training and a feedback mechanism reported on annually.

I. INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC SERVICES DESIGNED AROUND PEOPLE

Public administrative services are the most frequent point of contact between citizens and the state, and the quality of these encounters influences much more than just satisfaction with those services. As the OECD surveys on drivers of trust show, people's experience with administrative services affects the extent to which they trust their governments.¹ At the same time, the standard against which public administration services are judged has

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risen. Accustomed to fast and intuitive digital interactions with the private sector, citizens increasingly expect their administrations to meet the same standard. In response, governments worldwide are shifting from services organised around administrative structures and preferences towards human-centred design – an approach that places users' needs, experiences and participation at the centre of how services are conceived, designed and delivered, and one that relies on user research, co-creation, prototyping and iterative testing. OECD analysis of global practice, based on nearly 800 cases from 83 countries, confirms that co-created and participatory services are among the leading trends in government innovation.²

I.1 Human-centred services: The new international standard

This shift towards human-centred services has recently been codified at the international level. In September 2024, the OECD Council adopted the Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services – an international standard devoted entirely to designing and delivering administrative services around people's needs.³ The Recommendation calls for prioritising life events as the moments when users face the most frequent and complex interactions with the administration, bundling related services, applying the once-only principle, and removing both tangible and intangible burdens, including the anxiety and emotional strain that accompany administrative procedures. It also explicitly encourages experimentation through prototypes, pilots and “safe spaces” such as living labs, with user participation and feedback throughout.

For Serbia and the rest of the EU enlargement region, this agenda signifies more than international good practice, being embedded in the accession framework. The Principles of Public Administration, developed by OECD/SIGMA and used by the European Commission to assess the readiness of candidate countries' administrations, include a dedicated area on service delivery and digitalisation (Principles 19–22). Principle 19 places users at the centre of the design and delivery of administrative services, expressly requiring public administration bodies to engage users and involve them actively in the (re)design of services through co-creation. Moreover, Principle 20 requires administrations to

¹ OECD Surveys on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (2021 and 2023), as referenced in the background to the OECD Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services, OECD/LEGAL/0503.

² OECD (2024), *Global Trends in Government Innovation 2024: Fostering Human-Centred Public Services*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c1bc19c3-en>.

³ OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services*, OECD/LEGAL/0503, adopted on 17 September 2024. Available at: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0503>.

organise and offer public services in the form of life events.⁴ SIGMA assesses the performance of all candidate countries against these benchmarks once every 2–3 years and informs the European Commission’s country reports in the PAR area. Although these are requirements of soft law, rather than hard acquis, their position within the EU accession process makes them a measurable EU accession requirement.

1.2 Civil society as a bridge between administrations and users

CSOs are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between administrations and end users.

International standards are equally clear that administrations cannot accomplish this shift alone. The OECD Recommendation calls for partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) to co-design, co-create, co-deliver and co-evaluate services, and global practice increasingly shows examples of governments partnering with organisations rooted in communities to make services more responsive and more trusted.⁵ CSOs are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between administrations and end users: they are close enough to users to gather honest evidence about their experiences – including barriers that users might not report through official channels – while being equipped to translate that evidence into the language of procedures, competences and regulations that administrations can act upon. They can also provide a neutral space in which civil servants can creatively engage in developing new ideas without the constraints of their formal hierarchies and test solutions with users before their institutions commit to them.

This policy brief presents the process and results of the first WeBER Policy Lab implemented in Serbia. The WeBER Policy Lab was designed as a human-centred co-creation space between civil society and public authorities. In its first iteration in 2025, the European Policy Centre (CEP), together with the Public Policy Secretariat, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Office for IT and eGovernment, applied design thinking methodology to solve a specific service delivery problem. The exercise was part of the regional WeBER initiative, within which policy labs were organised in all Western Balkan administrations as a model of structured cooperation between civil society and governments on service delivery reform.⁶

⁴ OECD (2023), *The Principles of Public Administration*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7f5ec453-en>, sub-principles 19.b and 20.b; see also OECD (2024), *Assessment Methodology of the Principles of Public Administration*, available at: <https://www.sigmaweb.org/en/publications/documents/2024/assessment-methodology-of-the-principles-of-public-administration.html>. For the latest assessment of Serbia, see OECD (2025), *Public Administration in Serbia 2024: Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration*, SIGMA Monitoring Reports, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/02001fe4-en>.

⁵ OECD Recommendation OECD/LEGAL/0503, Section VIII.1.d; OECD (2024), *Global Trends in Government Innovation 2024*, Trend 5.

⁶ See: <https://www.par-monitor.org/policy-lab/>.

I.3 The problem and the purpose of this brief

Over the past decade, Serbia has made notable progress in digitalising and modernising public services: the offer of digital services has expanded steadily, and a growing number of them are organised around life events rather than around individual administrative procedures. More recently, institutions have also begun developing new services with the help of design thinking and related human-centred methods. Yet many life events still require citizens to obtain services separately, one institution at a time. Among them is the change of the last name after marriage or divorce – a high-impact life event that currently triggers more than a dozen separate, uncoordinated administrative procedures, with no unified service to connect them.

This policy brief is a product of the WeBER Policy Lab organised by CEP in 2025. Building on desk analysis of the legal and procedural framework and of the eGovernment Portal,⁷ in-depth interviews and a focus group with women who had recently gone through the procedure, and a design thinking workshop at which the institutions jointly developed prototypes of the future service, the brief proposes a unified service designed around the user rather than the administration. The analysis proceeds through the following sections: Section II, which reviews the relevant strategic framework; Section III, which analyses the current state of play for this life event; Section IV, which presents the co-creation process; and finally, Section V, which details the prototyped solution and offers recommendations for its implementation.

II. USER-ORIENTED SERVICE DELIVERY AS A STRATEGIC GOAL

Improving service delivery and digitalisation has been the key strategic priority driving Serbia's progress in public administration reform (PAR) over the past ten years. Numerous improvements have been made, expanding the offer of digital services for citizens and businesses,⁸ and organising services around key life events. Since the start of the current PAR planning cycle in 2021, this priority has been articulated in several strategic documents which outline measures and activities to tailor services to user needs, expand online service availability, improve the functionalities of the eGovernment Portal, upgrade the electronic service infrastructure, enhance in-person service delivery, establish one-stop shops and reduce administrative burden.

The framework under which the WeBER Policy Lab was conceived and implemented was set by the PAR Strategy 2021–2030 and its first accompanying Action Plan (AP), covering the period 2021–2025.

⁷ The eGovernment Portal (<https://euprava.gov.rs>), including its life-event sections and the services and information it offers, was analysed in July–August 2026; all descriptions of the Portal in this brief reflect its state at that time (last accessed on 7 August 2026).

⁸ The SIGMA 2024 monitoring report records an increase in the overall quality of public administration services in Serbia: OECD (2025), *Public Administration in Serbia 2024: Assessment against the Principles of Public Administration*, SIGMA Monitoring Reports, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/02001fe4-en>. WeBER monitoring likewise places Serbia among the region's service delivery front-runners: CEP (2025), *Western Balkan PAR Monitor: Service Delivery and Digitalisation 2024/2025*, available at: <https://www.par-monitor.org/par-monitor-reports/>. Implementation reporting on the eGovernment Development Programme 2023–2025 records that the number of annual submissions filed via the eGovernment Portal roughly doubled between 2022 and 2025 (from 1.2 million to 2.3 million), while Serbia's overall score in the European Commission's eGovernment Benchmark rose from 48.6 (2022) to 61.5 (2024). Available at: <https://monitoring.mduls.gov.rs/dokumenta.html>.

The AP devoted Specific Objective 5 to enhancing efficiency and innovativeness of service delivery to meet user needs and improve their experience, with activities including expanding the availability of services online and in person, popularising the use of digital services, upgrading the electronic services infrastructure, and continuously expanding one-stop shops in local self-government units.⁹

Two additional programmes under the PAR strategic framework operationalised this agenda until the end of 2025. The eGovernment Development Programme for 2023–2025 specified activities to strengthen interoperability and data exchange among public administration bodies – including data centres, digital enablers for accessing services, the service bus and the Metaregister.¹⁰ The ePaper Programme for 2019–2021, in turn, introduced the Register of Administrative Procedures – a platform containing information on all administrative procedures for citizens and businesses¹¹ – while the successor programme for 2023–2025 defined detailed activities for optimising and digitalising administrative procedures, including the creation of new and optimisation of existing life events.¹² The expansion of the one-stop-shop network and the upgrade of the eGovernment Portal are also envisioned in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Government Programme for 2024–2027, underscoring the strategic importance of the area.¹³

So far, these efforts have resulted in 65 one-stop shops established across Serbia,¹⁴ and 12 different “life events” available on the eGovernment Portal. However, most of the life-event sections do not yet initiate a unified service. They are largely informational, organised by topic, with links either to a unified e-service or to the relevant institution’s website where requests are filed separately. Although one of these events is devoted to marriage and family relations, it stops short of enabling a unified request for renewing personal documents after a last name change – a limitation analysed in detail in Section III.¹⁵

With the 2021–2025 cycle now expired, the successor planning framework has been developed, and service delivery remains at its core. The AP for 2026–2030 for the implementation of the PAR Strategy, adopted in September 2026, devotes its Specific Objective 5 to a public administration that provides services “in an efficient and innovative manner, responding to the needs of end users and improving their user experience”. The AP envisages, among other things, the development of standard models of unified services to be delivered through one-stop shops, the piloting of a methodology for involving

⁹ Action Plan for the period 2021–2025 for the Implementation of the PAR Strategy for the period 2021–2030, Activities 5.1.3, 5.1.11 and 5.2.12. Available at: <https://mduls.gov.rs/en/documents/?script=lat>.

¹⁰ eGovernment Development Programme for the period 2023–2025 with an Action Plan, available at: <https://mduls.gov.rs/en/documents/?script=lat>.

¹¹ Register of Administrative Procedures, for both citizens and businesses, available at: <https://rap.euprava.gov.rs/gradjani/home?tab=oblasti>.

¹² ePaper Programme for the period 2023–2025, available at: <https://epapir.rs.jp.gov.rs/dokumenti/>.

¹³ The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Government Programme for 2024–2027 defines several priority objectives for the implementation group *Modernisation of Public Services for a Better and Safer Life of Citizens*. Among those, the priority objective *Further Development of Public Services Through the Establishment of Information and Communication Infrastructure and Digitalisation* contains Activities 2.6.4 and 2.6.11 devoted to the aspect of one-stop shops and the eGovernment Portal. Available at: <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/dokument/847723/akcioni-plan-za-sprovedjenje-programa-vlade-2024-2027.php>.

¹⁴ The PAR AP 2026–2030 baseline records 65 one-stop shops at the end of 2024.

¹⁵ This section contains basic information on marriage and divorce, available at: <https://euprava.gov.rs/brak-porodicni-odnosi>.

end users in the creation of new and the optimisation of existing services, design thinking training for civil servants, and an analysis for the introduction of a “Service Lab” devoted to service delivery innovation. The target is to expand the one-stop-shop network to 80 by 2030.¹⁶ Along the same lines, the draft eGovernment Development Programme for 2026–2030 sets the development of an efficient and user-oriented administration in a digital environment as its general objective, while the preparation of a new ePaper Programme for 2026–2030 is envisaged in the PAR AP itself.¹⁷ Only the PAR AP has been adopted at the time of writing. This unfinished state of the successor framework is precisely what makes the present moment favourable. On the one hand, the new documents move in the direction this brief advocates: user involvement in service design and unified services delivered at one-stop shops appear as explicit commitments for the first time. On the other hand, they do not carry this agenda equally far. The PAR Action Plan provides a sound basis which anchors further work in this area, while the draft eGovernment Development Programme contains no measures on organising services around life events. Both the eGovernment Development Programme and the new ePaper Programme, still to be prepared, should therefore go further and incorporate concrete measures on organising services around life events, while also taking into account the recommendations set out in this brief regarding the prototype unified service of changing one’s last name.

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III. ONE LIFE EVENT, OVER A DOZEN PROCEDURES: THE STATE OF PLAY

The results of the strategic investment described in Section II are visible in two main delivery channels. The eGovernment Portal currently offers several sections organised around key life events, including education, women’s health, childbirth, retirement, and starting a business.¹⁸ As previously stated, the Portal does not offer a unified service for each of these events, but rather describes the different services and procedures to be completed and enables access to forms or requests for individual services. A clear exception – and a best practice in Serbia – is the unified service “eBaby”, which consolidates four previously separate procedures related to the birth of a child into a single service.¹⁹

¹⁶ Decision on Amendments and Supplements to the Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021–2030, with the Action Plan for the period 2026–2030, Official Gazette of RS No. 84/2026. Specific Objective 5, Measures 5.1–5.3 – in particular activities 5.1.2 (piloting of the methodology for involving end users in the creation of new and optimisation of existing services), 5.1.7 (analysis for the introduction of a “Service Lab”), 5.2.2 (design thinking training), and 5.3.5–5.3.6 (development and piloting of standard models of unified services delivered at one-stop shops). The preparation of the ePaper Programme for 2026–2030 is envisaged under activity 5.1.1.

¹⁷ Draft eGovernment Development Programme in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2026–2030 with the accompanying Action Plan (working document, January 2026; public debate held from 30 March to 20 April 2026). The general objective indicator targets an increase of Serbia’s overall eGovernment Benchmark score from 61.5 (2024) to 70 (2030).

¹⁸ Available at: <https://euprava.gov.rs/rodjenje-roditeljstvo>.

¹⁹ The eBaby service was first introduced in 2016, encompassing three procedures (birth registration, address registration and health insurance registration with health card issuance), and later further improved to include registration for social benefits related to the birth of a child. For more information, see: <https://euprava.gov.rs/rodjenje-roditeljstvo>.

When it comes to the offline service delivery channels, physical one-stop shops have been established across the country to provide multiple services in a single location. However, their network does not yet extend to the entire territory of the country, while the existing one-stop shops lack standardised procedures that would enable citizens to resolve all administrative requirements by filing one request for a unified life-event-based service rather than several separate requests.²⁰ Consequently, despite notable examples of innovation, for most life events, citizens are still faced with multiple separate service requests and processes regardless of the channel they use.

Accordingly, the citizens who decide to change their last name after marriage or divorce are left to update their personal documents and data in official registers through a series of disconnected procedures. From the state's perspective, a changed last name is a new official identity: it must first be recorded in the civil registers and reflected in a new ID card, after which a whole series of personal documents, registers and databases – analysed one by one in Section III.2 – must be updated through separate, uncoordinated procedures, with no single access point connecting them. Nor does the list end with public records: from the user's perspective, bank accounts, insurance policies, telecommunication contracts, employers' records, memberships and subscriptions also await updating – beyond the scope of this brief, but very much part of the same life experience. These procedures, moreover, arrive at a moment when users are already under strain: marriage and divorce are among the most emotionally intense and financially demanding events of a person's life, and every additional fee, repeated visit and uncertainty compounds that load.

III.1 High demand, a burden carried by women

The demand for a unified service is high. In 2025 alone, more than 29,000 marriages were concluded in Serbia, while the number of divorces exceeded 10,000.²¹ Since a large share of marriages and divorces involve a change of last name, a large number of citizens face these procedures every year. A unified service would therefore not be a niche improvement, but one with a broad – and even recurring – user base.

This burden, moreover, falls in a large majority of cases on women. Although the Family Law allows both spouses, on equal terms, to keep, exchange or combine last names upon marriage, in the vast majority of cases it is the woman who takes the husband's last name – a practice shaped by prevailing cultural and traditional norms.²² Men who take or add their wife's last name remain a rarity: according to media reports, between 2000 and 2018 only 2,356 men in

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²⁰ The need is recognised in the PAR AP 2026–2030, which envisages the development of standard models of unified services provided by one-stop shops, in order to ensure uniform quality of service delivery in all local self-government units (activity 5.3.5).

²¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, database, available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/180402?languageCode=sr-Latn>.

²² Family Law, Official Gazette of RS No. 18/2005, 72/2011 and 6/2015, Article 348. See also: “Kako je biti muškarac sa ženim prezimenom u Srbiji”, BBC News na srpskom, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-52017625>.

Serbia took their wife's last name – 136 of them in 2018 – against tens of thousands of marriages concluded every year.²³ The tens of thousands of name-change procedures conducted each year are therefore overwhelmingly carried out by women, making the current fragmentation a distinctly gendered burden. A unified service would consequently be more than an administrative simplification: it would function as a gender-responsive public service, delivering a concrete contribution to gender equality in access to public administration.

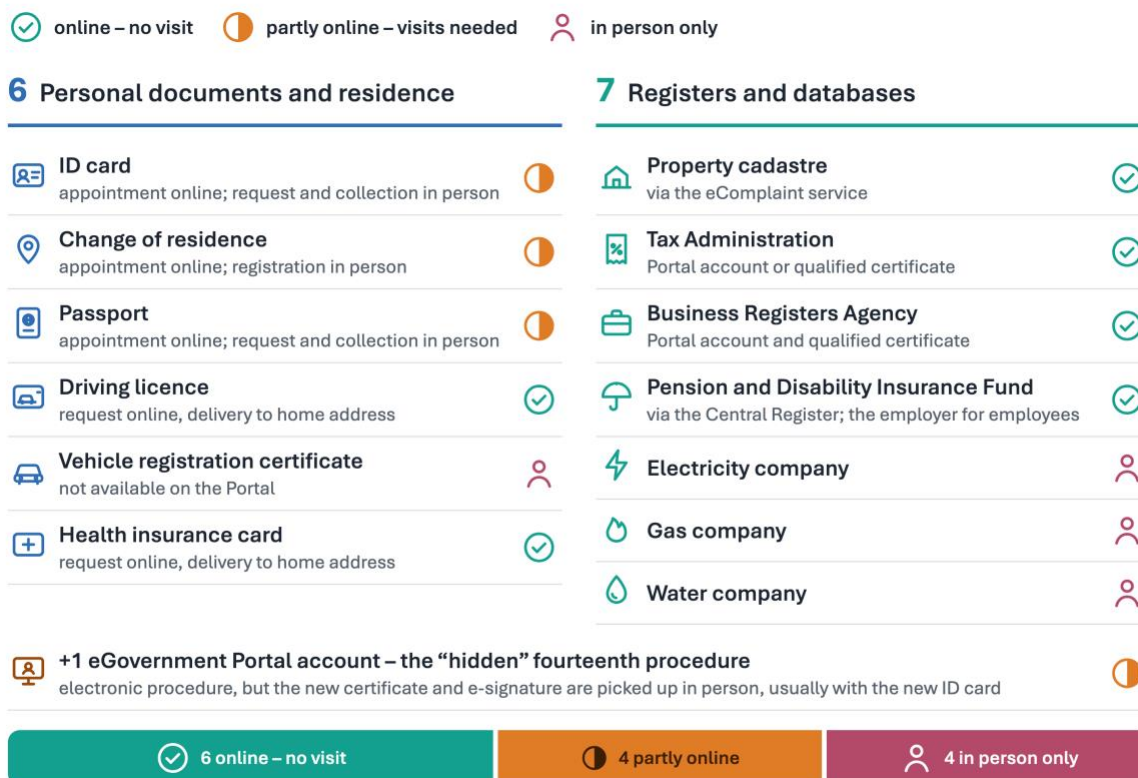
III.2 Fourteen procedures, unpacked

A significant number of official documents and databases require an update after changing one's last name. In some cases, a person may only need to renew their ID card (the only mandatory document) and health insurance card. However, let us examine a “worst-case” scenario: a person who has changed their last name owns a vehicle, a property and a business, moves to a new address, and wants to change their passport, driving licence, vehicle registration certificate and health insurance card. The process of changing one's name begins with changing the data in the civil registers (register of births and register of marriages). According to the Law on Civil Registers,²⁴ at marriage, the change is recorded on the basis of the declaration on the last name made at the wedding, without a separate request, while after divorce, resuming the previous last name requires a request to the registrar – within 60 days of the end of the marriage in a simplified procedure, and through the regular name-change procedure after that. Figure 1 lists all documents, registers and databases where personal information should be changed at the user's initiative:

²³ According to media reporting based on civil registry data: “Kako je biti muškarac sa ženinim prezimenom u Srbiji”, BBC News na srpskom, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-52017625>; see also Paragraf, Dnevne vesti, 20 August 2020, available at: <https://www.paragraf.rs/dnevne-vesti/190820/190820-vest10.html>.

²⁴ Law on Civil Registers, Official Gazette of RS No. 20/2009, 145/2014 and 47/2018, Articles 27 and 55. Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_maticnim_knjigama.html. On resuming the previous last name after divorce, see Family Law, Article 348, paragraph 2.

Figure 1. Fourteen procedures after a change of last name, and how each can be done today.



In this scenario, a person has to conduct thirteen different administrative procedures to set up their new identity: five related to official documents issued by the state, one to the registration of a new residence, and seven related to data in different registers and databases. However, before most of these services can be accessed online, the eGovernment Portal account must also be updated to reflect the new personal name of the user. Yet, this step does not appear visibly in any list of services and effectively represents a “hidden” fourteenth procedure. The account is tied to the holder’s Unique Master Citizen Number (UMCN), which allows only one account per person. At the same time, the recorded last name within the account cannot simply be deleted or replaced, and since a new account cannot be opened with the same UMCN, the change requires a separate official procedure, administered by the Office for IT and eGovernment upon request, and completed fully electronically. The qualified electronic certificate is also generated on the basis of the holder’s personal data, as is the electronic signature that relies on it, so a change of last name requires both to be issued anew. The new certificate and the electronic signature parameters are usually obtained and picked up with the new ID card. Until the account is updated, services requiring a high level of identity assurance remain out of reach for users who log in with their Portal credentials, including on the eTax and Local Tax Administration portals; users who already have the new ID card can log in to the eTax portal with its qualified certificate instead. The digital route thus begins with an extra step of its own.

For the five personal documents, the eGovernment Portal offers support that is broad on paper but shallow in practice. Only two documents can be fully obtained online: driving licence and health insurance card, for which requests can be filed online, and the documents can be delivered to a home

address.²⁵ For two out of five documents, appointments can be scheduled via the Portal – ID card and passport. The requests for the ID card and passport can be submitted together, at a single counter, with biometric data taken only once;²⁶ however, only the appointment can be scheduled online, meaning the request itself must be made on the premises, while the new documents must also be collected in person. Where the address also changes, the new residence is registered at the police as well, within eight days of the move, usually at the same visit as the request for the new ID card.²⁷ On the other hand, changing the vehicle registration certificate is the only service offered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs that is not available on the Portal; therefore, it cannot even be scheduled online. Furthermore, since a renewed ID card is formally a prerequisite for renewing the vehicle registration certificate (and all other documents), this service can, as a rule, only be obtained once the new ID card has been issued, further increasing the number of necessary visits to the institutions' premises. In practice, it is possible to use a paper confirmation of submission of request for a new ID card to request a new driving licence and vehicle registration certificate,²⁸ but this possibility is nowhere communicated formally. In short, only two out of five documents can be fully obtained online – driving licence and health insurance card, while for all other documents, users must make at least two visits to a police station, once to submit the request and once to collect the document.

Updating personal information in registers and databases is even more fragmented and requires each change to be made individually. Four out of the seven requests (excluding the eGovernment Portal) can be submitted online, such as with the Business Registers Agency.²⁹ Additionally, one can submit an online request to change the last name in the cadastre database via the eComplaint service, which is one of the rare Republic Geodetic Authority services still available to citizens directly, without the need to engage a lawyer or a professional geodetic organisation as a representative. Yet, this service is listed as part of the complaint procedure for correcting mistakes in the property cadastre, and was not envisaged as a proper, separate service.³⁰ Finally, requests for changing the data on different tax forms are available on the eTax Portal and the Local Tax Administration Portal. However, as established above, users who rely on their Portal credentials can change their data in the Tax Administration database online only once the eGovernment Portal account has been updated; those who already have the new ID card can use its qualified certificate instead.

²⁵ See: <https://euprava.gov.rs/usluge/00013?isNew=True> and <https://euprava.gov.rs/usluge/00009?isNew=True>. However, one needs to obtain a new ID card before obtaining these services. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the request for a new driving licence is filed on the Portal with the new biometric ID card, whose chip holds a qualified certificate, and the photograph taken for the ID card is reused (responses to the CEP questionnaire, April 2025).

²⁶ Responses of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the CEP questionnaire on procedures related to the change of last name, April 2025.

²⁷ Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens, Official Gazette of RS No. 87/2011, Articles 5 and 9. The law also allows electronic submission with an ID card holding a qualified electronic certificate. For adults, however, the eGovernment Portal offers only the booking of an appointment: <https://euprava.gov.rs/usluge/01084?isNew=True> (last accessed on 10 October 2026).

²⁸ Confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs via e-mail received on 27 August 2026.

²⁹ Available at: <https://www.apr.gov.rs/registri/privredna-drustva/obrasci.2042.html>.

³⁰ Available at: <https://www.rgz.gov.rs/vesti/kako-lako-ispraviti-gre%C5%A1ku-u-podacima-katastra>.

On the other hand, requests cannot be submitted online for databases held by utility companies,³¹ indicating that the time required to complete these procedures cannot currently be reduced. The change must also reach the records of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund. For employees, it is reported by the employer to the Central Register of Compulsory Social Insurance, from which both the Fund and the Republic Health Insurance Fund draw their data; the self-employed report it to the Central Register themselves, while the unemployed have to request the update from the Fund directly.³² Although outside of the scope of a governmental unified service, it is worth noting that business owners would have to change personal data for at least two bank accounts, one personal and one linked to the business they own, which further adds to the time demands and administrative burden. Overall, the register-related procedures are thus even less integrated than those for personal documents: each request follows its own channel, its own form and its own pace.

Online availability of the observed procedures is limited – and, as currently designed, conditional on prerequisites that many users do not have. Only six of the 14 procedures analysed can be completed online without a visit, and four only partly (Figure 1). Moreover, even where a procedure is online, availability does not automatically translate into ease of use. Digital literacy challenges and the need for enablers such as an electronic signature or qualified electronic certificate mean that many users still complete these procedures in person – for citizens in rural areas, often at the cost of travelling to another city. Filing requests for all procedures would take at least one full day, assuming all supporting documentation is prepared in advance and no repeat visits are required. As most services cannot be fully conducted online, a person requesting a single document must make at least two trips to the relevant institution – once to file the request and once to collect the document. This barrier is not inherent to e-services: in most EU member states, routine procedures require only a login with a widely held eID (for example, bank credentials in the Nordic countries, free trusted profile in Poland, or reused public-service accounts in France), while assisted service desks cater to users who cannot go online at all.³³ In short, online availability in its current form reduces neither the number of visits nor the overall time burden for most users.

³¹ For example, public utility company “Infostan tehnologije”, based in Belgrade, explains on their website that one must submit the request and provide all relevant documents at the premises of the institution, available at: <https://infostan.rs/promene-podataka-na-racunima/?pismo=lat>. On the other hand, the electric company “Elektro distribucija Srbije” does not provide the information on the procedure on their website.

³² Law on the Central Register of Compulsory Social Insurance, Official Gazette of RS No. 95/2018 and 91/2019, Articles 12, 13 and 34: changes are reported through the unified application, filed electronically via the Central Register’s portal with a qualified electronic certificate, within three working days.

³³ See, for example: Denmark’s MitID, issued through banks and citizen service centres, with an exemption regime and municipal assistance for users who cannot receive services digitally (<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/apps-and-digital-services/Digital-Post>); Poland’s free trusted profile (*profil zaufany*), activated via online banking and sufficient for dealings with public administration (<https://www.gov.pl/web/gov/zaloz-profil-zaufany>); France’s FranceConnect, which lets citizens access public services with accounts they already hold (<https://franceconnect.gouv.fr/>); and Portugal’s network of over 700 “Citizen Spots” where staff assist citizens in completing online services (<https://portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/noticias/rede-de-espacos-cidadao-conta-com-749-balcoes>). Under Regulation (EU) 2024/1183 (eIDAS 2.0), all member states will additionally provide citizens with a free European Digital Identity Wallet, including qualified electronic signatures free of charge for non-professional use.

The financial dimension of the process is equally tangible. Each document carries its own administrative fee, and each is paid separately, on a separate payment slip or using a separate e-payment procedure. To these direct costs one should add the indirect ones: travel to institutions (twice per document collected in person), postal delivery charges where available, and time taken off work for counter hours. In the worst-case scenario, re-establishing one's own identity thus carries a bill of more than 14,000 RSD,³⁴

Each document carries its own administrative fee, and each is paid separately, on a separate payment slip or using a separate e-payment procedure.

arriving at a life moment that is already financially demanding – a burden that a unified request with one consolidated payment slip could directly reduce. Focus group participants put their own costs at 10,000 to 15,000 RSD on average, and higher where an urgent passport was needed.³⁵ Most of this sum comes from the procedures of obtaining new documents, while the procedures of data change in registers, although often free, come with a non-financial burden of gathering appropriate documentation and submitting requests in person.

Some building blocks of a future unified service already exist, but they do not yet add up to one.

Some building blocks of a future unified service already exist, but they do not yet add up to one. The eGovernment Portal addresses the change of a last name within its “life events” section, which covers the documents that need to be changed in these circumstances. For now, however, the section only provides links for scheduling appointments and does not enable users to submit one request for all

documents.³⁶ Measured against the scale applied in the EU eGovernment Benchmark – which distinguishes services that can be completed fully online from those where only information about the service is available – this life event thus stands at the halfway mark: information online, transaction

³⁴ Health insurance card: 400 RSD or 600 RSD if the card is delivered via post. Available at: <https://rfzo.rs/index.php/osiguranalica/ekartica/ekartica-urucivanje>. ID card: 1,155 RSD. Available at: <https://rap.euprava.gov.rs/gradjani/postupak-pregled/6>. Passport: 4,500 RSD. Available at: <https://www.mup.gov.rs/wps/portal/sr/gradjani/dokumenta/putne+isprave/biometrijski+pasos>. Driving licence: 2,115 RSD. Available at: <https://www.mup.gov.rs/wps/portal/sr/gradjani/dokumenta/vozacka+dozvola/izdavanje+nove+vozacke+po+osnovu+zamen+e+stare>. Vehicle registration certificate: 1,310 RSD. Available at: <https://rap.euprava.gov.rs/gradjani/postupak-pregled/1268>. Total for personal documents: 9,480 RSD (or 9,680 if the health insurance card is delivered via post), excluding transaction fees.

For changing data in the cadastre: 660 RSD. Available at: <https://www.rgz.gov.rs/vesti/kako-lako-ispraviti-gre%C5%A1ku-u-podacima-katastra>. No data for Tax Administration: according to available sources, it should be free to change the data on your tax declaration. For Business Registers Agency: 4,000 RSD. This is the fee for changing data on business entities registered in the Register of Business Entities, available at: <https://apr.gov.rs/registri/privredna-drustva/naknade.2044.html>. For entrepreneurs, the fee is lower: 1,400 RSD for registering a change of data, increased by 700 RSD for each additional change filed with the same application. Available at: <https://www.apr.gov.rs/registri/preduzetnici/naknade.4864.html>. For the utility company for electric energy, it is stated that the change itself is free (unless there is a need for the company to conduct field work). Available at: <https://obrazac.rs/eps-promena-vlasnika-brojila-obrazac/>. For gas and water utility companies, there is no data, but it is suggested that the change is free since no proof of administrative tax payment is required. Available at: <https://infostan.rs/promene-podataka-na-racunima/>. Total for databases: 4,660 RSD.

³⁵ Focus group with women who had changed their last name, held on 24 April 2025.

³⁶ Available at: <https://euprava.gov.rs/brak-porodicni-odnosi>.

offline.³⁷ The instructions the section offers also remain brief, as they cover the basic procedures without much detail, say nothing about fees, and, for marriage, list only four documents that need to be changed, omitting the vehicle registration certificate as well as the changes of data in public registers, such as the cadastre, which are mentioned only in the part on divorce. The procedure for changing the last name in the eGovernment Portal account is not covered either. Taken together, despite the initial recognition of this life moment's importance, a comprehensive approach to developing a unified service around it has yet to take shape.

Information about the process, finally, is as fragmented as the procedures themselves. Despite the basic information available in the eGovernment Portal's life event section and in the Register of Administrative Procedures, citizens lack a comprehensive and user-friendly guidebook listing and explaining all steps necessary to obtain new personal

Information about the process is as fragmented as the procedures themselves.

documents and update data in institutional databases. This absence is particularly problematic because citizens' obligations are dispersed across at least ten legal acts.³⁸ Moreover, information on changing data in utility company (such as electric or gas companies) databases is not available through a single access point and has to be obtained either via company websites or in person through their service counters. The same applies to databases of other public entities, such as the Republic Geodetic Authority, Business Registers Agency, Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and Tax Administration. Thus, the time required to complete all procedures is further prolonged, as the process involves first gathering information on each procedure and required documentation, then preparing the documents, submitting requests, and finally obtaining the updated documents or database entries.

³⁷ The EU eGovernment Benchmark assesses services grouped in life events; its online-availability indicator scores a service according to whether it can be completed fully online, whether only information about it is available online, or whether it is offline only. See European Commission, *eGovernment Benchmark 2024: Method Paper*, available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/egovernment-benchmark-2024>.

³⁸ Law on the ID Card, Rulebook on the ID Card, Law on Travel Documents, Rulebook on Travel Documents, Law on Road Traffic Safety, Rulebook on Driving Licences, Rulebook on Registration of Motor and Trailer Vehicles, Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens, Law on the Central Register of Compulsory Social Insurance, Family Law. The Ministry of Internal Affairs lists the first seven as the regulations it applies in these procedures (responses to the CEP questionnaire, April 2025).

III.3 Identity, pressure and systemic obstacles: What issues do users face in practice?

Users enter these procedures at an emotionally sensitive moment – something the design of the service should take into account.

The user research conducted for the Policy Lab shows how these burdens play out in practice – and that changing a last name is anything but an administrative formality for the women who go through it. Findings from a focus group, organised among women who recently completed the process,³⁹ showed that the decision to change the last name – whether after marriage or after divorce – was not automatic or simple, but rather perceived as deeply identity-related, with emotional, symbolic and social

implications. Although they were not explicitly forced to change their last name, the dominant feeling was that this step appeared mandatory. That pressure manifested itself subtly, through family expectations and comments from those around them. Users therefore enter these procedures at an emotionally sensitive moment – something the design of the service should take into account.

Furthermore, participants attached significant importance to their last name as part of their professional reputation and career. Changing one's last name did not mean only a new ID card, it also meant a new Google search, a new email signature, a new ID in academic databases or a different name on written publications. Particularly striking was the feeling that, through changing their last name, women “disappear” from institutional records, and even from the digital space. For divorced women, reverting to their maiden name carried an element of liberation, but also of establishing a clear emotional and legal boundary with their former partner. These insights indicate that the last name is not merely an administrative item, but a complex identity issue related to personal history, family dynamics, professional integrity, and social perception.

The practical implications of the decision to change one's last name became apparent when the time came to transfer the new identity into administrative databases. The most pronounced problem that the focus group participants emphasised was the lack of coordination between institutions, resulting in multiple visits to different offices, even repeated visits to the same office. Moreover, this process sometimes required individuals to carry documents between institutions on their own (although the law obliges the institutions to

“The civil registrar told me: If I send the documentation, the process will take a long time, it is better if you take it.”

– Focus group participant

³⁹ The focus group was conducted on 24 April 2025, among six women who went through the procedure of changing their last name. It was conducted with the aim of looking at personal, procedural and emotional experiences of women who changed their last name in different life circumstances – marriage, divorce or personal decision. The conversation covered all aspects of that process: from the motives for making the decision, through administrative steps, to interaction with the system and impact on personal identity. A semi-structured guide was used, but there was also space for sharing of insights.

exchange them directly),⁴⁰ as one focus group participant pointed out: “The civil registrar told me: If I send the documentation, the process will take a long time, it is better if you take it.”

Furthermore, almost all participants stated that they had not received clear instructions from institutions. Neither the registrar, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, nor other service providers could inform them precisely about all the steps, deadlines, and obligations. Consequently, they were forced to search for information on their own using various online sources, such as blogs and lawyers’ websites. In such searches, it became very difficult to ascertain that one was accessing up-to-date information, considering that regulations change frequently. Thus, the participants highlighted the need for a unified, official guidebook for the process, whether due to marriage, divorce, or a differently reasoned personal decision. This would not only reduce the time spent gathering information but also ensure accuracy and reassure citizens that they are consulting the most up-to-date and official information. Additionally, it would help inform citizens of their rights and obligations in the process, thereby reducing the likelihood of institutions transferring responsibilities that lie in their domain onto citizens who are unaware of their rights and the authorities’ obligations.

In-depth interviews revealed additional issues.⁴¹ One interviewee pointed out that she changed her last name only eight years after her divorce, as the procedure was complicated and entailed significant expenses. Participants highlighted that necessary information was not always available online, and had to be obtained either in person, via phone calls to relevant authorities, or from acquaintances who had gone through the procedure. Moreover, procedures for changing personal information in public utility companies varied significantly, and often the institutions’ own staff were unsure of the procedures, as one participant emphasised: “The woman at the counter did not know the procedure. I was carrying a binder full of documents. In the end, they did manage to change my data, but only after a lot of confusion and phone calls.”

“The woman at the counter did not know the procedure. I was carrying a binder full of documents. In the end, they did manage to change my data, but only after a lot of confusion and phone calls.”

– Interviewee

The evidence presented in this chapter clearly indicates that the current fragmentation of procedures for updating personal data after marriage or divorce places a disproportionate burden on citizens, resulting in excessive financial and time demands, complexity, informational barriers and emotional strain. This is further reinforced by the fact that fewer than half of the procedures can be fully conducted online. Establishing a unified service for updating personal information in official documents and databases, available both online and through physical one-stop shops, would streamline procedures and ensure equal access nationwide, reducing administrative and financial burdens, while also softening the significant emotional strain often associated with these events.

⁴⁰ Law on General Administrative Procedure, Official Gazette of RS No. 18/2016, 95/2018 – authentic interpretation and 2/2023 – Constitutional Court decision, Article 103 (duty of the authority to obtain data ex officio).

⁴¹ In-depth interviews were organised with five women who recently changed their last name due to marriage or divorce. The interviews followed the same structure, primarily examining the general circumstances under which the change was initiated, followed by a description of all steps taken and key recommendations for improvement of the process.

IV. CO-CREATING THE SOLUTION: THE WEBER POLICY LAB

The WeBER Policy Lab was launched on 14 March 2025, at an initial meeting hosted by the Public Policy Secretariat, bringing together the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office for IT and eGovernment and CEP. The Policy Lab is a format of structured cooperation between civil society and state institutions: a concrete problem of public administration reform is addressed jointly, by co-creating and testing methods oriented towards people – in this case, the design thinking process built on human-centred design logic. The participants agreed on the focus – creating a unified, life-event service for citizens changing their last name after marriage or divorce – and on a clear sequence of steps: user research, a design thinking workshop, prototyping, testing and production. From the outset, the institutions that would implement the future service co-owned its design, while the WeBER project provided moderation and research with users.

The Policy Lab is a format of structured cooperation between civil society and state institutions: a concrete problem of public administration reform is addressed jointly, by co-creating and testing methods oriented towards people.

The Lab's evidence base was built between March and May 2025. Desk analysis mapped the legal framework, the institutions involved and every administrative step of the current procedures, while the focus group and in-depth interviews presented in Section III.3 captured the experiences of women who had recently gone through the process. Three interviews with civil servants from the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, as well as the questionnaire sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, served to collect information and ensure a full understanding of the current procedures. The research was synthesised into user personas and concrete design challenges – how to enable users to launch the entire process at a single point, without physically carrying documents between institutions; how to reduce the emotional burden accompanying the change; and how to provide clear, timely information before, during and after the procedure.

Whichever form the unified service takes, it must be accompanied by an authoritative guidebook for citizens ... written in simplified language free of bureaucratic jargon.

These challenges were taken to a full-day design thinking workshop held on 29 May 2025 in Belgrade, which gathered fifteen participants – service designers, researchers and representatives of the four institutions. Teams first reviewed the research findings, then generated and clustered solution ideas, and finally developed two complementary low-resolution prototypes: a unified electronic service on the eGovernment Portal and a unified request form submitted at one-stop shops. Both rest on one shared conclusion of the workshop: whichever form the

unified service takes, it must be accompanied by an authoritative guidebook for citizens. Participants unanimously agreed that the guidebook should be available in print and digitally and be easy to find, that it should be written in simplified language free of bureaucratic jargon, and that it should use illustrations, graphics and step-by-step guidance – including visual guidance through the online

procedure. The prototypes were evaluated through structured feedback and ranked by their impact on users and short-term feasibility – the one-stop-shop form emerged as achievable in the medium term, and the full electronic service as the strategic goal.

After the workshop, the prototypes were refined into a detailed specification of the future unified service and standardised request forms (Annexes 1 and 2). The final steps agreed at the outset – user testing of the prototypes, followed by production of the service – have not yet followed the workshop, as the process awaits continuation on the institutional side. The conditions for completing it were in place at the time: the research and the co-created design were done and endorsed by the representatives of participating institutions, the WeBER project stood ready to support the testing phase, and donor resources were available for the development of the new service. Yet, the prolonged political crisis in the country has led to the postponement of these plans. Carrying the process through to testing and production would allow the institutions to reap the full value of the work already invested – and to do so at minimal additional cost.

Beyond its concrete outputs, the Lab demonstrated in practice the model promoted by the OECD Recommendation and the Principles of Public Administration: institutions designing a service together, on the basis of user evidence gathered by a civil society organisation, in a neutral space that allowed for open discussion and creative thinking, allowing participating civil servants to place themselves in the shoes of service users. The same model can be replicated for any other life event.

V. TOWARDS INTEGRATION AND USER-CENTRED SOLUTIONS

Each year, around 30,000 marriages and 10,000 divorces take place in Serbia, and a large share of them involve a last name change – in a large majority of cases by women. Each such change potentially requires more than a dozen procedures which are dispersed across several institutions, uncoordinated among them. Moreover, users lack a single official information source which outlines what should be done, in which order, at what cost and by when. The establishment of unified services for changing personal documents and personal information in databases would significantly reduce the time necessary to obtain all services and finalise the procedures, while also decreasing the administrative and emotional burden citizens currently face.

Reflecting the sequence imposed by the current rules, the prototyped solution envisages two unified services: one for personal documents, and one for updating personal information in registers. Both are designed for delivery through two channels: online via the eGovernment Portal and physically in local one-stop shops, so that users can choose the channel that best suits them.

Reflecting the sequence imposed by the current rules, the prototyped solution envisages two unified services: one for personal documents, and one for updating personal information in registers.

The user journey begins before any request is filed. When scheduling a wedding, the registrar informs the couple about the options for changing the last name, the legal consequences and the deadlines involved, and hands over the guidebook “You have changed your last name – what now?”. Although the prototype was built around marriage, the journey after a

divorce would start the same way, when the request to resume the previous last name is filed with the registrar. Once the change is recorded in the civil registers, the user receives an SMS confirming that the unified service can be initiated, with a link to the Portal.⁴² The same guidebook is made available on the eGovernment Portal and at the physical one-stop shops. The guidebook includes clear instructions for both the offline and the online procedure, and for the latter explains how the Portal account is updated once the new ID card is issued.

The user logs in with the existing credentials – a qualified electronic certificate or the ConsentID application – and can access the needed services of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The ID card is the only mandatory service, while all others appear as optional. After selecting the applicable services, the Portal generates a single consolidated online payment slip for the combined fees and books a single appointment at the selected police station, where all requests are handled at a single counter. The only document required is the ID card valid at the time of request submission, while all other data are obtained through internal exchange between the authorities. Although the ID card and passport cannot be issued fully online due to the requirement to capture the applicant's biometric data and signature in person, the unified request removes repeated visits and separate queueing and payments for each document.

Once the new documents are collected, the second unified service activates: on the same Portal page, the user selects the other documents, registers and databases to be updated – from the health insurance card, the cadastre, the Tax Administration and the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund to utility companies – launching all remaining procedures at once. New documents and decisions arrive by post or in the user's electronic mailbox, changes in registers are confirmed by SMS, and the journey ends with a short questionnaire on user experience, which feeds future improvements.

For users who cannot or prefer not to use the digital channel, the unified requests are submitted in the same order – first the documents, then, with the new ID card, the data in records – on standardised forms at one-stop shops, where the clerk forwards them to all selected institutions, issues one consolidated payment slip and provides a receipt listing for each item and the date when it should be collected. Some details, such as when the health insurance card is requested, differ between the two prototypes and would be settled through user testing. For the ID card and passport, two options are possible. In the first, the one-stop shop only initiates the request, and biometric data are still taken at the police station. In the second, one-stop shops are equipped to take biometric data themselves, so that users do not have to visit both the one-stop shop and the police station – the better solution for users, but a bigger and more costly reform. Collecting the new documents and submitting the request for data in records can then be combined in a second visit to the one-stop shop, so that the whole procedure takes two visits – or three, if biometric data are still taken at the police station.

⁴² In line with the OECD Recommendation's call for proactive services, which initiate contact with users and provide support before life events, requests or issues arise: OECD/LEGAL/0503, Section VII.2.f.

Figure 2. The prototyped unified service: the user journey online and at one-stop shops.



The following recommendations emerge from the analysis as concrete steps to address the identified shortcomings and enable provision of unified services:

Establishing the unified services

- 1. Launch both unified services, building on the Policy Lab prototypes.** The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Family Care and Demography, Public Policy Secretariat and the Office for IT and eGovernment should, as the institutions responsible for the policy area and the services concerned, initiate the establishment of unified services for changing personal documents and data in official databases due to a change of personal name, building on the prototypes and the specification already produced in the Policy Lab. This procedure would require significant coordination efforts among the key stakeholders – individual service providers, public utility companies, and other relevant institutions identified in the analysis.
- 2. Offer them online and at one-stop shops – or at local administrations and police stations.** Both unified services – for changing personal documents and for updating personal information in various databases – should be available on the eGovernment Portal, as a marriage and divorce life event, and at one-stop shops, in order to facilitate multi-channel service delivery. Considering that not all local self-government units in Serbia have established one-stop shops, the unified services should also be made available at the premises of local self-government administrations. Alternatively, they could be offered at police stations nationwide, as most services falling under their scope fall under the competence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- 3. Let users start with their existing Portal credentials and finish with the new ones.** To keep the digital route open, the Office for IT and eGovernment should ensure that the last name in the Portal account is updated automatically once the new ID card is issued – usually together with a new qualified electronic certificate and electronic signature. Until then, users should be able to start the unified service with their existing Portal credentials.
- 4. One standardised form asking only for basic data.** Unified services should require citizens only to fill out a standardised form (see Annexes 1 and 2), both online and in person, asking them to provide only basic personal data – their Unique Master Citizen Number, full name and address and, for changes in databases, the number of the ID card valid at the time of submission. Besides this, the forms would require citizens to check all documents and databases they need changed, by selecting options from a list. Where the address also changes, the unified request should allow the change of residence to be registered at the same time.
- 5. One itemised payment slip for all fees.** One-stop shops should be able to generate, on the spot and based on the request submitted, a single itemised payment order covering all fees due for the selected procedures. Currently, the payment slips are available only per individual service, both in person and on the eGovernment Portal, so consolidating them into one is a core element of what the unified service should add, preferably reducing the total cost compared to the sum of individual services.

6. **Status tracking, with SMS confirmation of register changes.** The eGovernment Portal should enable users to track the status of requests submitted within the unified services procedures and inform them proactively via their accounts, while one-stop shops should establish contact points providing status information both proactively and upon request. Moreover, users should be notified by SMS once the change of last name is recorded in the civil registers, with a link to start the unified service, and every change in the other registers should be confirmed by SMS.

Enabling seamless data exchange among institutions

7. **Improve the digital enablers of data exchange between institutions.** Key authorities should continuously improve digital enablers that facilitate inter-institutional data exchange, especially with public utility companies, which currently accept no requests online. Moreover, although the requests via one-stop shops would be submitted in person, communication and data exchange among institutions should be conducted online. This would make inter-institutional exchanges smoother and faster, and reduce the time necessary to finalise procedures.
8. **Ensure even application of the once-only principle across all institutions.** Key authorities in the area should strengthen the implementation and ensure the quality of inter-institutional data exchange in conducting administrative procedures, in order to provide additional support to the existing provisions on the once-only principle. This would ensure that citizens are not faced with uneven approaches when they request services from different authorities and are not required to submit documentation that the institution should obtain *ex officio*.
9. **Timely data exchange between registrars.** Since changing personal information in civil registers is a prerequisite for all other procedures observed in this analysis, key authorities should ensure that registrars also exchange data among themselves within a reasonable timeframe, in order to facilitate smooth finalisation of the procedures and enable citizens to swiftly move forward with the next steps.

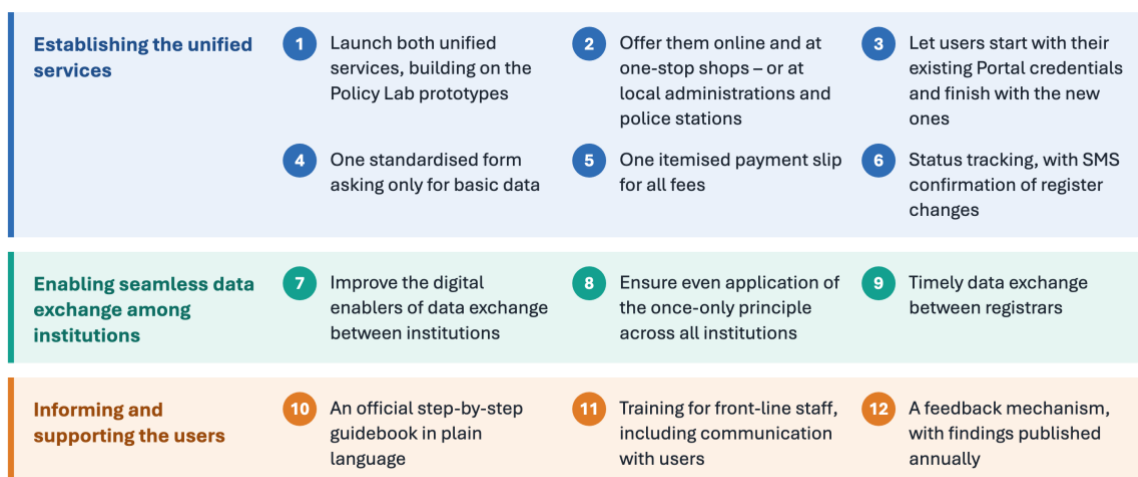
Informing and supporting the users

10. **An official step-by-step guidebook in plain language.** A significant step towards reducing the time burden citizens face is the development of a step-by-step guidebook, explaining in detail what steps need to be taken and how the procedure is conducted online and in person, ensuring that citizens receive accurate information through a single access point. In line with the conclusions of the Policy Lab, it should be written in simplified language free of bureaucratic jargon and use illustrations, graphics and visual guidance through the online procedure. The guidebook should be provided by the registrar when a wedding is scheduled or a request to resume the previous last name after divorce is filed, made easily accessible at the eGovernment Portal and Register of Administrative Procedures in digital format, as well as printed at the local one-stop shops. Moreover, a single authority (for example, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government) should be responsible for regular updating of the guidebook and its dissemination to all other responsible authorities in the process. Promotional campaigns targeting citizens should be organised in order to raise awareness of the availability of unified services.

11. Training for front-line staff, including communication with users. Additional training sessions should be organised for relevant staff of all institutions involved in both unified services, so that staff respond properly to citizens' requests and apply an equal approach nationwide. Officials who come into direct contact with citizens (e.g. at one-stop shops and police stations) should receive special training for empathising and adequate communication with the users, informed by the research conducted as part of the WeBER Policy Lab.

12. A feedback mechanism, with findings published annually. Key authorities should establish a feedback mechanism covering the full user base of the unified service. Every user should be offered the opportunity to rate the service and comment on it, both on the eGovernment Portal and at one-stop shops, upon completing the procedure. The findings should feed into continuous refinement of the service, and should be published at least annually, together with an account of the changes introduced in response.

Figure 3. Recommendations at a glance.



Including all key aspects of these recommendations in future solutions is crucial for reaching the overall objective of aligning service delivery with user needs rather than habitual administrative preferences and entrenched practices. Finally, such a holistic approach would help alleviate the underlying emotional burden, which is not always visible but is undoubtedly present. As it is women who change their personal name after marriage or divorce in a large majority of cases – a choice often shaped by social expectations – future improvement initiatives would also serve as a significant gender equality measure.

ANNEX 1

Unified request for issuance of documents due to change of personal name (first name or last name)

Personal data of the applicant:

1. Unique Master Citizen Number _____

2. Full name _____

3. Address of the applicant _____

Circle the number in front of the document for which you are scheduling the submission of a request:

1. ID card

2. Passport

3. Driving licence

4. Vehicle registration certificate

5. Health insurance card

The applicant has paid the fee and compensation Yes/No (circle)

I agree that the competent authority may obtain data from official records for the purposes of conducting required procedures ex officio.

Date _____ Signature of the applicant _____

CONFIRMATION OF REQUEST RECEIPT

_____ (full name), _____ (Unique Master Citizen Number) submitted a request for obtaining the following documents because of changes of the personal name (circle the number): 1. ID card, 2. passport, 3. driving licence, 4. vehicle registration certificate, 5. health insurance card, under the number _____.

The requested documents will be issued within _____ working days of the date of submission of the request.

Date _____ Stamp and signature of authorised person _____

ANNEX 2

Unified request for change of data in databases due to change of personal name

Personal information of the applicant (provide only the data necessary to proceed upon the request, with mandatory submission of data under points 1, 2, 3 and 4)

1. _____ (Unique Master Citizen Number)
2. _____ (full name)
3. _____ (ID card number)
4. _____ (address of the applicant)
5. _____ (cadastral parcel number and municipality)
6. _____ (meter number)
7. _____ (tax identification number)

I request that the data be changed in the following authorities/institutions:

1. Public Enterprise PTT Srbija (Post of Serbia)
2. Republic Geodetic Authority
3. Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Serbia
4. Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS)
5. Public utility company for unified billing of utility services (e.g. Infostan tehnologije)
6. Srbijagas
7. Business Registers Agency
8. Tax Administration
9. _____ (insert the name of the public utility company)

I agree that the competent authority may obtain data from official records for the purposes of conducting required procedures ex officio.

Date: _____ Applicant signature: _____

CONFIRMATION OF REQUEST RECEIPT

_____ (full name), _____ (Unique Master Citizen Number) submitted a request for changing personal information in the following databases due to changing personal name (circle the number): 1. Public Enterprise PTT Srbija (Post of Serbia), 2. Republic Geodetic Authority, 3. Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Serbia, 4. Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS), 5. Public utility company for unified billing of utility services (e.g. Infostan tehnologije), 6. Srbijagas, 7. Business Registers Agency, 8. Tax Administration, 9. _____ (insert the name of the public utility company), under the number _____.

Data in the records will be changed within _____ working days of the date of submission of the request.

Date _____ Stamp and signature of authorised person _____



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