A Comparative Analysis of Public Administration Characteristics, Performance and Reforms in the EU28

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hammerschmid

International Workshop on the Role of Public Administration in Public Policies’ Design
Agenda

• Background of the EUPACK project/research
• A comparative analysis of PA systems in the EU28 MS (task 1)
• Understanding reform dynamics in the EU28 MS (task 2)
• Future perspectives and recommendations
Project on European Public Administration Country Knowledge (EUPACK)

Project objectives & tasks

• Overall objective to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the status of reform dynamics in PAs in EU MSs with a view to better target EU support in this area in the future.

• The two specific objectives are:
  ➢ To develop a consistent country and thematic overview on the characteristics of public administrations in Member States, as well as on the content, outcomes and impact of reforms in this area (esp. task 1 & 2)
  ➢ To understand the effects and effectiveness of EU and other support, approaches and initiatives to enhancing quality of public administration in EU Member States (esp. task 3)

Running from September 2016 until June 2018
EUPACK Project Set-up & Tasks

- Key characteristics of public administration in Member States (task 1)
- Understanding reform dynamics (task 2)
- Understanding the role of (external) support within the country context and reform dynamics (task 3)

Thematic Experts

Country Experts in all EU28 countries

Conclusions, lessons and recommendations for future EU policy (task 4)

Thematic support – ad hoc reports, synthesis, meetings, coordination (task 5)
Comparative Public Administration in EU28 MS

⇒ Description/Analysis of key characteristics of MS public administration based on both quantitative and qualitative data
  • Size of government & general government employment
  • Scope & Structure of government
  • Civil service system/HRM
  • Politico-administrative systems and societal context of public administration
  • Indicator based assessment of government capacity & performance along 5 dimensions
  ⇒ Time comparison and comparison to EU average
  • Collection of additional indicators by country experts.

⇒ Total length of country reports and tables: 1136 pages

⇒ Synthesis written by core team based on the country reports
  http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8072
The analysis of the country reports has confirmed a high level of heterogeneity between the PA of the MS:

- Wide differences in size and composition of public employment;
- Different State systems, degrees of centralization, sharing of competences between government levels;
- Types of civil service systems (career vs. position-based, openness) and politicization civil service
- Differences in administrative capacities and government performance: indicator-based assessment by our country experts shows 1) substantial difference and 2) limited convergence/catching-up
- A continuous dominance of a Weberian Model in many countries
Comparative PA in EU28 MS: State system and multi-level governance

Number of local governments

Average population per local government entity

Source: National experts + Eurostat 2016 for population numbers

Source: National experts, CEMR

NB: This graph takes into account the lowest tier of governance in each country, in most cases the municipalities.
### Comparative PA in EU28 MS: Key features of the Civil Service System

#### HR system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career based</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Position based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT, BE, CY, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LU, LT, PT</td>
<td>BG, IE, MT, PL, RO</td>
<td>CZ, EE, FI, HU, LV, NL, SK, SE, SI, UK</td>
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</table>

#### Differences between public employees and civil servants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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#### Coherence of HRM across different levels of government

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Comparative PA in EU28 MS: Key challenges

⇒ Systematically comparing the PA faces substantial challenges:
  • The lack of common definition on concepts such as: core public administration, civil servant/public employee, agency, accountability etc.
  • Not one public administration but multitude of administrations at central, regional and local government level
  • Government performance multidimensional due to a range of goals/perspectives and contested from different stakeholder perspectives
  • Substantial differences between countries in the availability and reliability of data
Public sector employment in % of total employment

Source: Eurostat

DEFINITIONS! TERMINOLOGY! DATA AVAILABILITY?
Comparative PA in EU28 MS: Government capacity and performance

Assessed over 5 dimensions based on 28 cross-country comparative indicators selected
Understanding Reform Dynamics (task 2)
How was the Analysis Conducted?

Consistent report structure/requirements for all 28 MS

1. Overall relevance and development of PAR over the last two decades
reform discussions and programs, responsible bodies, key drivers/barriers

2. Main topics of and content of the reform agenda over last 10 years
reform initiatives according to 5 dimensions: transparency & accountability, civil service
system and HRM, service delivery and digitalization, organization & management of
government, policy making coordination and implementation

3. In-depth analyses of 3 selected reform initiatives
reform background and content, reform process/dynamics,
reform results/outcomes and lessons learned/recommendations

4. Overall implementation dynamic and reform outcomes
implementation dynamics (scope, progress, outcomes);
analysis of European Semester documents; reform outcomes

5. Key Findings and Outlook

6. Annex: (1) table inventory of PAR programmes/initiatives
(2) Mapping PAR content of European Semester documents
Understanding Reform Dynamics (Task 2)

How was the Analysis Conducted?

Resulting in 28 country reports with a total of 1456 pages including 85 PAR case studies

### Transparency & Accountability (13)

- Overall transparency & accountability reform (ES, HR, MT, SK, SI, NL)
- Anticorruption law (FR), reform of disciplinary procedures (EL), transparency portal (AT), fori & central contract registry (CZ), public data transparency for local budgets (RO), trust reform (SE), big society initiative (UK)

### Civil Service System & HRM (15)

- Overall civil service reform (BG, CY, CZ, EE, HR, LT, PL, SK, SI)
- Appointment of top civil servants (EE, LU), civil service cutback program (NL), remuneration reform (LU), HRM reform (IT)

### Digitalization & Service Delivery (19)

- Overall e-government reform (BG, DK, DE, ES, FI, PL, SE, UK), one stop shop reforms (HU, LU, MT), central e-participation portal (EE), national electronic procurement (CZ), e-governance and IT infrastructure (CY), alternative service delivery mechanisms (IE), digitalisation of local taxes (RO), service delivery and administrative burden (SI), personalization of individual budgets (UK), crossroads data sharing in social security (BE)

### Organization & Management (26)

- Performance management (AT, IE, LT, LU, IT, PT), center of government coordination (NL, PL, PT, EL), territorial reform (DK, FI, SI), budgetary reform (AT, IE, FR), spending reviews (DE, IT, LU), shared service centers (EE, SE), state-owned enterprise reform (LT, LU), Copernic reform (BE), local government capacity (SK), fiscal crisis management arrangements (HU)

### Policy Making, Coordination, Regulation (12)

- Reduction of administrative burden (BG, DE, FR, HR, HU, MT, PT, RO), Policy coherence/coordination reform (BE, CY, DK, FI)
Understanding Reform Dynamics

Key Drivers of Reform

- Reforms mostly driven by:
  - Budget pressures/crisis (14 countries)
  - Political/government changes (9 countries)
  - Chance/crisis events (8 countries)

- Increasing influence of EC in certain areas (digitization, administrative burden, one-stop-shops) and regions (CEE, Southern Europe)

- Who is in charge of PAR reform:
  - In many countries rather frequent changes in bodies responsible for PAR
  - Attempts to strengthen coordination through strategic frameworks/multi-annual programs, creation of new coordinating bodies or strengthening existing ones
Understanding Reform Dynamics

Content of Reform

• Rather common reform trends with regard to
  – Open government/transparency
    (foi, open data, procurement, anticorruption authorities)
  – Civil service reform
    (cutback/productivity, meritocracy, performance appraisal, code of conduct)
  – e-government (portals, signature) and one-stop shops
  – Strengthening coordination/center of government and mergers of agencies/bodies
  – Performance management
  – Administrative burden reduction/better regulation and consultation arrangements

• But: same concepts often implemented rather differently (translation)
• Also contrary trends observable: mergers vs. agencification; decentralisation vs. centralization
• NPM reforms still of high relevance and attractiveness
• No clear geographical patterns with small exceptions
Understanding Reform Dynamics

Reform Process

- Only 40% of countries with strategic approach
- 50% of countries with whole-of-government approach covering all government levels
- Nature of change: A clear dominance of incremental approaches (vs. big bang/disruptive approaches)
- A clear dominance of law-based reform approaches
- A clear preference of top-down implementation
- For many countries only weak reporting/monitoring arrangements are in place
Understanding Reform Dynamics
Reform Outcomes

- In overall PAR in Europe with a rather mixed success
- Both positive and negative evidence
- Mostly moderate to high progress: transparency & accountability, digitalisation
- Mostly moderate progress: civil service reforms, policy making coordination & implementation
- Without clear pattern: organization/management reforms
- Overall in most countries a clear lack of valid Information / independent evaluations to assess reform outcomes
Understanding Reform Dynamics: What Makes Reforms Successful?

- Need for political support and credible leadership throughout all phases of a reform
- Use windows of opportunity
- Build external stakeholder support
- Provide a roadmap/plan of change and keep the scope of reforms well-focused
- Combination of top-down and bottom-up: top-led and bottom-fed
- Provide adequate resources
- Show and publicize/communicate “good results” (quick wins)
- Assure arrangements to monitor/measure reform progress/results
- Need to institutionalize reforms and assure continuity over time
Future Perspectives & Recommendations

- Need for more common definitions and more systematic data collection at EU level
- Recognize the complexity and political nature of PAR
- The importance of context → turn away from “one-size-fits all” approaches and align reforms to context
- Reforms should be based on ex-ante evaluations of particular circumstances and address key challenges and performance deficits
- A need to move from an obsession with claimed “best practices” towards broader learning
- Be aware of long-term nature of public administration reform
- Pay attention to the sequencing and timing of reforms and avoid reform overload (prioritization)
- Implementation should be accompanied with continuous monitoring and independent evaluations
- Invest in broader ability/capacity to change/innovate
Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hammerschmid
Professor of Public and Financial Management
Hertie School of Governance
Friedrichstraße 180
10117 Berlin
hammerschmid@hertie-school.org
www.hertie-school.org

Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/gerhard-hammerschmid-88308610/de