Public Sector Reform in Norway: Views and Experiences from Senior Executives

Country Report as part of the COCOPS Research Project

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Coordination for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS): www.cocops.eu
About COCOPS

The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It analyses the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens’ service needs and social cohesion in Europe. Evaluating the extent and consequences of NPM’s alleged fragmenting tendencies and the resulting need for coordination is a key part of assessing these impacts. It is funded under the European Union’s 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014).

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1. Introduction

Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS), as one of the largest comparative public management research projects in Europe, intends to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the public sector in European countries and to systematically explore the impact of New Public Management (NPM)-style reforms in Europe. The project brings together public administration scholars from eleven universities in ten countries and is funded as part of the European Union’s 7th Framework Programme between January 2011 and June 2014. The research is comparative and evidence-based, drawing on both existing data and innovative new quantitative and qualitative data collection, at both national and policy sector levels. A cornerstone of the project is the COCOPS Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe: an original, large-scale survey of public sector top executives in ten European countries, exploring executives’ opinions and experiences with regards to public sector reforms in general government, as well as more particularly in the health and employment policy sectors.

Scholars within the public administration discipline have long underlined the need for more quantitative and rigorous comparative research, going beyond single-country and single-organization approaches (see Derlien, 1992; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Pollitt, 2011; Raadschelders and Lee, 2011). Moreover, few research initiatives have explored in depth the transformation of public administrations as triggered by NPM reform discourses in a systematic comparative form (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid, 2011). Responding to such concerns, this survey offers systematic evidence regarding the dynamics of public administration reform in Europe, with the goal to create an encompassing and systematic picture of public administration after more than two decades of NPM reforms.

From a theoretical perspective the survey builds on the perception of three major reform paradigms (New Public Management, Public Governance and the Neo-Weberian State) as described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011). Focusing on top executives, it follows pioneering elite studies such as those of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (see Putnam 1976, Aberbach et al., 1981, and Aberbach and Rockman, 2006), which lay the foundation for many other both national and cross-national executive surveys (e.g. Mayntz and Derlien, 1988; Christensen and Laegreid, 2007; Bertelli et al., 2007; Trondal, 2010; Bauer et al., 2009; COBRA survey; UDITE survey).

Methodologically it also draws inspiration from cross-national population surveys such as the European Social Science Survey, European Values Survey, the International Social Survey Program; as well as from experiences with cross-national surveys such as those of the Survey Research Centre at the University of Michigan (2010).

As set out by the project’s terms of reference the goal of this large-scale survey is to analyse national administrations (both ministries and agencies) in the participating countries and also to take a closer look at the policy fields employment and health. The survey aims to explore public sector executives’

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1 This introduction is based on Hammschmid, Görnitz, Oprisor and Stimac (2013), and is standardized for all WP3 COCOPS country reports.
2 Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hertie School of Governance Berlin, University of Bergen, Bocconi University, University of Cantabria, Cardiff University, CNRS Paris, Corvinus University Budapest, University of Exeter, KU Leuven, Tallinn University of Technology
3 More information on the project is available at www.cocops.eu
perceptions, experiences and opinions with regards to their work context and administrative reforms, but also on other factors such as values and identities and the impact of the fiscal crisis. The core survey implemented in all participating countries consists of 31 questions structured in four parts (I) General information; (II) Management and Work Practice of Your Organization; (III) Public Sector Reform and the Fiscal Crisis; (IV) Attitudes, Preferences and Personal Information. The survey is a result of the joint work of all the national research teams within the COCOPS project and under the leadership of a team of researchers at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. In addition, further universities from other European countries were included as strategic partners to replicate the survey in these countries.4

Three essential challenges connected to the design of the questionnaire and the survey methodology had to be handled by the research team: a sample design that would allow systematic comparative analyses; an access strategy to produce (statistically sufficient) high response rates; and a questionnaire design and translation that would assure conceptual equivalence between all countries. As a general principle, the survey team opted for a balanced and pragmatic approach with a view on a maximum of quality and comparability, while still allowing for sufficient flexibility within each country’s context. A core questionnaire developed by the survey team in English was translated into country-specific versions by the respective national research teams and – if assumed helpful – optional questions were added. With regards to the population definition, the research team targeted a group with relevant experience to assess overall developments and trends both on an organizational and policy field level. In general, top executives are viewed as such informants regarding the state of administration, given their privileged vantage point (Walker and Enticott, 2004), but also, with the blurring of the classical boundaries between politicians and civil servants (Aberbach et al., 1981), due to their own role in policy-making and their influence on the choice and implementation of reforms (Christensen and Lægreid, 1999; Ridder et al., 2006). A major critique raised against elite surveys however (see in particular Enticott et al., 2008) is that they usually focus on a limited selection of individuals at the top of the organization. As these individuals are relatively disconnected from processes at lower levels in the organizations, and also due to issues of desirability, such an approach is bound to provide a biased image of the respective organization(s). These are important points to take into consideration when interpreting the results.

In order to avoid random sampling and issues of representativeness, the COCOPS executive survey is based on a full census of all central government ministries and agencies. It covers all high level public sector executives who in their respective positions can be expected to be involved in public administration reform processes. A core set of binding sample principles, based on a detailed mapping of national administrative structures, was followed by all teams in all central government areas and especially in the case of employment and health. Deviations were only allowed if precise equivalence could not be established due to the specificity of administrative structures. Local government and service delivery levels were excluded for the purpose of this survey. Generally, within all central government ministries and subordinated agencies the two top-administrative levels were addressed; in some cases invitations were also sent to executives on the third level if, due to their policy relevance, this was deemed appropriate. State-owned enterprises and audit courts were not included due to their different task repertoire. In the fields of employment and health, as special

4 The Vienna University of Economics and Business for Austria, the Kaunas University of Technology for Lithuania, the Technical University of Lisbon for Portugal, Copenhagen Business School, the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence for Serbia and the University of Bern for Switzerland
focus areas, regional and state government ministries and agencies were also included if relevant – without addressing however direct service delivery levels (e.g. hospitals, job centers).

Moreover, the survey explicitly covers different units of analysis (see Pollitt 2011: 121, on units of analysis in comparative public administration research) to allow for multi-level analyses: policy field, organization and individual experiences of the respondent. These are explored through the (self)perceptions of public sector executives, acknowledged in research as the closest channel into objective processes and developments within public organizations and, at least in the absence of stringent limitations, as reliable predictors of administrative behaviour (see Aberbach et al., 1981; Bauer et al., 2009).

The survey was implemented online, with standardized webpages being built in the national language(s) for each country. Flexibility was allowed, and even recommended, in the data collection strategies used by national teams, due to major differences in administrative cultures between the countries. A major emphasis was put on a thorough data cleaning and harmonization at the end of the survey, to make sure that final results were comparable across countries and that any deviations allowed during the implementation process were explained and controlled.5

Table 1. Number of invitations and response rates of the COCOPS survey (by end of December 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Invitations Sent*</th>
<th>Survey completions</th>
<th>Response rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>36.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>35.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5297</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>22.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>24.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>29.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>20.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>29.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>33.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>18.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>11.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20307</td>
<td>4814</td>
<td>23.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The invitations sent represent the final number of invitations that has reached respondents, after the exclusion of any failure deliveries, wrong addresses etc.

The survey was launched in May 2012 and implemented in two rounds (May-July 2012, and September-November 2012). In these two rounds combined, the survey was sent out to over 20,000 high ranking civil servants in the ten participating countries via post and email (using either a personalized access link or an anonymous one), depending on each country’s predefined access strategy. Invitations were followed by reminders and, in cases where response rates were low, teams took additional measures, such as phone or postal reminders, to increase the number of survey participants. In the beginning of November 2012, all surveys were closed, and all datasets were cleaned, checked and harmonized according to a standardised procedure for all countries. By the end

5 The details of the survey design and implementation process can be found in the survey Research Report (see Hammerschmid, Oprisor, Stimac, 2013).
of 2012 there were 4814 valid answers available from ten participating countries and an overall response rate of 23.7% (for details see Table 1). These answers are the basis for the respective country reports. The data in both the national and the integrated datasets are subject to strict anonymity regulations, to protect individual respondents, whereas aggregate data will be published according to a set of rules commonly agreed upon by the research teams involved.

The current country report summarizes the findings for Norway along with some first comparisons with the aggregate results from all of the ten validated surveys in Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and UK. A more systematic comparative report based on these country reports will follow in summer 2013.
2. Context and Status Quo of Public Administration Reform in Norway

Norway is a small, multiparty parliamentary state. In a comparative perspective, it has a strong democratic tradition and relatively strong collectivist and egalitarian values, is consensus-oriented and has well-developed corporatist arrangements with integrated participation in policy making from interest organizations. Civil service unions are pretty strong. The regime’s performance, support for democracy and the level of trust in public institutions are generally higher than in most other countries (Norris 1999, Christensen and Lægreid 2005), as is the general level of trust in society (Rothstein and Stolle 2003). The economic situation is good and the financial crisis in Europe has not had a great impact on Norway.

The public sector in Norway is large, due mainly to a large, universal welfare state, and there is a relatively high level of mutual trust among public-sector organizations. Privatization reforms have been reluctant, but some critical infrastructure, such as telecommunication, has been partly privatized. Norway is a unitary state with a combination of political and administrative decentralization. The central government in Norway is characterized by strong sector ministries and relatively weak supra-ministries with coordination responsibilities across ministerial areas (Christensen 2003). The relationships between parliament, ministers and agencies are based on the principle of ministerial responsibility, meaning that the minister is responsible to the parliament for all activities within his or her policy areas in the ministry, as well as in subordinate bodies (Christensen and Lægreid 2002). Norway has a long tradition of central government agencies being responsible mainly for professional, regulatory and technical issues. There are 17 ministries and 62 central agencies in Norway. We also have 19 counties with both a delegated state authority to the Prefect and a regionally elected body (the county municipality). Adding to this many state agencies have their own regional bodies.

The principle of local self-government is also rather strong. There are elected bodies at both local and regional level, which are expected to make and implement their own local policy without too much interference from central government but also to implement policy decided at the central level. The delivery of the most important welfare services is delegated to the 429 municipalities. Added to this, there are also government bodies at both local and regional level that are responsible for implementing central government policy.

Norway has been a reluctant New Public Management (NPM) reformer (Olsen 1996). This is attributable to a combination of several factors. Historically, Norway’s political-administrative culture has been rather collectively oriented, attaching great importance to Rechtsstaat values and quality, and rather less to the individualism and efficiency, which have been prominent features of modern reforms (Christensen 2003). In recent decades, the pressure on Norway to engage in public reform has been rather low, reflecting a healthy economic situation and a well-functioning public apparatus. In addition, nearly three decades of minority governments up to 2005 have not created favorable reform conditions. Taken together, these factors produce a context that is not conducive to a strong public management reform path.

Even though Norway has been a reluctant NPM reformer, it has been influenced by international reform waves (Christensen and Lægreid 1998). In the mid-1980s Norway introduced two reform programs that reflected a NPM rhetoric, and the 1990s brought gradual reforms in the central government apparatus (Christensen and Lægreid 2001). The non-socialist parties pushed for public
reform rather early in the 1980s, although not very aggressively. Meanwhile, the Labour Party moved to the right on questions of administrative policy, accepting a gradual NPM course. The OECD increasingly put pressure on Norway to adopt more radical reforms from the 1990s. Eventually, this led to regulatory reform. Political polarization over public management reform has increased over the last 5–10 years, starting with some active moves towards reform by the Conservative-Centre government that was in office from 2001 to 2005. The Red-Green government that succeeded it is currently trying to amend or reverse some of the NPM measures installed.

Historically, Norway is a homogeneous society with many shared norms and values and a low level of conflict. These characteristics are reflected in the political-administrative system (Christensen and Peters 1999). The cabinet in Norway has comparatively strong collegial features, meeting frequently, favouring consensus and working as a team (Christensen and Lægreid 2002). Politicians and central civil servants share important norms and values, and trust one another. The Parliament also has a strong inclination towards consensus and collective decisions, and its relationship with the executive has traditionally been good and built on trust. Most citizens trust both central political and administrative institutions, and individual political and administrative actors. Furthermore, the system is traditionally characterized more by “meta-rules,” strong norm-building and socializing institutions than by detailed formal rules and incentive systems (Christensen and Peters 1999).

The Ministry of Government Administration has been responsible for the development of the various governments’ modernization and renewal programs (Lægreid and Roness 2003), starting with the Modernization Program of the Willoch government (1986) and the Renewal Program of the Brundtland government (1987), and followed by a White Paper on administrative and personnel policy (1992), the Jagland government’s “The Norwegian House” (1996), the program on a “Simplified Norway” of the Bondevik I government (1999), the Stoltenberg I government’s program for innovation in the public sector (2000), the program of the Bondevik II government labelled “From words to action” (2002), and the program “Renewal of the Public Sector” of the Stoltenberg II government (2005). These reform programs represent a loose collection of on-going reform measures and new reform ideas more than a consistent, coordinated and unified strategic plan for changing the administrative apparatus. They have, however, played an important symbolic role and have affected the public discourse on administrative policy and public-sector reforms. Generally, there has been a rather strong consensus on administrative policy, and only minor differences in the reform programs from one government to the next. The issue of privatization is an exception and tends to follow the ideological cleavage between the Right and the Left in Norwegian politics.

The Norwegian policy style, characterized by compromises, has largely produced reform programs that are focused on maintenance, modernization and efficiency measures aimed at retaining a big public sector rather than marketization, privatization and downsizing the state (see Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, Wright 1994). The reforms have normally been implemented by strong sectoral ministries and not by the Ministry of Government Administration, however. Typical examples are the Budget Reform (implemented by the Ministry of Finance), the Hospital Reform (implemented by the Ministry of Health), the Welfare Administration Reform (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion), The Police Reforms (Ministry of Justice), the reform of food control (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture) and the Quality Reform for universities and higher education (Ministry of Education and Research). Thus, sector-based central government has carried out sector-oriented reforms (Lægreid, Roness and Rolland 2013), producing structured pluralism rather than uniformity and universality.

A process of internal structural devolution started in the 1980s. This was brought about partly by an intention of making administrative rules and regulations more flexible. Ordinary agencies were given more autonomy in personnel and financial matters and to some extent in substantial policy issues as well. One important feature of internal structural devolution in the central administrative apparatus has been the gradual autonomization of ordinary agencies over the last decade or so. This has consisted chiefly of internal delegation of authority to agencies, accompanied by a more formalized
performance-assessment regime. Another feature has been the autonomization of regulatory agencies.

A second element has been external structural devolution – comprising the establishment of new, autonomous state-owned companies (SOCs) or the reorganization of public enterprises into such companies. Until 1992, major public domains like the railways, telecommunications, the power supply, postal services, forestry, grain sales, public broadcasting, road construction and airport administration were organized as central agencies or more integrated government-administrated enterprises. Since then, the commercial parts of these enterprises have been corporatized, i.e. established as various types of SOCs, while the regulatory parts have retained their agency form. There has, however, not been a linear and steady growth towards more agencification and corporatization (Lægreid, Roness and Rolland 2013).

In addition to the structural reform measures, Management by Objectives and results (MBOR), made mandatory from 1990 (Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2006a), increased market orientation and contracting-out; increased managerial autonomy and the use of leadership contracts, service declarations, and the introduction of one-stop shops exemplifies other initiatives.

Summing up, since the 1980s the centralized state model in Norway has been challenged, primarily through structural devolution. The gradual creation of more independent agencies and state-owned companies meant that subordinate organizational units were moved further away from political executive leaders (Christensen and Lægreid 2003). In the period 2001–2005 the Centre-Conservative government adopted some ideas from the neo-liberalist doctrine and implemented them in regulatory, health and education reforms.

By focusing on performance management, single-purpose-organizations and structural devolution, the reforms have reinforced vertical coordination, but tend to ignore the problems of horizontal coordination (Fimreite and Lægreid 2005). Horizontal coordination represents a pressing problem in the Norwegian political-administrative system, but has not been emphasised in the reforms of the past decades. Still, the challenges from wicked transboundary problems have recently been put higher on the reform agenda. This can be exemplified by the reform of the welfare administration and in recent renewed attention to cross-boundary internal security issues.

The Centre-Conservative government in power from 2001 to 2005 had a rather typical neo-liberal agenda, and pursued reforms that had a hybrid character and some important post-NPM features (Christensen and Lægreid 2010). One example is the hospital reform, which combined centralization, thus potentially increasing central political control, with devolution (Lægreid, Opedal and Stigen 2005). The reform was decided by the labour minority government in 2001 but was implemented by the Centre-Right minority government in 2002. It transferred the ownership of hospitals from the counties to central government and transformed the hospitals from public administration units into health enterprises. Another example is the merging of the central administrative sectors of employment and national insurance administration into a new agency for work and welfare, which collaborates through partnership agreements with the social services run by local authorities in local one-stop shops (Christensen, Fimreite and Lægreid 2007). The reform was decided in 2005 and implemented through 2012, and represents the largest administrative reform ever carried through in Norway. A third example is the Quality Reform in university and higher educations in 2003 (Bleiklie 2009). The reform introduced a new incentive based and output oriented funding system, a new system of accreditation and quality assurance, a new study program, and a new system for leadership and institutional steering inspired by New Public Management. A fourth example is the
attempt to strengthen control of the central immigration administration, which had gained institutional autonomy following its reorganization in 2001 (Christensen and Lægreid 2009b).

The current Red-Green coalition won the 2005 elections on an anti-NPM ticket and was re-elected in 2009. The current Red-Green government emphasizes the participation of employees, a feature atypical of the NPM-reforms implemented under the previous, Centre-Conservative government. The current government also tends to stress collective features and societal solutions, voices support for a large public sector, and is sceptical towards competitive tendering, out-sourcing and privatization. Instead, it advocates the renewal and development of the public sector, though just how this is to be done is not very clearly defined. The Red-Green government also emphasizes the more classical post-NPM features of coordination and a holistic perspective. It is rather sceptical about structural devolution and pays more attention to ICT and digitalization. In a White Paper from 2009 titled “An Administration for Democracy and Community”, the government’s main aim in its administrative policy is to combine political control, broad participation and an efficient use of resources (St. meld. 19 (2008-2009)). This indicates a reform break more than a new reform wave. The white paper presents a hybrid and multidimensional model combining core elements of NPM with partnerships, community, participation and collaboration (Christensen and Lægreid 2011a).

Hence, the current government has rebalanced some NPM features by introducing several small changes. The work and welfare reform was initiated by the former government, but implemented by the current government (Christensen, Fimreite and Lægreid 2007). Some privatization, cut-back management and competitive tendering has been stopped. This is the case in the organization of the railways infrastructure. Also, the law on private schools has been changed, making it less easy to establish and get public support for private schools. The government has established a new ownership policy for state-owned enterprises, saying no to options programs for directors and trying to control them more. Finally, the government is now trying to control the immigration administration more. These examples demonstrate a move away from structural devolution and towards a strengthening of the centre.

A conclusion is that the current government is ridden with tensions between the two reform waves of NPM and post-NPM. Many of the changes made gradually over the years, like structural devolution, are not easy to reverse. Furthermore, there is disagreement within the coalition about what approach to take to reforms. Thus, the policy has in practice consisted more of rebalancing than transforming the NPM features introduced in the public sector (Christensen, Lie and Lægreid 2007). The reform processes can be characterised as layering processes, combining old public administration, new public management and whole-of-government reforms, resulting in more complex and hybrid organizational forms (Christensen and Lægreid 2011b).
3. Data and Method

3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation

The Norwegian COCOPS survey was conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Bergen, Department of Administration and Organization Theory. According to the chosen sampling strategy, respondents from the top three administrative levels within the 17 Norwegian ministries were included for the central government policy area. At the upper level this included 18 Secretary Generals. At the second level all Director Generals were included (121), and at the third level all Heads of Department (about 500).

At the agency level, all agencies listed as central administrative bodies were included (62 bodies). Previous research shows that agencies and other bodies at arm's length from political authorities are defined and identified differently across countries (Verhoest, van Thiel, Bouckaert and Lægreid 2012). In our case, a minimum definition was used, meaning that only state agencies outside the ministries were included, while state-owned companies and government foundations were not. In our case, state agencies are characterized as semi-autonomous organizations without legal independence but with some managerial autonomy (van Thiel 2012). At agency level, respondents from the top two administrative levels were included.

The employment sector included respondents from the top two administrative levels with the Norwegian Labour and Welfare administration (NAV) at central level. The sample also included all respondents from the top administrative level within 19 County units of NAV (NAV Fylke) and directors of NAV Special Units. Local NAV offices responsible for service delivery at the local level were not included.

The health sector included respondents from the top two administrative levels in central government. Here, an exception to the rule of only including state agencies was implemented and respondents from the top two levels of four regional health enterprises in Norway were included in order to get a balance of respondents from both the employment and the health sector. Also, 19 County medical officers were included. Service delivery at lower level (i.e. individual hospitals and the municipality level) was not included.

Based on previous positive experience and considering limited time and resources, an access strategy based solely on e-mail invitations was chosen. Respondents were sent an invitation by e-mail with a link to the electronic web survey. A PDF version of the questionnaire was also available on the survey webpage with an option to return the questionnaire by post. In the end, no postal questionnaires were returned.

In order to check for any problems of errors, a survey pilot was sent to 10 individual respondents with a background from public administration and research April 17, 2012. The original e-mail invitations to participate were then distributed on June 7, 2012. Two reminders were sent within the next weeks, the first June 18, 2012 and the second June 22, 2012.

The first round of e-mail invitations revealed a technical access problem for the respondents working within the NAV administration. Due to internal firewalls, respondents from NAV could not enter the

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6 State Secretaries are politically appointed and were therefore not included.
survey from their work computers. In order to solve this, both practically and technically, it was decided to resend the questionnaire to respondents from NAV after the summer and after the technical barriers had been removed. This was done on September 24, 2012, with two reminders in the weeks following (October 2 and October 10, 2012).

Overall, a total of 1299 invitations were sent out: 1055 to central government executives, 155 to health sector executives, and 89 to executives in the employment sector. In total, the survey received 436 partially or fully filled out answers, which leads to an overall response rate of 34 percent, as shown in Table 2. The response rates for the health sector (54% vs 30%) and the employment sector (54% vs. 27%) are considerably higher than the total COCOPS response rates within the same sectors.

### Table 2. Sample size and response rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central government</th>
<th>Health sector</th>
<th>Employment sector</th>
<th>Norway total</th>
<th>Total COCOPS sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitations sent</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>20307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed surveys</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>4814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>29,5% (21,4%)</td>
<td>54,2% (30,6%)</td>
<td>53,9% (26,9%)</td>
<td>33,6%</td>
<td>23,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the survey responses and their distribution across policy fields (see Figure 1) we see that a considerable share of responses comes from the areas of general government (21%) and health (19%). Otherwise, the respondents spread out rather evenly, varying between five and ten percent within each category. Fewest respondents are found in the fields of defence (3%), matching the response share for the overall COCOPS sample. Compared to the entire COCOPS sample, the amount of respondents from general government is twice the size in the Norwegian sample, whereas the size of the finance and justice, police and safety sectors in the Norwegian case are only close to half of the size in all countries combined.

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7 Here, it should be noted that respondents were allowed to select more than one category.
Unless otherwise indicated, the following categories are used to interpret the results: if a scale ranging from 1 to 7 is used, 1 meaning ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 meaning ‘strongly agree’, the percentage shares for scale numbers 1, 2 and 3 (vs. 5, 6 and 7) are added and interpreted as ‘rather disagree’ (vs. rather agree). In some cases, the percentage shares for scale numbers 1 and 2 vs. 6 and 7 are calculated and interpreted as ‘agree’ vs. ‘disagree’. 
3.2 Organizational Context of Respondents

Before exploring respondents’ opinions and attitudes towards their role and work in public administration it is important to establish some of the key contextual features that set the organizational and personal background of the respondents as described in chapters 4 to 8.

**Organization type** (see Figure 2). The greatest share of respondents work within an agency or subordinate government body (47%) or in a ministry at central government level (35%). This reflects a strong tradition of central agencies in Norway. For the overall COCOPS sample the share of executives in agencies at the central government level is considerably lower (32%). The Norwegian sample and the entire COCOPS sample are at level with regard to the amount of respondents working in ministries at central government level (35% and 32%) as well as in bodies at regional level (16% and 19%).

**Organization size.** Moving on to the right-hand box of Figure 2, we see that a scant majority (52%) of the Norwegian public officials state that they work in a medium-sized organization, i.e. an organization of 100-499 employees. This is a considerably larger share of the respondents than in the overall COCOPS sample (33%). The rest of the respondents are spread quite evenly out on the five remaining categories. Compared to the overall COCOPS sample, a much smaller share of Norwegian executives work in organizations with more than 500 employees (31% in Norwegian sample vs. 49%).

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8 The categories for Norway on this question are slightly different from the rest of the sample to accommodate the Norwegian context. The category “Ministry at state or regional government level” is used in the overall sample, but converted to “Agency or subordinate body at regional level” in the Norwegian context. The category “Agency or subordinate government body at state or regional government level” in the overall sample is converted to “Public body at lower level”. 
3.2 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents

Gender (see Figure 3). A clear majority of the respondents are men (60%). Even though female senior executives are underrepresented here, by comparison, the share of women in the Norwegian sample (40%) is considerably higher than in the overall COCOPS sample (32%). Thus, female executives are more present in Norway than in other European countries. A high share of women in executive positions corresponds to the general picture of employees in central government in Norway, where women are in fact overrepresented (Difi 2010).

Age (see Figure 3). As many as 83% of Norwegian senior officials are 46 years or older. This is substantially above the overall COCOPS sample finding, where 73% place themselves in the same categories. 17% of the public officials in Norway are between 36 and 45 years old (as opposed to 20% in the overall COCOPS sample). Only 0,5% of the Norwegian respondents are under 35 years old vs. 6% in the overall COCOPS sample. The results point to a relatively old executive population in Norway, possibly with long time of service in the public sector. It seems that the age distribution corresponds to the overall picture of employees at central government level. In general, more than half of the employees in central government are above 40 years old (Difi 2010).

Hierarchical level (see Figure 3). Moving on to executives’ position in the organizational hierarchy, we find almost three fourths of the respondents (73%) to be working at the third hierarchical level in the organization. This is in contrast to the overall COCOPS sample where only 35% of the
respondents state that they work at the third hierarchical level. One explanation can be that there are differences between the original population of respondents from the countries included. In order to reach a sufficiently high number of executives, and in the interest of reaching an acceptable response rate, the population of respondents from the third hierarchical level in Norway was higher than from the other countries included in the survey. From the bigger share of lower standing executives in the Norwegian case, it follows that there is also a big discrepancy between the Norwegian sample and the overall sample with regards to both amount of respondents in second hierarchical level (13% vs. 40%) and top hierarchical level (13% vs. 24%) in organizations. Thus, executives from the uppermost hierarchical level are not very prominent in the Norwegian case.

**Education** (see Figure 3). With regard to educational background, we see that a clear majority of all respondents (72%) have a university degree at Master level, which is slightly higher than the same share in the overall COCOPS sample (69%). However, the share of respondents with a doctoral degree in Norway shows only half of the shares for the overall sample (7% vs. 16%), and there are more senior officials with a Bachelor degree in Norway than the case is for all COCOPS countries together (21% vs. 16% in the overall sample). This indicates that even though Norwegian senior executives are clearly well educated, the executives in the other COCOPS-countries are even more highly skilled.

Following up on public officials’ education, an overview of disciplinary fields of education⁹ (see Figure 4) show that among Norwegian senior officials, business/management/economics (30%) is the subject where most have their highest qualifications. Many of the respondents also state that they have either political science/public administration (20%) or other social sciences and humanities (21%) as their main educational field. The legal profession, which is the most frequent education for the entire COCOPS sample (28%), is only the main field of education for 13% of the Norwegian executives. Thus, whereas senior executives in the overall sample have a background in law or business/economics, Norwegian bureaucracy is dominated by economists and social scientists. The legal profession is, however, stronger represented among executives at the ministerial level (Christensen and Lægreid 2009c).

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⁹ Here, it should be noted that respondents could select more than one answer.
With regard to question of tenure of office (see Figure 5), the results might mirror some of the key characteristics for the Norwegian public administration, such as life-long careers in the civil service and seniority-based promotion. More than half of the respondents (54%) have worked in the public sector for more than twenty years. This is slightly below the overall sample result (58%). Also, only 3% of senior officials have a public sector experience of less than five years (vs. 14% in the overall COCOPS sample). The general low mobility within the sector is indicated by a share of 46% of Norwegian executives who have been working in the current organization for more than 10 years, and 19% who have been in the same position for more than 10 years, reflecting a similar overall pattern in the sample.

Looking more closely at senior officials’ experience outside the public sector, we see that a relatively high share of the public sector executives has at least some private sector experience. Only 18% state that they have no previous private sector work experience (lower than in the overall COCOPS sample (27%), and 33% say they have 5 years’ work experience or more in the private sector (vs. 19% in the overall sample).
Summing up, compared to the general European picture the Norwegian executives in this survey are to a greater extent located in central government agencies. A smaller share work in large organizations and a larger group come from the third hierarchical level compared to the survey results from the other European countries. There are relatively more women among the Norwegian executives and the average age is pretty high. In this survey, Norwegian executives are dominated by economists and social scientists, and the legal profession has a weaker position than in the general sample. Similar to the rest of the sample, Norwegian executives predominantly follow a public sector career.
4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives

The following section will present some data on how public sector executives in Norway perceive their role as executives, their motivation and social values and preferences.

Identity and role perception (see Figure 6). When asked about their self-understanding as public sector executives, a clear majority of the respondents agree that achieving results (89%) ensuring efficient use of resources (87%), ensuring impartial implementation of law and rules (74%) and providing expertise and technical knowledge (73%) is central for their role. Other aspects such as getting public organizations to work together (64%) and finding joint solutions to solve problems of public concern (55%) are also strongly anchored. Finally, a rather low share of 31% agrees that developing new policy agendas and providing a voice for societal interests is part of their role as executives.

Figure 6. Identity and self-understanding (Q: I mainly understand my role as public executive as)

The answers from the Norwegian public sector executives are in line with the results from the overall COCOPS sample. Also here, the same four roles are agreed with as central for public officials; achieving results (82%) ensuring efficient use of resources (78%), ensuring impartial implementation of law and rules (73%) and providing expertise and technical knowledge (71%). The biggest difference is that Norwegian executives seem to be more preoccupied with getting public organizations to work together (66% vs. 55% in the overall COCOPS sample). Also, the overall sample shows more agreement with finding joint solutions to solve problems of public concern compared to the Norwegian sample (63% vs. 55% in the Norwegian sample).

Value preferences for public sector priorities (see Figure 7). In this question, the executives were asked to place themselves in a line between two opposing general preferences with regard to public sector priorities. With regard to values, we find a clear preference for traditional civil service values such as equity and quality over efficiency (agreement 30% vs. 7% and 27% vs. 5% respectively). This clear positioning is interesting, as Figure 6 showed us that almost all public officials agreed that ensuring efficient use of resources was one of their main roles. Still, the traditional citizen focus is being challenged by a more managerial customer focus (21% agreement vs. 19%) both among Norwegian and European officials. Also, the identical distribution for those officials emphasizing...
achieving results and those preoccupied with following the rules (38% rather agree and rather disagree) might indicate a turn among senior executives with regard to the focus on efficiency. Furthermore, the strong support for tax financed public services as opposed to user charges (37% agreement vs. 5%), should not be a surprise, as our welfare state is organized around tax financing. We also see a strong support in favour of state provision, as opposed to market provision (38% vs. 5%). Thus, the traditional bureaucratic understanding of the state seems to stand tall, although we see an increasing focus on efficiency, and a turn towards more customer-orientation.

Figure 7. Priorities as public servants (Q: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position?)

Comparing the Norwegian sample with the results for the overall COCOPS sample, we find that Norwegian officials represent a more traditional bureaucratic understanding of the state compared to all officials partaking in the COCOPS survey. All in all, Norwegian public officials seem to be less preoccupied with efficiency measures and customer-orientation than the case is in the rest of the COCOPS-countries.

Motivation (see Figure 8). When Norwegian officials were asked to evaluate what motivates their job, close to everyone agreed that interesting work (95% agreement) was important. There is also a high level of agreement on the importance of being able to make decisions (76%) and doing something that is useful to society (73%). Most officials were less preoccupied with status (15% agree that it is important), followed by good opportunities for promotion (26%) and job security (31%). With regard to flexible working hours (41% agreement), opportunities to help other people (41%) and high income (31%), officials seem to think that this is important, but not the most defining issues for their motivation. One should however keep in mind that these results are relative sizes, and that, all in all, the majority of officials see most of these aspects as important in their everyday work.
Comparing the findings for the entire sample, we see that all executives in the survey agree that, interesting work, room to make decisions and doing something useful to society are the most important motivations. Still, the overall sample shows that executives find good opportunities for promotion (45% vs. 26% sees this as important), job security (43 vs. 28%) and status (24% vs. 15%) to be more important than what was the case among Norwegian officials.

Social value preferences (see Figure 9). In a last value oriented question officials were asked about their attitudes towards different aspects of life. We see that more than 77% of the Norwegian officials place themselves in opposition to the statement that they avoid doing anything that might upset the status quo. Also, all of the respondents place themselves at the positive side of the spectrum with regard to the two statements: I make decisions and move on (82% agree) and I like taking responsibility for making decisions (89% agree). Thus, Norwegian public officials consider themselves to be rather progressive and vigorous. Still, only 19% of executives agree that they like taking risks, and 67% of the respondents agree that success depends on ability rather than luck. Furthermore, rather few officials agree that being successful is important to them (20%). Also, public officials show a high degree of general trust, with 59% agreeing that most people can be trusted. Last, a majority of the executives (58%) also agree that being creative and thinking up new ideas is important to them.
A comparative perspective reveals that the European officials also perceive themselves as forward-looking and responsible, with a clear majority agreeing that they make decisions and move on. They also like taking responsibility for decisions. What is more, the same disagreement to the statement that they do not want to upset the status quo, is present. Still, we see that European officials are more risk prone (26% vs. 19%) and less trustful (42% vs. 59%) than their Norwegian counterparts. Also, European executives seem more ambitious, focusing more on the importance of being successful (39% vs. 20% in Norwegian sample). A smaller share agrees that success depends on ability instead of luck (52% vs. 67% in Norwegian sample).

Summing up, the Norwegian executives in line with their European colleagues have multiple roles focusing on performance, efficiency, impartiality, professionalism as well as finding joint solutions. With regard to values we find a clear preference for traditional civil service values, such as equity and quality over efficiency. In line with the Norwegian welfare state tradition we also find preferences for tax financing as opposed to user charges and to state provision as opposed to market provision. Taken together, Norwegian executives seem to be less preoccupied with efficiency measures and customer-orientation than executives in other countries. The Norwegian executives are less motivated by status, job security and promotions than their European colleagues, but agree that the most important motive is to have interesting work, to be able to make decisions and to do something that is useful for society. Norwegian executives are as the rest of the sample, forward-looking, responsible and progressive, but they are less risk prone, less creative, less ambitious and more trustful than executives in other countries.
5. Characteristics of the Public Administration Work Context

This chapter analyses how Norwegian top civil servants perceive their work context and evaluates to what extent the results indicate that management practices can be transferred successfully to Public Administration.

When asked about goal ambiguity and measurability in their work context (see Figure 10), Norwegian public sector executives appear to be rather sceptical about the possibility to observe and measure their organization’s activities: 35% of the respondents agree that their activities can be observed and measured easily while 37% disagree. This gives an impression that many officials do not view their organizations as transparent. Nevertheless, the remaining replies indicate low levels of goal ambiguity: More than 80% agree that their organization has a high number of goals, that the organization’s goals are communicated to all staff, and that their goals are clearly stated.

Figure 10. Goal ambiguity and measurability (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?) (n=428-434).

Norwegian executives are in line with the overall COCOPS sample with regard to the evaluation of how easy it is to observe and measure their activities, representing 35% compared to 36%, respectively. Thus, a limited openness around activities seems to be a characteristic of public organizations in all partaking countries. On the other hand, the lower share of European colleagues reporting that they have a rather high number of goals, show that Norwegian officials work in a more goal oriented environment (65% in the overall COCOPS sample state that they have a rather high number of goals, compared to 81% in Norway). When it comes to perception of stating and communicating of goals, public executives from the Norwegian sample are more positive than the rest. 85% in Norway and 78% in the rest of the survey perceive that goals are clearly stated, and 86% of Norwegian officials state that goals are communicated to all while 73% in the overall sample say the same.

Management autonomy (see Figure 10) is another variable asking further about the transferability of management practices to the public sector. Norwegian officials feel they have a considerable degree of autonomy with regard to policy implementation (83% rather agree), as well as hiring staff (80%
rather agree). Also, close to half of the respondents rather agree that they have autonomy for changes in the structure of their organization (49%), for promoting staff (50%) and for budget allocations (51%). At the other end of the spectrum, 52% of Norwegian officials state that they have rather low autonomy when contracting out services is considered. Also, 40% of executives confirm a rather low autonomy with regard to policy choice and design. With regard to the last statements, dismissing or removing staff, the respondents spread out quite evenly across the values, with approximately 20% placing themselves in the middle either/or option. All in all, the understanding here is that public officials experience a rather high degree of autonomy in their everyday work which is very much in line with previous findings (Lægreid et al. 2006b, 2012). This might reflect a high level of mutual trust between ministries and agencies in Norway (Christensen and Lægreid 2008a).

Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to) (n=425-435)

Compared to international experiences, Norwegian executives perceive a greater degree of autonomy in almost all respects. This is especially the case for hiring staff (where 80% of Norwegian respondents perceive a rather high degree of autonomy, compared to only 41% of the overall sample), and for policy implementation (where 83% of Norwegian rather agree that they experience high autonomy, compared to 62% in the international sample). Also, a higher share of Norwegian executives reports a rather high autonomy in promoting staff (50% vs. 38% in the overall COCOPS sample). Norwegian senior officials feel slightly less autonomous than their European counterparts only with respect to policy choice and design (28% of Norwegian officials and 40% of overall respondents feel a rather high degree of autonomy). Still, for both groups of officials, a rather low degree of autonomy is the pattern here.

**Interaction frequency** (Figure 12) gives an overview of how often Norwegian public officials interact with different institutions. The first thing one notices is that public officials are in closest contact with the actors within their own organization – 93% interact daily with their direct staff, and 84% of Norwegian executives interact at least weekly with their administrative superiors and higher administrative levels and administrative units within their organization (budget, personnel, IT etc.), respectively. Also, for subordinate agencies and bodies, most respondents keep contact at a weekly basis, or more often (52%), whereas contact with their responsible minister is less frequent (32% have at least monthly contact). Among the outside actors, contact with officials in other departments...
is the only interaction that seems to be rather extensive. Here, 75% of the respondents state that they are in contact with other departments outside their own at least on a monthly basis. Interaction frequency with trade union representatives and media is medium (68% and 62% interact at least monthly with these actors). For audit organizations and private sector companies, the interaction mostly happens on a yearly basis or less frequently (71% and 56%, respectively). Also, looking closer at interactions with other politicians, as well as local/regional government, two thirds of the officials state that they are in contact with them yearly or less frequently. The low level of contact with responsible minister and other politicians should be seen in relation to fact that the majority of respondents work at the third hierarchical level in the bureaucracy. This indicates that public officials work rather independently from politicians. The lowest levels of interaction is found with the international institutions (such as IMF, OECD, ILO) and EU institutions, with 67% and 64% respectively, stating that they have never or rarely been in contact with these units.

Figure 12. Interaction frequency (Q: Please indicate how frequently you typically interact with the following actors or bodies) (n=398-423)

A comparative perspective reveals that the public sector tends to be fragmented also in other countries. In the overall COCOPS sample, public service executives similarly interact most often with actors within their organization. A notable difference is that the Norwegian executives have a closer contact with administrative units within their organization than what is the case for the whole sample (86% are in contact at least weekly, compared to 72% in the overall sample). This might reflect the fact that many of the respondents are managers at the third hierarchical level. Another interesting finding is that Norwegian officials hold much closer contact with media (64% holds at least monthly contact, compared to 39% in the entire COCOPS sample) and, maybe less surprising, with trade union representatives (66% holds at least monthly contact, compared to 42%). Executives from the Norwegian sample have somewhat less contact with local/regional government (31% have at least monthly contact compared to 48%) and private sector companies (44% have at least monthly contact compared to 55%). Last, we find that with regard to contact with the international level as well as with other politicians – including own responsible minister, contact is just as rare for the entire sample as is the case for the Norwegian sub-sample.
In contrast to interaction frequency, **coordination quality** (see Figure 13) is a more in-depth measure of fragmentation in public administration. It is interesting to see that close to 20% of the Norwegian executives state that they cannot assess the collaboration with national and local/regional bodies and national and supra-national bodies/international organizations. This probably reflects that many of the executives have internally directed roles and tasks, and little experience with different types of coordination (Christensen and Lægreid 2008b). Among those who answered these questions, the collaboration is considered best within national government bodies within the same policy area (58% considered collaboration as rather good). For the four remaining variables – government bodies and private and voluntary stakeholders, national and supra-national bodies, national and local/regional government bodies and national government bodies from different policy areas, the distribution across the scale is rather similar: the short side of 30% argue that collaboration between bodies within their own policy field is more or less poor, whereas around 20% are neutral, and around 30% think collaboration is more or less good. The overall picture tells us that coordination is not considered to be particularly good, and this experience seems to be strongest in relation to bodies from different policy areas.

**Figure 13. Coordination quality (Q: How would you characterize collaboration in your own policy field between) (n=344-408)**

![Diagram showing coordination quality across different types of collaboration](image)

Despite the mixed experience with coordination with the different institutions, Norwegian public sector executives assess coordination quality more favourably than their international colleagues; this applies especially to the collaboration between national government bodies within the same policy area (58% of Norwegian respondents evaluate this as rather good, compared to only 49% of the entire COCOPS sample). Yet, the international sample evaluates collaboration with government bodies and private and voluntary sector stakeholders as better (48% rather good vs. 35 in Norwegian sample). The same is the case for collaboration with national and local/regional government bodies (40% rather good vs. 29% in Norwegian sample).

Moving on to Figure 14 and the question of **degree of politicization**, 63% of the respondents rather disagree that politicians interfere in routine activities in their organization. Furthermore, we see that there is rather strong agreement that politicians respect the technical expertise of senior executives (72%). To the statement that politicians interfere with senior-level appointments, the respondents spread out equally along the scale. Thus, Norwegian executives seem to operate rather freely in their everyday work. It is also interesting to see that 44% of officials have chosen the neutral option to the
statement that senior executives and not politicians initiate reforms or new policies. Last, 48% rather agree that removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better policies. Thus, the degree of politicization is not experienced as particularly strong among Norwegian senior executives (Christensen et al 2010).

Figure 14. Degree of politicization (Q: What is your view on the following statements) (n=327-396)

Comparing the findings from Norway with the cross-national sample, the main impression is a large degree of similarity. However, a considerable lower share of international executives agrees that politicians respect the technical expertise of senior executives (54%, compared to 72% in Norway). Summing up, compared to their European colleagues, the Norwegian executives tend to work in a more goal oriented environment. They perceived a greater degree of managerial autonomy and policy implementation autonomy but less autonomy when it comes to policy design. They have seldom contact with politicians. Compared to the other countries Norwegian executives have a more frequent contact pattern with media and also with trade unions, but less contact with local and regional government and private sector companies. The coordination quality is perceived as good with bodies within own policy area, also compared to their European colleagues. On the other side, officials are less favourable concerning coordination with private and voluntary sector and with local and regional governmental bodies. Thus, vertical internal coordination is pretty good, but external coordination is rather poor. The degree of politicisation is rather small. Politicians respect the technical expertise of senior executives to a great extent and more than what is normal in other European countries. It seems that politicians seldom interfere with routine activities.
6. Relevance of NPM and post NPM Reforms

This chapter provides information on public sector executives’ perception of the implementation of NPM and post NPM reforms which are characterized by a stronger emphasis on coordination and networked forms of governance. The respondents have been asked to assess the type and character of reform trends in their policy field (6.1), their organization (6.2) and in their own work (6.3).

6.1 Policy field level

Moving on to focus on reform trends, Figure 15 below shows that transparency and open government and digital or e-government within public administration are seen as the most important recent reform trends in the Norwegian bureaucracy (84% list these as important to a rather big extent). Also, more than 70% of the officials state that reforms focusing on outcomes and results are important to a rather big extent. The same goes for collaboration and cooperation among different public sector actors. Furthermore, there are signs of reform through internal bureaucracy reduction, flexible employment, treatment of service users as customers (65%/56%/61% list these as important to a rather large extent) and lastly, within external partnership and strategic alliances (46% to a rather large extent). On the other side of the scale, reform is seen as the least important within the fields of privatization (78% experience this rather rarely), followed by extending state provision into new areas, contracting out and public sector downsizing (48%/62%/58% place themselves on the non-reform side of the scale). Even more, for creation of autonomous agencies or corporatization and mergers of government organizations, the share saying that reforms are not that important (50%/40%) outdo the share stating that reform are important to a large extent (30%/36%). For citizen participation methods/initiatives, the officials spread out evenly across the scale. Thus, we find evidence that certain reforms are taking place, but that the most pronounced NPM-types of reform, such as privatization and contracting out are only deemed important to a limited extent.
The results for all COCOPS countries clearly show that some radical public sector reforms have been more extensively implemented in the other European countries compared to Norway. The most remarkable difference is the giant gap in implementation of public sector downsizing, where 70% in the entire sample state that this is taking place to a rather large extent, while only 25% among Norwegian officials say the same. Furthermore, public sector executives in other countries more frequently experience implementation of mergers of government organizations (49% vs. 36%) and contracting out (34% vs. 26%). Yet, for treatment of service users as customers, external partnerships and strategic alliances creation of autonomous agencies or corporatization and extending state provision into new areas the experiences in Norway and the overall sample are quite similar. At the same time, transparency and open government as well as flexible employment has been more frequently implemented in Norwegian public administration than elsewhere (84% vs. 60% and 56% vs. 46%, respectively). Nevertheless, the differences are smaller when it comes to evaluation of collaboration and cooperation among different public sector actors focusing on outcomes and results (70% vs. 66%), and internal bureaucracy reduction/cutting red tape. Also, for privatization both the Norwegian sub-sample and the entire COCOPS sample agree that this happens rather rarely. When it comes to e-government, the Norwegian executives assess this as more important compared to their European colleagues (84% in Norway deem this largely important, vs. 68% in the overall sample). This is in line with the current government’s focus on digital government which is announced by the Prime Minister to be the next major government reform (Digitalizing Public Services 2012). Thus, it seems that although reform trends have been visible in both samples, the ones most common in the Norwegian case are judged less demanding and less extensive than by European colleagues.

**Dynamics of public sector reform** (Figure 16) illustrate how public sector executives evaluate the reforms that have been implemented. The respondents were asked to indicate their views on different dynamics of public sector reforms on a 1-10 scale. With regard to the overall assessment of the success of public administration reforms in Norway, the responses are rather difficult to
interpret. On the one hand, 28% of the respondents perceive the reforms as rather successful (respond 8-10 on the scale). On the other hand, only 5% see them as rather unsuccessful (respond 1-3 on the scale). Furthermore, close to every fourth Norwegian executive asked assess the reforms as not demanding enough (22%; scales 8-10 vs. 10%; scales 1-3). Still, the share characterising public sector reform as substantial (42%; scales 1-3) and comprehensive (22%; scales 1-3) is bigger than the ones finding reforms to be symbolic (7%, scales 1-3) and partial (14%, scales 8-10). Also, one fourth of the public officials believe that Norwegian public sector reform is consistent, in contrast to only 9% of respondents finding it inconsistent. With regard to the drives and dynamics of reform in Norway, public officials’ answers are spread rather equally out. Public executives are split in two with regard to the view of reform as being about cost savings or about service improvements. Also, half of the respondents say that the reforms have been signified by little public involvement, whereas the other half says that public involvement has high. The exceptions are, first, the question of initiation power, which is conceived as strictly top-down (49%; scales 1-3), and second, union involvement, where unions are experienced as more supportive than contesting (27%, scales 8-10 vs. 14%, scales 1-3). Reform processes in Norway are driven by politicians (64%; scales 1-5), but just as much by crises and incidents (51%, scales 1-5) than planned efforts (49%, scales 6-10).

Some interesting differences appear when we compare the Norwegian responses to those of the overall COCOPS sample. Comparing means, we find that the reform design that European public institutions have introduced is perceived as more inconsistent (5,3 vs. 4,8), more partial (5,6 vs. 5,2) and more symbolic (4,7 vs. 4,3) than what is the case for the Norwegian reform design. With regard to the drivers of reform, other countries’ reform designs are clearly more top down (3,3 vs. 3,9), more contested by the unions (4,2 vs. 5,9) and less open to public involvement (4,3 vs. 5,8). This is in line with the Norwegian collaborative and participation reform strategy and policy style (Olsen 1983). The findings here also seem to inflict on the overall assessment among public sector executives, stating that public sector reform is considered less successful among European officials than among Norwegian executives (5,6 vs. 6,4).
6.2. Organizational level

Management instruments. Moving on to the organizational level, Figure 17 asks which instruments for management are available in the officials’ organizations. The most commonly used tools seem to be staff appraisal talks, risk management, management by objectives and results, codes of conduct and business/strategic planning. 79-89% state that they largely use such instruments. Decentralization, both of staffing decisions and of financial decisions, seems to also be instruments seen in a considerable share of public offices (55% and 56%, respectively, largely use these). Furthermore, a majority of executives state that quality management systems and customer/user surveys are being used to a rather large extent (65% and 57%). Moving on to see what is less frequently used management instruments in Norwegian public sector, performance related pay stands out, with 75% stating that they rather not use this instrument. For internal steering by contract, 47% say that they do not use this instrument very much, while 37% state that they tend to use it. No clear pattern is observable for benchmarking and service points for customers. All in all, management instruments seem to have rather high relevance. The overall picture is rather similar to previous findings (Christensen and Lægreid 2008a, Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2007).

Figure 17. Relevance of different management instruments (Q: To what extent are the following instruments used in your organization?) (n=388-430)

Executives in the overall COCOPS sample use management instruments to the same extent as Norwegian organizations, but what is weighted differs somewhat. We see that performance related pay (25% vs. 13%) is clearly more common in the entire sample than what is the case for Norway. For benchmarking, internal steering by contract and service points for customers, the differences are small between European senior executives and their Norwegian colleagues. On the opposite side, the European executives see much less of risk management (79% vs. 50%), staff appraisal talks (89% vs. 77%), decentralization of staffing and financial decisions (55 vs. 31 and 56 vs. 38), management by objectives and results (85 vs. 71) and codes of conduct (82% vs. 61%) than their Norwegian colleagues. Thus, it seems like management systems are a part of officials’ everyday work-life both in Norway and in the rest of Europe, but that which management instruments are utilized vary considerably.
Relevance of performance management (see Figure 18). For Norwegian officials, the general picture is that public officials’ organizations experience little monitoring by indicators from the politicians (59% state that this is rather not used). What is more, neither sanctions for not achieving goals nor rewards for achieving goals are a part of the conditions that they work under (74% and 71% respectively say that such management is rather not used). This is in line with previous findings (Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2006a). Lastly, the figure shows that what Norwegian executives do experience is measurement of outputs and outcomes (62% rather agree that this is used), whereas measurement of input and processes is only used to a more limited extent (31% rather agree that this is used).

Figure 18. Relevance of performance management (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?) (423-433)

The results for the overall sample are quite similar with regard to the seldom use of sanctions for not achieving goals. Rewards are a bit more common in the rest of Europe, and this also goes for rewards for achieving goals (62% seldom in Europe vs. 71% in Norway). Still, the overall sample tells us that it is more common for politicians to use indicators to monitor their performance in Europe than in Norway (37% rather agree vs. 27% in Norway). Also, Norwegian senior officials are more used to outputs and outcomes being measured than their European colleagues (62% vs. 51% in the entire COCOPS sample).

In Figure 19, officials are asked how they work to find coordination solutions to problems with cooperating organizations. When experiencing coordination problems with other organizations, Norwegian public officials are most likely to either refer the issue upwards in the hierarchy (55% rather agree) or set up a cross-cutting work/project group (53% rather agree) (This is in line with a long tradition for the use of cross-cutting collegial bodies in the Norwegian ministries (Christensen et al. 2012). Also, the short side of 40% tend to refer the issue to political actors and bodies and consult relevant experts to resolve coordination problems. On the opposite side of the scale, respondents indicate that setting up special purpose bodies or consulting civil society organizations or interest groups is not something that is common in the Norwegian bureaucracy (76% and 71%, respectively, rather disagree). The last two variables, deciding on a lead organization and setting up a cross-cutting policy arrangement, are also not used very much (60% and 55%, respectively, rather disagree). Thus, it seems that Norwegian public officials utilize a limited number of instruments when coordination problem issues arise in their organizations.
When comparing the results with the overall sample, the pattern that emerges is quite similar to the one found for Norway. Still, referring the issue upwards in the hierarchy is an even more preferred strategy for the international officials (67% rather agree), whereas setting up a special purpose body is the least used strategy (66% rather disagree, compared to 76% among Norwegian officials). Otherwise, substantial differences are only found for deciding on one lead organization. This is more common in the international sample than in the Norwegian sample (32% rather agree that this is typical, compared to 21% in Norway).
6.3 Individual level

Figure 20 aims to identify the fields of application where public sector executives are most likely to use performance indicators. In general, there is little variation. Most options are used to a certain extent, but not excessively. Performance indicators are mostly used for satisfying requirements of own line manager (62% state that this is used to a rather large extent) and foster learning and improvement (60% rather agree). Furthermore, a majority of the officials state that they to a rather large extent use performance indicators to manage the image of their organization (58%), to identify problems that need attention (53%) and to assess whether they reach their targets (55%). Performance indicators are used least to engage with external stakeholders (43% of the respondents say that they would rather not use performance indicators for this task) and to communicate what the officials’ organizations do to citizens and service users (37%). Thus, it seems that performance indicators are used mainly for internal scrutiny and not for external contact (See also Lægreid, Roness and Rubecksen 2008).

Performance indicators seem to be used to a rather similar extent among international and Norwegian public officials. In general, the differences are small. Among European executives, it is slightly more common to use performance indicators to identify problems that need attention (60% say it is used to a rather large extent, vs. 53% in Norway). On the opposite side, Norwegian executives more often use performance indicators to satisfy requirements from line manager (62% vs. 51% use this to a rather large extent) and to manage the image of their organization (58% vs. 45% to a rather large extent). Lastly, the international sample use indicators to engage with external stakeholders, or to communicate what their organization does to citizens and service users, to a lesser extent than is the case for Norwegian officials (53% in the international sample state that they tend not to use it to engage with external stakeholders, vs. 43% in Norway, and 46% in the international sample tend not to use it to communicate to citizens or users vs. 37% in Norway).

Summing up, the Norwegian executives agree that the most important reforms have been in the field of transparency and open government and e-government while privatization is not important.
Compared to other countries certain public sector reforms have been less important in Norway. This is especially the case considering downsizing, but also mergers and contracting out. On the other hand, transparency and open government seems more important in Norway. Reforms in Norway are to a great extent driven top-down by politicians. Also, there is normally a strong union involvement. The reforms are planned, but also driven by crisis and incidents, and are often seen as rather substantial. There are, however, some doubts about the success rate of the reforms. Only 28% report that the reforms have been rather successful. Compared to reforms in other countries the Norwegian reforms seem less contested by unions, more open to public involvement and more successful. The most used reform tools are managerial, involving appraisal talks, risk management and management-by-objective-and-result, codes of conduct and strategic planning. In contrast, performance pay is less common, also compared to rest of Europe. Risk management, staff appraisals talks, performance management, codes of conduct and decentralization of staffing and financial management are more common in Norway than in the other countries. They are to a little extent monitored by indicators from politicians, and sanctions and rewards are not used to follow up on performance. Being monitored by indicators from politicians and rewarding good performance are management instruments that are somewhat more common in Europe than in Norway. Coordination by hierarchy is most common in Norway as is the case also in other European countries. Performance indicators are mainly used for a variety of internal purposes such as scrutiny, learning image building and identifying problems. Compared to other European countries, Norwegian executives use performance more to satisfy requirement from line managers, and to image building.
7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration

Norway is among the countries that have been the least affected by the global financial crisis and has not faced a fiscal crisis similar to the one seen in many other European countries. In many European countries the governments’ deficits and accumulated debts have been excessive, resulting in consolidation of budgets and cutback management. According to a government appointed financial crisis commission the situation for Norway is probably due to a combination of luck, skill and caution (NOU 2011:1).

A mission from the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2012) concluded that the economic policies implemented by the Norwegian Government have been effective in counteracting the financial crisis. Following a comparatively mild recession in 2008-09, the economy has grown steadily for the last years, and unemployment has stabilized at a low level. Economic recovery has been assisted by an appropriately supportive policy environment, including fiscal stimulus. IMF concluded that the Norwegian economy has weathered the global financial crisis remarkably well. The OECD’s Economic Survey of Norway 2012 concludes that Norway continues to benefit from its well managed petroleum wealth and sound macroeconomic policies, achieving levels of well-being and social cohesion that have remained high by international standards.

The crisis shows that the real economy of countries with solid state finances, like Norway, is less severely affected. Norway is in a favourable position and the fiscal rule provides a good framework for tightening the stance when the economic cycles turns. The Centre-Left majority government which came to power in 2005 was re-elected in 2009 partly due to its domestic handling of the global financial crisis.

The conclusion is that Norwegian public sector has not faced any kind of fiscal crisis, cut-back management or significant cost-cutting measures as a result of the global financial crisis. The global financial crisis in the public sector has not affected the public sector in Norway to any great extent and thus there is not an emerging coordination challenge that can be linked to the financial crisis. In Norway there were no major changes in public management due to the financial crisis. The crisis was mainly handled by professional experts in the Ministry of Finance assisted by the Central Bank and the Financial Supervisory Authority.

**Broader cutback measures.** Norway and the Norwegian state’s protection against the fiscal crisis is evident in Figure 21. 54% of the officials respond that *no approach was required* to realize savings in response to the fiscal crisis. Among the other options, that all register different measures that can been taken in their organization to realize savings, 24% says that targeted cuts according to priorities has been implemented, whereas proportional cuts across-the-board over all areas and productivity and efficiency savings both have been utilized as approach in the work places of roughly 10% of the Norwegian officials.
Figure 21. Overall saving strategy (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis how would you describe the broader approach to realizing savings in your policy area?)

Compared to the international sample, it becomes clear just how protected the Norwegian senior officials have been from savings in the public sphere elsewhere in Europe. Only 10% of European colleagues (as opposed to 54% of Norwegian executives) has been in a work place where no approach was required in response to the fiscal crisis. Almost twice as many executives have experienced targeted cuts according to priorities (41% vs. 24%) compared to Norway. For another 31% of the respondents, proportional cuts across-the-board over all areas has been the chosen approach in their organizations, whereas productivity and efficiency savings has been the strategy striking 19% of executives in the international sample. These numbers clearly state that the rest of Europe has been much harder struck by the economic crisis than what the situation has been in Norway.

**Specified cutback measures** (see Figure 22). Given the special place that Norway has been during the financial crisis, it should not come as a surprise that many of the cutback measures mentioned in Figure 22 has only to a very limited extent been used in public organizations in this period. We see that there is close to complete absence in the use of pay cuts (96% not) pay freezes (88%) and increased fees and user charges for users (81%) as response to the financial crisis. Also with regard to downsizing back office functions (74%), reducing front line presence (70%) and staff layoffs (68%) the amount of Norwegian senior executives stating that such measures is not used, is overwhelming. The only two measures where “only” half of the Norwegian officials have registered that they have not seen such cutback measures is for postponing or cancelling new programs (51% not) and cuts to existing programs (52% not). Moving on to the measures that have been somewhat used among those who have initiated cutback measures, we see that hiring freezes (14% to a certain extent) and postponing or cancelling new programmes (12% to a certain extent) have been used to a certain extent, whereas cuts to existing programmes have been introduced to at least a lesser extent for 20% of the Norwegian officials.
The results for the overall, cross-national sample look very different. The most common cutback measure that has rather been used among European senior executives is hiring freezes (60%), followed by pay freezes (43%), postponing or cancelling new programmes (36%), downsizing back office functions (34%) and cuts to existing programmes (33%). Where Norwegian officials have experienced introduction of cutback measures, they too have utilized hiring freezes the most, which must be said to be a rather soft cutback measure among the listed alternatives. Still, the results show such tremendous differences making it hard to properly compare Norway with the rest of the COCOPS sample in this respect.

Summing up, Norwegian public sector is to a little degree affected by the financial crisis. While only 10% of the European executives are in a policy area without any need for response to the financial crisis this is the case for the majority of Norwegians. Pay cuts, pay freezes and increased user fees are almost absent. Downsizing and lay-offs are also much less common than in the other countries.
8. Impact of Public Administration Reform

A main goal of the present study is to obtain systematic information on how public sector executives assess the impact of the various managerial reforms at organizational level but also other public sector reforms on a policy level. In this chapter, we present the results of such evaluative questions.

First, an overall assessment of public administration (see Figure 23) shows that a rather big minority of Norwegian officials state that the way public administration runs in Norway has clearly improved (31% marked 8-10 on the 10-point scale) over the last 5 years. Still, most officials assess it as more or less the same (66% marked 4-7), whereas the share of respondents observing a clear deterioration of public administration in Norway over the last 5 years is more or less absent (4% marked 1-3).

Figure 23. Overall PA assessment (Q: Compared with five years ago, how would you say things have developed when it comes to the way public administration runs in your country?) (n=365)

Executives from the other European countries show a less positive assessment with 22% of them observing an overall improvement (compared to 31% in Norway). A considerably higher share of European officials evaluate the development of public administration to have gone in the wrong direction the last 5 years (23%, compared to only 4% in the Norwegian sample).

Measuring outcomes of public administration in such a one-dimensional way does not tell us too much about the experiences of the public officials. Thus, the next question provides more nuanced approach addressing different performance dimensions (see Figure 24) as found in public management literature. One important performance dimension is equity, in the meaning that citizens should have equal access to service and should be adequately involved in matters of public administration. With regard to the questions of fair treatment of citizens and equal access to services over the last five years, most Norwegian executives seem to observe improvements (59%/58% state that these dimensions have rather improved).

The most positive results can be found for managerial aspects of public administration: The majority of Norwegian public officials perceive an improvement over the last five years in service quality, cost and efficiency and innovation (79%/68%/54% state that these dimensions have rather improved) as well as external transparency and openness (78%). The more mixed evaluation is done with regard to more policy-relevant categories such as social cohesion, policy effectiveness and policy coherence and coordination (28%/41%/42% state that these dimensions have rather improved). Despite this, citizen trust in government is still believed to have rather improved by half (50%) of Norwegian executives.
With regard to the remaining aspects ethical behaviour among public officials, staff motivation and attitudes towards work, and attractiveness of the public sector as an employer, these are also evaluated to have rather improved during the last 5 years (59%/57%/55%) according to a small majority of officials. Regarding the last performance dimension, internal bureaucracy reduction/cutting red tape, a minority (41%) rate this to have rather improved during this time period. Here, a rather big share also evaluates this dimension to have rather deteriorated (23%) the last five years. This feedback is however the exception in the Norwegian data. Thus, deterioration is not felt to be a problem for the internal administrative factors in Norwegian Public Administration.

Figure 24. Different performance dimensions (Q: Thinking about your policy area over the last five years how would you rate the way public administration has performed on the following dimensions?) (n=380-391)

When compared to the entire, cross-national sample, it becomes clear that Norwegian officials on the whole have a remarkably more positive view of public administration performance than their European colleagues. Only innovation is perceived slightly more positively in the entire sample. The biggest discrepancies are found with regard to service quality (61% rather improved, compared to 79% in Norway), external transparency and openness (35% rather improved, compared to 78% in Norway) and citizen trust in government (22% rather improved, compared to 50% in Norway). Common for both, however, is their relative ranking of social cohesion as the one of the dimensions where deterioration is most clearly experienced. Whereas 42% of all public officials agree that social cohesion has rather deteriorated, the equivalent for the Norwegian executives is 19%.

Central to the overall COCOPS project is also the question of whether NPM reforms have a negative impact on social cohesion. Although we cannot say anything about changes given the cross-sectional form of the survey, the Norwegian sample shows that officials here have a high degree of social capital and trust (see Figure 25). The statement that people in my organization is trustworthy is the variable receiving most support in Figure 25, with 93% rather agreeing. Only for the variables people in my organization view themselves as partners in charting the organization’s direction and people in
my organization enthusiastically pursue collective goals and mission, do more than 10% of the officials asked rather disagree. For the remaining variables Norwegian public officials agree that people in their organization share the same ambitions and visions for the organization (83% rather agree), have a strong team spirit (83%), have confidence in one another (83%), willingly share information with one another (83%), share and accept constructive criticisms without making it personal (72%) and engage in open and honest communication with one another (85%).

Figure 25. Social capital and trust (Q: People in my organization) (n=407-412)

The cross-national sample tells us that Norwegian officials stand out as more trustful and with higher degrees of social capital than what is the case for their European colleagues. The two samples place the different variables more or less in the same order with regard to how strongly they agree; both are most supportive of the statement that people in their organization are trustworthy (80 rather agrees in overall sample vs. 93% in Norway), and both are least supportive of the statement that colleagues view themselves as partners in charting the organization’s direction (25% rather disagrees and 49% rather agrees in overall COCOPS sample vs. 12% rather disagrees and 69% rather agrees in Norway). Still, Norwegian officials agree with 10 to 25 percentage points above their European colleagues on all variables. Thus, this confirms the picture painted by previous international surveys of Norwegians as a population with exceptional high levels of social capital and trust (Christensen and Lægreid 2005).

Job satisfaction (Figure 26). Norwegian public officials also seem to show a high degree of satisfaction with their organization. 73% of Norwegian officials agree that they would recommend their workplace as a good place to work, and a clear majority also agrees with the following statements: I feel valued for the work I do (66%) and I get a sense of satisfaction from my work (80%). Also, 48% of the officials disagree with the statement that they regularly feel overloaded or unable to cope, and only 10% agrees with this description.
Job satisfaction among the European COCOPS sample is also high, but continuing along the same lines as the previous figures in this section, Norwegian officials score even higher. 63% agree that they get a satisfaction from their work (vs. 80%), whereas roughly 50% agree that they feel valued for the job they do and that they would recommend their organization as a good place to work (vs. 66% and 73%, respectively). Nevertheless, the Norwegian sub-sample and the entire sample are similar with regard to the degree to with they regularly feel overloaded or unable to cope.

A further related question assesses the executives’ organizational commitment. For Norway Table 27 tells us that most public officials disagree that it was better when people stayed in one organization for their entire career (75%, only 1% agree). Furthermore, they are quite spread out with regard to the question of whether they were taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to the organization (32% disagree while 23% agree). We also observe that only 19% agrees, and 39% right-out disagrees that it would be hard to leave the organization right now, even if they wanted to. To the question of whether they would be happy to spend the rest of their career with the organization they are currently in, 38% of Norwegian officials agree that they would. Lastly, we see that Norwegian officials only to a limited extent look upon the organizations’ problems as their own (18% agree with the statement, whereas 25% disagree). In overall the organizational commitment in Norway appears not to be that strong, and probably lower than expected, given the high tenure and lack of career mobility (see Figure 5). Even so, this might partly be explained by the fact that two thirds of public officials in the Norwegian sample work at the third hierarchical level of the organization, and consequently do not feel that their organization depends on them to the same degree as top-level officials.
Compared to the overall COCOPS sample, Norwegian public sector executives show a clearly lower commitment towards the organization they work for. In the overall sample, a much higher share of respondents agrees that they were taught the value to remain loyal to one organization (49%, vs. 23% in Norway), and 42% say that they see their organization’s problems as their own (vs. only 18% in Norwegian sub-sample). They also disagree with the statement that it was better when people stayed loyal to the organization for their career (59%, vs. 75% in Norway), but at the same time a relatively considerable share say that it would be hard for them to leave the organization now (32%, and 26% disagreeing vs. 19% agreeing and 39% disagreeing in Norway). With regard to spending the rest of their careers in the same organizations, the entire sample and the Norwegian sub-sample look rather similar.

Summing up, only about 1/3 of the executives report that there has been an improvement in the way public administration has developed over the past five years. The Norwegians are, however, more positive than their European colleagues. They see improvements in the area of service quality, external transparency and openness, fair treatment of citizens and equal access to services. They are also positive regarding the development of ethical behaviour, staff motivation and attractiveness of public sector as an employer. They are more negative regarding social cohesion, policy effectiveness and policy coherence and coordination. Generally deterioration is not a perceived problem for the Norwegian executives. Overall they have a more positive view of the public administration performance than their European colleagues. This is especially the case regarding external transparency, trust in government and also service quality. Generally the Norwegian executives report a high degree of trustworthiness, social capital and trust and significant more so than their European colleagues. They are generally very satisfied with their own organization and the job satisfaction is generally higher than in rest of Europe. Thus the reforms do not seem to have reduced the level of social capital, trust and job satisfaction. Organizational commitment seems however, to be lower than for the overall COCOPS sample.
9. Findings from the Employment and Health sectors

9.1 The employment sector

During the 1980s and 1990s clients and civil servants in the welfare administration in Norway became increasingly critical of the fragmentation of service delivery, which was seen as especially problematic for the multiservice clients who had to visit many different public offices to claim their benefits. These actors put pressure on the Parliament to initiate changes in the structure of the welfare administration, but were unsuccessful in their efforts until 2001 when a strong enough coalition was formed to ask the government to come up with a unified solution for the welfare administration (Christensen, Fimreite and Lægreid 2007). The minority coalition government was reluctant to accept this demand and sent a report back to the Parliament saying that they did not support the idea of a unified service. A majority in the Parliament was dissatisfied with this answer and replied that the government must deliver a more holistic service. This resulted in the government deciding to establish a public committee of experts to look into the matter. Their conclusion was that the basic fragmented structure was sound, but that the unemployment and social services should collaborate more closely at the local level.

The minister for the welfare administration who came to office in 2004 headed a ministry that for the first time had responsibility for all the relevant welfare services. Realizing that it was politically impossible to come back to the Parliament with yet another fragmented solution, he proposed a compromise that entailed a partial merger. The main goals of the compromise were to get more people off benefits and into work, to offer a more user-friendly and coordinated service and to be more efficient.

The administrative welfare reform was primarily a structural reform, consisting of two crucial elements. The first entailed a merger of the agencies for employment and the national pensions system, creating a new welfare agency (NAV) on all levels (Christensen, Fimreite and Lægreid 2007). The second element entailed the establishment of a local partnership between this new agency and the social services at the local level run by the municipalities (Fimreite and Lægreid 2009). The idea was to locate all services in one place and reduce the number of tasks involved to a minimum. Two aspects of this solution are worth mentioning. One is that it was politically impossible to propose a completely unified welfare administration, because that would have implied that it should be run either by central or by local government, which was not politically feasible. The second aspect is that the legally enshrined mandatory partnership required the support of the local authorities and their central organization, and one way to do this was to allow a dual local management in the welfare offices, making it easier for both actor groups to be represented and also allowing the municipalities to offer more services in local offices, over and above the minimum required. This might be seen as the central state increasing its influence and interfering in local self-government, but it could also be interpreted as local government getting central government to finance more local services.

After the Parliament approved the reform in 2005, an interim period of one year followed during which the old organizations continued to run as usual while the new internal structures were being discussed and decided on. The new welfare administration officially began operating in 2006. It was

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10 This discussion is based on Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Lægreid (2012).
based on a central partnership agreement between the government and the central organization for the municipalities followed by local agreements between the new NAV agency and all the municipalities. The process of establishing local welfare offices in all municipalities took four more years to finish.

In 2008 the reformed system underwent two significant reorganizations (Christensen and Lægreid 2012). One was the establishment of six regional pension offices, while the other entailed the establishment of county-based administrative back offices. This involved shifting quite a few personnel resources from the local level up to the regional level. The main arguments for this were that regional units provided an opportunity to increase the quality of casework. What this meant in practice was increasing competence and introducing more standardization, equal treatment and efficiency with respect to different benefits, while at the same time giving local offices the opportunity to focus on their two main tasks: providing information and guidance for their clients and helping the clients to get work. Central political and administrative actors, both in the ministry and in the welfare agency, saw this reorganization of the reform as a major precondition for fulfilling the aims of the original welfare reform. The paradox, however, was that the reorganization potentially undermined the original main reform idea of strong welfare offices in each municipality.

The Norwegian data does not include too many respondents in the employment sector; only 48 of the 436 respondents have registered that they belong to this sector. Given the small amount of cases we here base our analyses on, the conclusions should be carefully drawn. Because of the small sample, we use mean values to analyse differences between the Employment sub-sample and the other sectors. In the following we focus our attention to four broader thematic areas: executives’ values and attitudes, work context, the experiences relevance of NPM reforms and the experiences impact of public sector reform.

Values and attitudes
In the Employment sector executives have a very similar self-understanding and identity pattern to their colleagues in other policy fields. The only difference is that they prefer tax financed services over user charges (the mean for employment here is 2,5 compared to one of 3,3 for the rest of the sample). Employment sector officials also have a rather similar motivation to their colleagues in other policy fields, two exceptions being that opportunities to help other people is a stronger motivation for them (mean of 5,7 compared to 5,0 in the remaining policy areas), and that they are slightly more preoccupied with having high income (5,3 compared to 4,5 for the other policy fields).

Work context
Executives in the employment sector perceive their goals as less ambiguous than their colleagues in other sectors. They agree to a larger extent that their goals are communicated to all staff (6,3 vs. 5,5 in the other sectors), that their goals are clearly stated (6,1 vs. 5,5), and that they have a high number of goals (6,0 vs. 5,4).

Interaction frequency in the employment sector rather contrasts the findings from the rest of the policy sectors. Concerning the most prominent differences we find that officials in the employment sector interact more frequently with trade unions (here a mean value of 4,3 is observed, compared to a value of 3,6 for the remaining sample). On the other hand, employment sector executives are less frequently in contact with their responsible ministers (2,2 vs. 2,8 in the other policy fields). Also, contact EU institutions (1,7 vs. 2,4) is less frequent in the employment sector than in other sectors.
Coordination quality is also generally perceived as quite similar in the employment sub-sample and the remaining policy groups. The clearest differences are found in that employment executives are more satisfied with coordination with local/regional government bodies (4,5 compared to 3,9 in the rest of the sample) clearly less satisfied with the coordination with supra-national bodies (3,6 compared to 4,2 in the other policy fields. Lastly, senior officials in the employment sector perceive a rather similar degree of politicization as the other policy fields.

**Relevance of NPM reforms**

Almost all NPM reform trends are more relevant in the employment sector when compared to the rest of the sample. In particular, mergers of government organization are more common (a mean of 4,6 in the sub-sample for employment, one of 3,7 in the rest of the sample). Also, the employment sector executives perceive citizen participation methods as significantly more relevant (the mean value is 4,6 for employment, and 3,8 for the other sectors). The same is true for outcome and result orientation (5,7 vs. 5,0). Nevertheless, for the policy reforms contracting out, flexible employment and privatization, reform is more present within the other policy fields compared to the employment sector.

Employment sector executives also assess the dynamics of reform in their policy field in more complimentary terms. In particular, they describe the reforms as containing much higher public involvement (a mean value of 7,0 in the employment sector, compared to a much lower value of 5,5 for the other sectors) and being about service improvement (6,7 vs. 5,6). They also to a bigger degree than their colleagues in other sector state that reforms have been planned (6,2 vs. 5,6), and less contested by unions (6,6 vs. 5,8).

Management instruments are less used in the Norwegian employment sector than within the other sectors. This is especially the case for use of codes of conduct (a mean value of 5,7 in the sub-sample for employment, one of 4,1 for the remaining sample), benchmarking (4,8 vs. 3,8) and service points for customers (5,0 vs. 4,0). In general, performance management is considered as more relevant in the employment sector than in other policy fields: there is considerably more likely to measure outputs and outcome (5,6 vs. 4,6). Also with regard to the use of performance indicators, the general pattern is that this is more common in the employment sector, both at organizational and individual levels. The use of coordinating measures is perceived in a rather similar way for the employment sector and the other sectors grouped.

Regarding the assessment of different performance dimensions, the executives in the employment sector give a slightly more positive evaluation of the performance dimensions. This is most marked for equal access to services (5,4 vs 4,7).

Summing up, the executives in the employment sector have a similar self-understanding and identity pattern as their colleagues in other policy fields. They perceive their goals as less ambiguous compared to other policy areas. They interact more frequently with civil service unions and local and regional government. They are also more satisfied with the coordination with local and regional bodies than the rest of the sample. They report more than others that politicians interfere in routine activities. The emergence of mergers and citizen’s participation is more common in this area, as is public involvement in the reform processes. Improvement is more up front and the reforms are less contested by unions. Service codes of conduct and benchmarking are less used than in the whole
sample, while performance management is more relevant. The executives in the employment sector are overall positive to the reform.

9.2 The health sector

Historically, municipalities and various local actors were in charge of the development of health institutions in Norway. As a consequence the hospital system was fragmented, resulting in large differences among regions in access to healthcare. In the 1970s the counties were to take responsibility for the development of hospitals. By the 1990s, the counties came under increasing fire because of long waiting lists for patient treatment, a lack of economic control and failed attempts at achieving a more equal regional distribution of medical services (Byrkjeflot and Neby 2008; Hagen 1998).

In hindsight the county regime that existed between 1970 and 2002 seems quite unstable. The conflicts between professions, districts, administrators and politicians, and local and central health authorities were recurrent, and various terms such as “rematch” and “blame-game” were used to describe the situation (Byrkjeflot and Grønlie 2005). The question of responsibility was raised several times by government, but with not much success. Other important reform acts were implemented, however, primarily among them activity-based funding of somatic hospitals in 1997 and a patient rights legislation including the right to «free hospital choice» in 2001 (Ot.prp. nr. 12 (1998–99). These reforms made it even more difficult for the counties to take responsibility for the hospitals, since patients could go elsewhere at the same time as the central government now provided more than 70% of the funding for these institutions (Hagen and Kaarbøe 2006:331).

A process that led up to the transfer of responsibility for the Norwegian hospitals from counties to the central government started in 2000. The decision to reform the hospitals was passed in the parliament in 2001. Thus, the reform act was prepared and implemented at a very fast pace (Herfindal 2004). One of the most important justifications for the reform was to give the hospitals “more clearly defined roles and responsibilities”. Rather than be an integral part of the public administration, they were now to be organized as enterprises with their own responsibilities as employers and for use of capital and finances, with the restriction that they may not go into voluntary liquidation.

New management principles were introduced for the hospitals based on a decentralized enterprise model, originally with five regional enterprises, 33 local health enterprises which integrates 81 former hospital units (Stigen 2005:38). Currently there are 4 regional enterprises and 24 local health enterprises. The local enterprises are owned by the regional enterprises and are responsible for patient treatment, research, education of health personnel and patients. Several health care directorates and agencies were also reorganized in the same period, but these processes were initiated and implemented more or less independent of the hospital reform (Stigen 2005).

On the one hand, the minister of health assumed full responsibility for conditions in the health sector and a new department of ownership was established; on the other, the enterprises were given enhanced local autonomy with their own executive boards and general managers with powers of authority to set priorities and manage the regional and local health enterprises. The reform involved

11 The following discussion on reform trends in the Norwegian health sector is based on Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Lægreid (2012).
an escalation of overall central government ownership responsibilities and control, simultaneously representing a decentralized, but also more unitary and hierarchical system of management.

Adding to the Hospital reform there is also an on-going reform called the Coordination Reform (St.meld. 47 (2008-2009). The Coordination Reform is focusing on the relationship between the primary health care with a municipal responsibility and the specialist health care with government owned health enterprises responsibility. The goal is for the patients to receive the proper treatment – at the right place and right time. A binding system of agreements between municipalities and health authorities has been launched and financial incentives and municipal co-financing of patient treatment has been introduced.

The analysis for the health sector – albeit based on a rather small sample of 84 respondents – yields the following results. We use mean values to compare the Health sub-sample with the other policy fields in the Norwegian sample. Also here, we focus our attention to the following four thematic areas: executives’ values and attitudes, work context, the experiences relevance of NPM reforms and the experiences impact of public sector reform.

Values and attitudes
Executives working in the health sector have a very similar self-understanding and similar identity patterns like their colleagues in other policy fields; the only difference here is that developing new policy agendas is less important to them (the mean for the health sector is 3,7, compared to 4,4 for the other sectors. The results concerning the priorities they have as civil servants in general are rather similar. One interesting difference is that health sector employees give more weight to tax financed services as opposed to user charges/fees (the mean for them is 2,8, the one for the other sector is 3,3). Health sector executives have a rather similar motivation like their colleagues in other policy fields. The exception is that the opportunity to help others is a stronger motivation to executives in the health sector than what is common for the other sectors (5,5, compared to 5,0 for the rest of the sample).

Work context
In general, executives working in the Health sector do not differ significantly from the rest of the sample. Also with regard to management autonomy do the executives in the Health sector look rather similar the remaining sample. For interaction frequency, the results are rather similar to the overall sample, besides that employees in the health sector interact less frequently with their responsible minister (here a mean value of 2,2 is observed, compared to a value of 2,8 for the other sectors). Also for contact with international bodies (mean value of 1,8, compared to 2,3 in the rest of the sample) is contact less frequent in the health sector. Coordination quality, however, is perceived as less well for the Health sector than for the rest of the Norwegian sample. With regard to the issue of politicization, senior executives in the health sector look identical to their colleagues in the other sectors in the Norwegian sample.

Relevance of NPM reforms
Almost all NPM reform trends are more relevant in the health sector if compared to the other sectors. In particular, more citizen participation occurs (a mean of 4,3 in the sub-sample for health, one of 3,8 for the rest of the Norwegian sample). Also, the health sector executives perceive more relevance of mergers of government organizations (a mean value of 4,2 in the subsample for health, one of 3,7 for the other sectors) as well as treating service users as customers (5,1 vs. 4,5).
Health sector executives also assess the dynamics of reform in their policy field somewhat different than the other sectors do altogether. In particular, they describe the reforms as containing a higher degree of public involvement (a mean value of 6.5 in the health sector, compared to a much lower value of 5.6 in the remaining sample). Furthermore, they consider the reforms as more top-down (3.4 vs. 4.0) and more driven by politicians (4.5 vs. 5.1) than their colleagues in the other sectors.

Management instruments are just as much used in the Norwegian health sector as in the other sectors. Performance related pay (2.1 vs. 2.6) is less used management instruments in the health sector than in the other sectors. The relevance of performance management is also the same both for the sub-sample of health executives and for their colleagues in other sectors. The only substantial difference found signifies that politicians are more likely to use indicators to monitor the performance of Health executives than is the case in other sectors (3.9 vs. 3.1). In general, use of performance indicators seems to be more relevant in the health sector than in the other policy fields.

**Impact of public administration reform**

With regards to the overall assessment of the public administration reform, the health sector does not differ significantly from the rest of the sample. As concerns the more nuanced assessment of different performance dimensions, the executives in the health sector give a rather similar evaluation of the performance dimensions. Also with regards to job satisfaction is the Health sub-sample and the other sectors close to identical. However, executives here feel substantially more valued for the work they do than is the case for the executives in the remaining sectors (3.4 vs. 2.9). The results for social trust and capital are almost identical with the results from the rest of the Norwegian sample. Organizational commitments seem to be slightly lower in the health sector, although no substantial differences are found between the Health sub-sample and the remaining Norwegian sample.

Summing up, over all the executives in the health sector does not differ significantly from the rest of the sample. They have a rather similar self-understanding, identity patterns and work context. They experience a higher degree of public involvement in reforms that also tend to be more driven by politicians. The politicians also tend to use performance indicators more frequently to monitor the performance in the health sector.
10. Conclusion

Norway is a small country with a comparatively large public sector. Around one third of the total labour force is publicly employed. Structurally, it is a unitary but decentralized state where local government takes care of many functions. There is a strong tension between the principle of ministerial responsibility with strong specialization by sector, and the principle of local self-government with specialization by territory. The financial situation in Norway is good and living standards are relatively high. Central and local government influence the everyday life of citizens through generous welfare state institutions and programmes. Public administration generally enjoys a high level of public trust, and there is a relatively high level of mutual trust among public sector organizations. Norms of impartiality and professionalism have been strong and the level of corruption has been low.

Public sector reforms, later framed as NPM-reforms, were launched from the mid-1980s but did not get any pace until the mid-1990s. Together with other Scandinavian countries, Norway has been characterized more as a modernizer than a marketizer, following managerial and user-responsiveness strategies rather than competition, marketization and incentivization strategies (Foss Hansen 2011, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). The NPM-reforms in the Norwegian civil service gained momentum from the mid-1990s and onwards, and were implemented in a rather pragmatic manner. The modernization process in Norway has been characterized by participation and consultation with stakeholders, and legitimization and accountability (see Pollitt, van Thiel and Homburg 2007). Thus, Norway has been influenced by international reform waves, but these have largely been filtered and adapted to the existing politico-administrative culture and structure. The general Norwegian policymaking style is characterized by consensus based on common interests and “revolution in slow motion” (Bezes, Fimreite, Lidic, Lægreid 2013; Olsen 1988). Norway has also been characterized as a “reluctant reformer” (Olsen 1996) but the reforms peaked from 2000 until 2005. Recently the reforms have taken on a more “post-NPM flavour”.

Sector-specific hierarchical coordination within ministerial areas from central state to local level is quite strong, but balanced by a relatively strong coordination within the county (regional) and municipality level. The rather hesitant reform approach is attributable to a collectivistic oriented political-administrative culture with an emphasis on traditional Rechtstaat values and quality rather than individualism and efficiency. The NPM reforms in Norway have largely been characterized by structural devolution where agencies has gained more autonomy both structurally, managerially and policy-wise, accompanied by a more formalized performance-assessment regime and the establishment of new, autonomous state-owned companies. In addition, Management by Objectives and Results has been a central reform measure. In municipalities and also in state owned companies there has also been contracting out and increased marked competition.

The results of the COCOPS executive survey confirm that Norway is characterized by similar, but also some important different reform trends and attitudes towards these reforms compared to other European countries. The survey provides interesting new insights into characteristics of the public sector executives, their work environment, and their attitudes and thoughts about central reforms and management instruments. Norway retains some of its traditional elements, but there are also findings that suggest new developments.
The Norwegian sample confirms that Norway in general is characterized by a high share of women participating in the workforce at all levels. Although the majority still is male, compared to the other COCOPS countries, a higher share of women is employed at the top executive levels. The survey further confirms a common picture of life-long careers in the civil service and seniority-based promotion. In general, the Norwegian executives are highly educated. While the overall sample show that the European bureaucracies tend to be dominated by executives with a background in law or business/economics, the Norwegian executives are generally economists or social scientists.

Executives in the Norwegian sample are highly motivated by their work, finding it interesting, important and useful to society. They are to a lesser extent than their European colleagues motivated by opportunities for promotion, job security and status. They perceive themselves as forward-looking and responsible, but seem less risk-prone than others. As in the other countries included, achieving results, ensuring efficient use of resources and the impartial implementation of law and rules, and providing expertise and technical knowledge are dominant values. Interestingly, Norwegian executives seem more preoccupied with getting public organizations to work together than others. The sample also confirms a tendency towards compromise and consensual decision decision-making, whereas executives in the Norwegian sample are more prone to search for joint solutions to solve problems. The Norwegian sample further shows a clear preference for traditional civil service values such as equity and quality over efficiency. However, when achieving results are set up against following rules, the respondents are prone to both, it seems. Compared to the overall results, Norwegian executives represent a more traditional bureaucratic approach to the state. At the same time, a more traditional citizen focus is being challenged by an increasingly important managerial customer focus.

The executive’s perception of their work context is a major focus in this report. In contrast to some of the other COCOPS countries (Germany for instance), goal ambiguity is rather low in the Norwegian sample. Norwegian respondents work in a highly goal-oriented environment, and a larger majority agree that their organization has a high number of goals. The goals are, according to the Norwegian respondents generally clearly stated and communicated. At the same time, scepticism towards measurability of these goals is plain. All in all, the Norwegian executives are rather autonomous when it comes to their everyday work, also compared to their European colleagues. They have a considerable degree of autonomy in policy implementation, when it comes to hiring and promoting staff, changing their own organization, and budget allocations, but lesser so when it comes to policy choice and design, and contracting out services. This confirms previous findings indicating a high level of mutual trust between different levels within central government and between ministries and agencies (Christensen and Lægreid 2008b). It gives a picture of Norwegian executives’ orientation towards more traditional civil service values and possibly a stronger emphasis on a separation of policy-making and administration.

In terms of interaction, executives in Norway reveal a much more frequent contact with the media compared to their European counterparts. This also goes for their contact with trade unions – a factor that is maybe less surprising giving the consulting policy style in Norway. On the other hand, Norwegian executives are to a lesser degree in contact with local and regional government and private sector companies. This indicates a clear division of responsibilities between state affairs and local government affairs, and between the state and the private sector. With regard to contact with politicians and the international level, contact is rather rare, and similar to what is the case for the
overall European sample. The Norwegian executives find it rather difficult to evaluate coordination quality. Coordination quality is generally higher within national government bodies in the same policy area. Overall, coordination is assessed as rather poor, and mostly so between bodies in different policy areas (horizontal coordination). Norwegian executives evaluate coordination quality between national government bodies within the same policy area as better than their European colleagues, while coordination quality between government bodies and private or voluntary sector stakeholders is seen as worse.

Overall, the degree of politicization seems low within the Norwegian central government. Most agree that politicians tend not to interfere, and respect the more technical expertise of senior executives. Interestingly, the executives are rather neutral when asked who initiates reforms and new policies. This might indicate that they see that senior executives have an important role in policy formation and initiations alongside politicians – but can also indicate that it is sometimes difficult to tell where the reform ideas and new policies come from. Compared to the overall sample, executives in Norway experience, and also seem to favour a lower level of politicization and a greater separation between policy-making and administration.

A key goal of the present study is to obtain systematic knowledge of how public sector executives assess the impact and relevance of NPM reforms and other recent public sector reform trends. Although the Norwegian executives can hardly be said to see the reforms as successful, they acknowledge that the reforms have had a considerable impact and are rather positive towards further reforms. A majority think that the reforms have been consistent, but not demanding enough. The reforms are perceived to be largely top-down and driven by politicians, but also by crises and incidents just as often as being planned. In terms of instruments, transparency and open government and digital (e-) government have made the most impact, alongside an emphasis on outcomes and results, and collaboration and cooperation among different public sector actors. Reform is least present with regard to privatization, contracting out and public sector downsizing. This last feature is in rather stark contrast to the other European countries, where public sector downsizing has been a much more dominant reform trend. The reforms introduced in the other European countries are perceived as more inconsistent, partial and symbolic compared to Norway. Other countries’ reforms are clearly more top-down and politician driven, more contested by unions and also less open to public involvement. This confirms the picture of Norway as being more collaborative and participatory when it comes to reform strategy and policy style (Olsen 1988). It supports the claim of a Nordic variant of a Neo Weberian reform model emphasizing participation and consultation (Pollitt, van Thiel and Homburg 2007).

On the organizational level, the most common management instruments are staff appraisal tasks, risk management, management by objectives and results, codes of conduct and strategic planning. Also, decentralization of decisions, quality management and customer/user surveys are seen to a considerable extent. Internal steering by contracts is evident to some extent. Performance related payment, on the other hand, is rather uncommon. No clear pattern is evident when it comes to benchmarking and the use of service points for customers. Once again, the evaluation pattern among the Norwegian executives differs somewhat from the overall European sample. Management instruments are used to the same extent, but in a different mix. Performance related pay is much more common in the European sample, while risk management, staff appraisal, management by objectives and results and codes of conduct are more common in Norway.
When asked about their use of performance indicators on an individual level, most instruments were used to a certain degree and with little variation according to motivation. In general, there were also small differences between the Norwegian and the rest of the sample when assessing the motivation behind the use of performance indicators. Performance indicators are used for a variety of internal purposes such as scrutiny, learning image building and identifying problems. Compared to other European countries, Norwegian executives seem to use performance more to satisfy requirement from line managers and for image-building.

On the whole, Norwegian executives have a remarkably more positive view of public administration performance compared to their European peers. The level of social capital and trust among the executives is rather high, and they are generally satisfied with their work and working environment. All in all, they are also quite positive towards the development of public administration over the last years. Most think that the quality of public administration remains more or less the same as before, but a larger share thinks that it has improved rather than deteriorated over the last five years. Interestingly, a considerably higher share of European executives state that the development has gone in the wrong direction. Most Norwegian executives find improvements with regards to questions of fair treatment and equal access to services. Furthermore, citizens’ trust in government and general ethical behaviour among public officials are seen to improve. The most positive results concern service quality, cost and efficiency, and innovation. Policy-relevant indicators such as social cohesion, policy effectiveness and policy coherence and coordination are on the other hand more ambiguously interpreted.

One possible explanation for the rather positive attitude towards the public administration and its development is that the Norwegian public sector has to a very little degree been affected by the financial crisis. The majority of respondents from Norway state that no approach was needed in response to the fiscal crisis, while only 10 % of the European executives say the same. Pay cuts, pay freezes and increased user fees are almost absent. Downsizing and lay-offs are also much less common than in the other countries.

In addition to central government, the COCOPS survey targeted the health and employment sectors more specifically. In Norway, both sectors have undergone quite large changes over the last years. The welfare and employment administration has been reformed to create a more holistic service integrating employment services, pensions and welfare benefits at both central and local level. The health sector has also been reformed, creating regional health enterprises and new arrangements through a comprehensive “Collaboration reform”.

The executives in the employment and health sector have a similar self-understanding and identity pattern as their colleagues in other policy fields. However, the executives in the employment sector perceive their goals as somewhat less ambiguous compared to other policy areas. They interact more frequently with civil service unions and local and regional government, and tend to be more satisfied with the coordination with local and regional bodies. The policy field also seems more politicized, whereas the respondents here more than others report that politicians interfere in routine activities. Also, citizens’ participation and public involvement in the reform processes is more common. Improvement is also more up front. The reforms are less contested by unions. Service codes of conduct and benchmarking is less used compared to the whole sample, while performance management is more relevant here. The executives in both sectors are overall positive to the reform.
Overall, the executives in the health sector do not differ significantly from the rest of the sample. They have a rather similar self-understanding, identity patterns and work context. Nevertheless, health sector employees give more weight to tax financed services as opposed to user charges/fees. Also, equity (as opposed to efficiency) is slightly more important for them. Finally, achieving results is more important than following rules. As is the case for the employment sector, the health sector also seems more politicized and controlled by politicians. The respondents here experience a higher degree of public involvement in reforms, and report that they tend to be more driven by politicians. The politicians also tend to use performance indicators more frequently to monitor the performance in the health sector.

The conclusion is that the Norwegian reform landscape is a mixture of Old Public Administration, New Public Management and post-NPM. Rather than one reform replacing previous reforms we see that new reforms are supplementing and complementing old reforms. It is a layering process going on producing a more hybrid and complex public administrative system. We face an interesting combination of robustness and flexibility in the central government apparatus. 2/3 of the executives report that they see no big changes over the past 5 years in the way public administration is run, indicating that the reforms cannot be seen as an unconditional success.

The traditional bureaucracy has, however, been modernized and according to the administrative executive the reforms have over all moved the public administration in a positive direction towards a more efficiency oriented, performance focused and citizen-friendly administrative apparatus. Service quality and transparency has improved according to the administrative executives. The reforms do not seem to have reduced the level of trust and job satisfaction and the executives have an overall positive view of public administration performance. This rather positive assessment as perceived by the top bureaucrats can be understood as a combination of an absence of economic crisis combined with a strong confidence in an active and large public sector. This combined with coalition and minority governments (up to 2005) and a traditional administrative culture incompatible with many NPM elements might explain why Norway has been a rather reluctant NPM reformer and chosen an incremental path. This seems to be a reform strategy with many positive impacts according to the top civil servants.
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