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

Country Report as part of the COCOPS Research Project

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May 2013

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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The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 266887 (Project COCOPS), Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities.

ISSN 2211-2006
## Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 4
2. Context and Status Quo of Public Administration Reform in Italy ...................................................... 8
3. Data and Method ...................................................................................................................................... 13
   3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation ............................................................. 13
   3.2 Organizational Context of Respondents .......................................................................................... 15
   3.3 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents ......................................................................... 16
4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives ............................................................................... 19
5. Characteristics of the Public Administration Work Context .................................................................. 22
6. Relevance of NPM and post NPM Reforms ....................................................................................... 25
   6.1 Policy field level ............................................................................................................................. 25
   6.2 Organizational level ....................................................................................................................... 27
   6.3 Individual level ............................................................................................................................... 29
7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration ............................................................................ 30
8. Impact of Public Administration Reform ............................................................................................. 31
9. Findings from the Employment and Health sector ............................................................................. 35
   9.1 Health Sector .................................................................................................................................. 35
   9.2 Employment Sector ......................................................................................................................... 36
10. Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 38

Tables ......................................................................................................................................................... 40
Figures ......................................................................................................................................................... 40
References .................................................................................................................................................... 41
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; Tronda, 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 Hammeschmid, Görnitz, Oprisor and Stimac (2013), and appears in the same form in 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

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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.\(^5\)

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.

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.

\(^5\) The details of the survey design and implementation process can be found in the survey Research Report (see Hammerschmid, Oprisor, Stimac, 2013).
By the end 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 Italy 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 Italy

In describing Italy through the application of some ‘typical’ comparative politics categories in the search for explanations of the dynamics of administrative reforms, the notion of ‘context in motion’ acquires a central significance: the Italian politico-administrative and institutional system over the period 1992-2012 has not been stable (at least to the extent to which institutional systems tend to be relatively stable in ‘normal’ periods in Western democracies); rather, Italy 1992-2012 may instead be interpreted as characterised by the layering of new and old institutions and other processes of negotiated change that have determined the normalisation of these very processes of negotiated change without any veritable transition to a new stable system (Bull and Rhodes, 2007, p. 662 and pp. 658-659). In other words, the transformations that occurred cannot be qualified as a transition from one punctuated equilibrium to another one, from the so-called Italian First Republic (that no more exists) to a Second Republic (which has never appeared), from one Republic to another one à la française. Within this frame of ongoing negotiated change becoming the normalcy, or at least being normalised, it makes sense interpreting the effects also of (relatively) constant features of Italian politics and administration, institutional features like the perfect bicameralism (the two chambers have exactly the same competences and functions, though they had during the observed period a partly different electoral system), or socio-institutional features like the so-called Southernisation of the civil service (the large majority of civil servants coming from the South of Italy) – features that did not change and juxtaposed to the institutions that emerged or significantly changed during the period of observation (such as the relationship between the executive and the legislature, that was altered in favour of the executive during the period of observation).

Since the source of political and policy change has to be searched in the dynamics of the political system (Radaelli and Franchino, 2004), our overview of the politico-administrative context takes the move from the nature of the executive government, the (rapidly shifting) electoral and party system, and notably the nature of government alternation in Italy. We also briefly review other factors deemed to be influential on the dynamics of administrative reforms, which include (see COCOPS WP7, country report on Italy): the (profoundly) differential attitude towards – and of - ‘Europe’; the level of politicisation and party patronage; and the role of certain key actors (such as the trade unions and the ‘grand corps de l’Etat’).

Last but not least, the legacy of previous reforms, which abounded since a previous fiscal and currency crisis through which Italy underwent in 1992 that ended up in a political crisis marked by the collapse of the party system (see Di Mascio et al., forthcoming; on the issue of treating temporality in the study of public management reform dynamics, see also Ongaro, forthcoming), should also be considered as part of the context within which the investigation carried out in the present research project takes place.

Preliminarily, for completeness of information, it should be recorded that, as regards the general structure of the state, Italy is a unitary but regional state, i.e. there is some constitutionally

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6In this section we follow especially Belle’ and Ongaro (forthcoming), Ongaro (2009), as well as the Short Country report prepared for COCOPS WP7 (produced by Edoardo Ongaro, Fabrizio Di Mascio, Davide Galli, Alessandro Natalini and Francesco Stolfi).
entrenched division of power across levels of government, although the central level still retains in many important respects ultimate sovereignty (at least in budgetary matters as well as in institutional affairs and the field of administrative reform). In terms of culture of governance, Italy may be ascribed to the category of Rechtsstaat states (Pierre, 1995). More in detail, Italy may be clustered with countries in the Napoleonic administrative tradition (Ongaro, 2008, 2009 and 2010; Painter and Peters, 2010; Peters, 2008). Another persistent feature of the politico-administrative system in Italy is legalism, a term through which we denote the centrality of a specialized branch of law, administrative law, in the overall administrative activity of public bodies (Capano, 2003, discusses its having become a cultural paradigm, and lawyers holding a policy monopoly in Italy).

Starting from the nature of government alternation, during the period of observation Italian governments have been formed by minimum winning coalitions, namely “coalitions just as large as [their participants] believe will ensure winning and no larger” (Riker 1962, 32-33; see also Lijphart, 1999; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). These were followed (in 2011-2012) by a grand coalition government in the form of a technical government, namely one whose cabinet members were not elected members of Parliament (Sbragia 2001). The technical government was supported by the largest centre-left and centre-right parties (named Partito Democratico and Popolo della Liberta’ respectively) as well as by a smaller centrist party (named Unione di Centro). Government alternation may affect reforms through four channels. First, as ideological alternation: affecting whether administrative reforms climb the governmental agenda, affecting especially the contents/options considered for reform, and the constellation of actors (hence the style – consensual or majoritarian – and pace of reforms); for example, if a coalition is closer to the public sector unions than the other one, then one might see a connection between government alternation and the nature of public employment reform or the very attempt to reform public employment. Second, as ideational alternation: if the change in government also brings into government reformers with different disciplinary backgrounds or connections to different national or international epistemic communities, then the areas of public management reformed and the contents of reform might systematically differ depending on which party (parties) is in government. This may also affect the basic orientation of the response to the fiscal crisis (cheese-slicing vs. prioritising, and whether efficiency gains are actively searched or not, see Pollitt, 2010). Third, as attitudinal alternation: this may manifest as greater or lower “willingness” to implement recommendations flowing from EU institutions, to anticipate such recommendations, to exploit them to force change. For example, there is a relatively ample literature on how the Berlusconi government has treated the EU and its requests as a nuisance to be minimized or skirted, while the centre-left has been keen to use European pressure to win domestic acceptance of reform (Quaglia and Radaelli, 2007). Fourth, we might expand our taxonomy of alternation to also encompass alternation between political and technical governments (which may be found three times over “just” two decades in the Italian experience). In this case, the main qualifying trait is the (necessarily relative) insulation of the cabinet and governmental action from societal and political interests.

We should stress that the first two channels through which government alternation can be expected to affect the nature and chances of reform pertain to what one may call “normal politics”. The third channel (attitude towards Europe) operates in normal political times, but it can be expected to be especially relevant in periods of crisis, when European pressure is likely to be higher. In this respect, the European fiscal crisis and the pressures from EU institutions can also be conceptualized as having an impact by changing the domestic opportunity structure in favour of reform. In other words, they
increase the cost of the status quo and thus contribute to insulate reformers (Stolfi 2008). This phenomenon reached its paroxysm with the ‘technical government’ led by Professor Mario Monti. However, it should also be noted that these external factors do not operate automatically, in the sense that there must be actors (reformers) willing to mobilize them as tools against the opponents of reform. Hence, these factors may play a larger or smaller role in the reform process depending on who is in government (i.e. which parties or whether the government is political or technical). In other words, the nature of the government interacts with external factors (European pressure, fiscal crisis) to affect the domestic opportunity structure (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002) and thus the relative power of reformers and actors opposed to reform. In this framework, Europe enters the scene in two ways in explanations of administrative reforms in Italy. First, in a more ‘passive’ way, so to speak, i.e. triggered by the differential attitude of the government in charge towards ‘Europe’ and exploiting European rules as a set of opportunities for forcing administrative reforms (Quaglia and Radaelli, 2007; Radaelli and Franchino, 2004). The differential attitude to Europe of the centre-left and centre-right governments has extended to the respect of the European fiscal rules. The centre-left strove to abide by them in the second half of the 1990s in order to ensure Italy’s entry in the EMU and only allowed itself relative minor slips after the start of the EMU. Conversely, in 2005, under a centre-right government, Italy incurred in the EU’s excessive deficit procedure for breaching the 3% deficit-to-GDP limit prescribed by the Stability and Growth Pact. The imposition of the procedure, however, did push the centre-right to a tighter control of the budget balance. Second, in a more ‘active’ way, triggered by debt crisis (the Italy-issued bonds’ “spread” with Federal republic of Germany bonds), when the action of EU institutions deployed a form of coercion over fiscal policy ‘spilling over’ to the administrative reform policy area (it can be conceptualised as a form of coercive policy transfer, where “transfer” is from certain generic recipes produced by International Governmental Organisations and other bodies, rather than from one specifically identified polity). This has marked – in our view - a watershed transformation (see Ongaro, 2012b): the European level (through both its supranational and its intergovernmental bodies) has become an actor in its own right in the public management reform policy of the euro-zone countries under fiscal pressure; this has occurred in a policy field that previously used to be (constructed and interpreted as) a national competence.

Turning to politicization, Italy has long displayed the features typical of the South European bureaucratic model (Gunther et al., 2006; Sotiropoulos 2004) such as ‘clientelism at the bottom’, with patterns of favouritism in the recruitment of low-ranking officials, and the absence of a well-educated administrative elite selected by competitive means sharing an esprit de corps and enjoying high social esteem (Cassese 1993) – although these interpretations have been partly challenged by recent investigations of the topic (Di Mascio, 2012, chapter 6). ‘Clientelism at the top’, another key feature of Southern administrative systems, was less extensive in the ministerial domain than in the fragmented mélange of state agencies and companies (Golden 2003). In has been argued that a pact of reciprocal self-restraint has been formed between top civil servants and politicians. This pact was based on an exchange between job security and political power: public managers renounced an autonomous proactive role in decision-making processes, while political elites refrained from intervening in the management of bureaucratic careers (Cassese 1999; for an interpretation along the lines of Hood and Lodge, 2006, ‘public service bargain’ theoretical perspective, see Ongaro, 2009).

The turning point occurred in the early 1990s during a massive loss of popular support for the party system. The collapse of the old governing parties paved the way for the launch of successive civil reform programmes which have supported the establishment of autonomous administrative elites.
particular, any prerogative of the ministers to override acts of higher civil servants has been removed by reforms occurred in 1993 (legislative decree 29/93) and 1998 (legislative Decree 80/1998). Moreover, performance management has been introduced as a tool for steering interposed between the political and managerial sphere (Legislative Decree 29/1993 and 286/1999). These two waves of personnel management reform are usually referred to as the First and the Second Privatisation (Ongaro and Bellé, 2010; Bordogna and Neri, 2011). The First Privatisation took place in 1992/1993, when the government presided by Giuliano Amato and followed the year later by the ‘technical’ government led by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi adopted a comprehensive reform package: the Legislative Decree 29/93, which followed the guidelines set out by Delegating Law 421/92. With the First Privatisation, the former sovereign employer model, in which the government unilaterally determined staff regulations in the public sector, was replaced by a collective bargaining system similar to that in place in the private sector. Among other innovations, the 1993 reform abolished automatic salary increases and introduced performance-related pay provisions for employees of all grades. The First Privatisation affected about eighty percent of public employees and left out only a few categories: the most senior state executives, judges, state attorneys, military personnel, the police, diplomats, prefects, and university professors. As public employment relations shifted from the administrative law to the civil code, jurisdiction over employment disputes wandered from administrative to ordinary tribunals.

The Second Privatisation, which was devised by the then Minister for Public Administration Franco Bassanini and took place at the end of the 1990s, extended the contractualisation of employment relations and significantly decentralized the public collective bargaining system, reducing the scope of national agreements in favour of integrative local contracts. The Second Privatisation increased the percentage of management staff that could be hired through fixed-term contracts and extended the contractualisation of the employment relations to the most senior public sector executives.

A new modernization initiative was already under way before the fiscal crisis materialised (Legislative Decree 150/2009). The new initiative resumed the implementation of performance assessment as well as emphasising transparency of contractual conditions employed in political appointments (the publication on the internet of the gross salary of public managers as well as the remuneration of consultants). On the other hand, this reform regulated by law aspects of public personnel administration that were previously determined through collective bargaining agreements (e.g. criteria for within-grade salary steps) or autonomously decided by the management at the organization level (e.g. the distribution of performance ratings). However, ministerial elites exploited the circumstance of the crisis to promulgate provisions that restored the pure ministerial discretion by removing procedural links between performance evaluation and the political appointment process (Decree Law 78/2010 and 138/2011).

As for political control on non-ministerial bodies, the traditional relevance of “clientelism at the top” remained while there has been a reduction of “clientelism at the bottom”, as it revealed itself incompatible with constraints on public finances made more stringent by the process of European integration. Fiscal constraints, however, have exerted much less pressure at the regional and local level, where political appointments proliferate. The extent to which the fiscal crisis has curtailed this process is a matter for empirical investigation.

As a result of the patronage practices outlined above, Italy clusters in the higher-patronage end of a sample of 15 democracies (Kopecky et al. 2012). However, data show that there is no “South
European model’ of bureaucracy characterized by the pervasiveness of patronage practices. As it happens in most European democracies, the levels of politicisation in Italy reflect patterns of political appointment that reach into the middle levels of ministerial bureaucracy while being limited to the highest position in a large number of non-departmental bodies. As for the relevance of partisanship in patronage practices, political allegiance is less relevant in Italy than in other Western European countries (Di Mascio 2012). The low relevance of political links as a condition for appointment reflects the ‘resource-oriented’ political control of public institutions. Party leaders rely on their personal network of affinities to penetrate state institutions so as to consolidate their power base through access to material public resources that are manipulated for political ends.

The implementation gap of civil service reform has also implied the failed modernization of ministerial cabinets as entrenched advisory structure within the Italian core executive (Di Mascio and Natalini Forthcoming), and to a re-stated centrality of certain grand corps in both everyday decision-making and the policy-making in the competent field for the ministerial bureaucracy, and in the reforming processes of public administration, where they have an effect in the sense of filtering, according to the administrative law paradigm, the content of administrative reforms (Capano 2003; Ongaro 2011). This is due to the factionalized nature of grand corps networks which, coupled with the fragmentation of the ministerial elites, countered the implementation of the “managerial substance” of administrative reforms (Di Mascio and Natalini Forthcoming).

Another persistent trait has been the involvement of trade unions in the making of decisions concerning public employment, a feature that has remained unchanged also during the 2000s, a period in which the traditional unity of the main unions was deeply shaken.

As to the other areas of public management reform beyond the already illustrated area of personnel management, a (very) synthetic overview of the public management reform trajectory in Italy between 1992 and 2012 may be outlined as follows (see Belle’ and Ongaro, forthcoming; Ongaro, 2009, pp. 65-79; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011, chapter 4 and appendix on Italy):

- the financial management trajectory displays a move from input-oriented spending responsibility to limited forms of responsibility budgeting system; the patchy diffusion of previously inexistent accrual accounting and cost-calculation systems, diffusion which is however mainly concentrated in one policy field, namely the healthcare sector.

- the reform trajectory in audit and performance measurement shows a shift from ex ante compliance controls on administrative acts to mainly ex post controls (though right at the end of the observation period a new bill provided for restoring ex ante controls); and the spread of performance indicators (as confirmed also by the findings of the survey), though mostly used for monitoring rather than decision-making – the notable exception being the healthcare sector;

- the trajectory in the organisation of the public sector may be schematically delineated as a shift from homogeneity to differentiation in the organisational schemes adopted by public sector organisations; it is further characterized by the establishment of certain executive agencies explicitly patterned on the UK ‘Next Steps’ model, the use of divisional, next to functional, organisational models for ministries; the massive employment of purchaser-provider split in the healthcare sector; the use of Market-Type Mechanisms – MTMs – in certain areas of welfare (mainly healthcare);
As a final remark, it is useful to notice that one policy sector can be singled out for the extent of change that occurred, and the radical NPM character of the reforms that were implemented: healthcare. In the healthcare sector, in fact, a process of systematic deployment of MTMs – e.g., through the introduction of diagnosis-related groups (DRGs) and the split of the purchasing and providing function of health services – combined with the massive corporatisation of hospitals and local healthcare units has taken place (Anessi Pessina and Cantù, 2000; Cantù, 2012). The extent to which NPM-inspired reforms were introduced in the healthcare system has no parallel in other areas of the public sector in Italy, which is why it may theoretically interesting to single out this policy sector for purposes of examining the ‘impacts’ of administrative reforms.

3. Data and Method

3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation

The Italian COCOPS survey was conducted by a team of researchers at Bocconi University located in the Centre of Research for Health and Social Care Management (CERGAS). In line with the survey’s general sampling principles and population definition, the Italian sample represents a full census, avoiding random sampling. Survey invitations were sent to the top three hierarchical levels of public sector executives working in central government, employment services and the health care sector. As regards the central government, we surveyed national government ministries as well as national agencies directly subordinated to national government ministries. We chose not to target territorial representatives of the central government at the regional/local level (e.g., prefects). For the employment sector, we targeted the first three hierarchical levels in the Employment and Welfare Ministry (108 executives) and also all heads of territorial offices at both regional (21) and provincial level (124); this choice was driven by the consideration of the high decentralization of employment activities (i.e., the ministry runs most of its services through direct provision at the local level). Moreover, two National Employment Agencies were surveyed, namely Italia Lavoro with 25 invitations and Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL) with 6 invitations sent out. For the health sector, besides sending invitations to the first three hierarchical levels in the Ministry of Health, we targeted state and regional level executives, including in the surveyed population the general directors, administrative directors and health directors of all public health organizations across the country. More specifically, at regional level we included executives from the 21 regional health departments (Assessorati alla Salute) and 13 Regional Health Agencies (Agenzie Sanitarie Regionali). At the local level, we targeted the top management of the 138 Local Health Authorities (Aziende Sanitarie Locali), as well as the heads of the 80 directly managed hospitals (Aziende Ospedaliere and Aziende Ospedaliere Universitarie), and the 22 research-based hospitals (indicated with the acronym of IRCCSs).

As concerns access procedures, a web-based version of the survey seemed the best option to achieve a high response rate. Invitations were sent through the Unipark platform provided by the Hertie School of Governance (WP leader) to a total ‘sample’ of 1,703 names. In order to prompt contacted persons to take part to the research project and fill out the questionnaire, a personalized email message (in which people were addressed by name and in which the purpose of the survey and the significance of their active involvement was illustrated) was sent out to each of the 1,703 identified
names. The questionnaire and the instructions about how to fill it in were available directly by clicking the survey link at the bottom of the message. The questionnaire could be completed either on-line or by returning the filled in questionnaire via post or email. A PDF version of the questionnaire was also available on the survey webpage for download. Specifically for the healthcare sector, in order to increase coverage we used the ‘forwarding option’: we sent out email invitations to the general director of the public health organizations recommending a participation in the survey and inviting him/her to forward the survey to lower levels (e.g. administrative director and health director). Also, administrative and health director were directly targeted via email. Moreover, before the survey launch—in order to more effectively communicate to potential respondents in the healthcare sector and boost the response rate- we made a public national call using the weekly *Il Sole 24 Ore Sanità*, the most authoritative magazine (packed with the Tuesday issue of the financial newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*); we also presented the project during a network meeting in early March 2012 with healthcare general managers at CERGAS Bocconi (Network DASP).

The Italian survey was kept very close to the core questionnaire, with only one optional question added in the section 2 of the survey regarding international organizations influence on public sector reforms. No additional change or modifications to the survey have been made. The email invitations for the general Italian survey were distributed to respondents on the 1st of June 2012, with the deadline of the 17th of July. To increase the response rate, three email reminders were sent out every ten days to the entire sample (18th June, 29th June and 12 July 2012). Unfortunately in July we did not reach the targeted response rate of 300 completed questionnaires so we had a second round of questionnaires being sent out as an attachment to selected email contacts within our main mailing list in October 2012.

Overall, a total of 1,703 invitations were sent out: 720 to central government executives, 707 to health sector executives, and 276 to executives in the employment sector. In total the survey received 343 partially or fully filled out answers, which leads to an overall response rate of 20.1%, as shown in Table 2. Total response rate in the Italian case is in line with that from the overall COCOPS survey (23.7%), thus adding confidence that we could achieve a reasonable level of response. More specifically, central government and employment sector response rate are in line with those from the overall COCOPS sample (18.1% Italy vs. 21.4% in overall COCOPS sample for central government and 29% vs. 26.9% for the employment sector). For the health sector the Italian response rate is relatively lower (19.2% vs. 30.6%), notwithstanding the important communication strategy deployed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central Government</th>
<th>Health Sector</th>
<th>Employment Sector</th>
<th>Italy Total</th>
<th>Total COCOPS Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitation sent</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>20307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed survey</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>4814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate (total COCOPS sample)</td>
<td>18.1% (21.4%)</td>
<td>19.2% (30.6%)</td>
<td>29.0% (26.9%)</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the survey results and their distribution across policy fields (see Figure 1 – please note that respondents were allowed to select more than one option) we notice that out of the 343 completed survey, 39.6% relate to the health sector, not unexpectedly given this was the single most
targeted policy field, followed by the employment field (23.3% - the other policy sector specifically targeted), social protection and welfare (15.2%), education and finance (each around 9%), general government and economic affairs (each around 6%), recreation, environmental protection, justice and infrastructure (each accounting for 4.4%). The lowest response rates are found in the fields of foreign affairs (2%) and defense (1.2%), these data closely matching the respective response shares for the overall COCOPS sample.

Figure 1. Policy field sample shares

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 analyzing the respondents’ opinions and attitudes towards their role and work in the public administration, we provide in this section a brief introduction overview of the respondents’ personal background and organization type they belong to.

Organization type (see Figure 2). What kind of organization do respondents work for? The largest share (34.1%) comes from a public agency or otherwise denominated subordinate government body, at regional level. The significant presence of regional bodies is explained by the fact that most health organizations belong to this category. For the overall COCOPS sample the share of respondent executives in this position is considerably lower (9.5%). An equal share (32.6%) comes from respondents of ministries at central government level (much in line in this case with the 36% for the overall COCOPS sample), whereas a relatively smaller share of executives (17.9%) represent agencies or other semi-autonomous bodies at the national level (vs. over 30% for the overall COCOPS sample). A small share of answers comes from other public sector bodies at the sub national level (9.7%) – these coming mainly from the employment sector- and only 5.6% of the sample is composed of
administrations (offices directly hierarchically accountable to elected officials) at the regional or local level - compared to 15.8% of the overall COCOPS sample.

Organization size (see Figure 2). Respondents to our survey tend to belong to large organizations in terms of the people employed. A share of 57.4% work in organizations with more than 1,000 employees and another significant share of respondents come from public organizations with over 5,000 employees (22.4%, a datum which in the overall COCOPS survey is at 17.5%). The data for Italy suggest that more than half of the respondents work in complex organizations with over 1,000 workers.

Figure 2. Organization type and size shares

3.3 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents

Gender (see Figure 3). As expected, the great majority of respondents are male (70.7%), and only 29.3% are female – a proportion which confirms the traditional and still existing male dominance among public sector executives in Italy. Data reflect the proportion found in the overall COCOPS surveyed population. The gender gap in both public and private organizations in Italy is a widely debated issue.

Age (see Figure 3). The relative majority of respondents (41.7%) have an average age between 56-65 years, while they represent only one third of the overall COCOPS sample. Another 38.5% is aged between 46 and 55 years (in line with the COCOPS sample 40.7%), while another 12.9% are between 36 and 45 years (here the share among the overall COCOPS sample is higher, reaching 20.5% of the respondents). Only 5.21% of the Italian responders are under 35 as in the overall COCOPS sample. Over 65 years are the smallest share (1.74%).
Hierarchical level (see Figure 3). With regards to the hierarchical position within the organization, most respondents (43.9%) are in the second hierarchical tier. About a third of the respondents are at the third level, and the remaining 25% are at the highest hierarchical level. This distribution of responses perfectly reflects the overall COCOPS sample.

Education (see Figure 3). The majority of respondents (90%) have a four of five-year university degree, and the remaining 10% have also a doctoral degree, thereby confirming the high level of education and literacy of executives working in Italian public organizations in managerial positions. Data reflect the fact that in Italy holding a university degree is compulsory for access to managerial positions (though there may be exceptions, at the intersection of partly contradictory regulations stratified over the years) and formal education is generally weighed in the competitions for executive posts. The COCOPS sample presents a more balance distribution between doctoral degree and bachelor degree (16% each).

Looking at the disciplinary field of education (see Figure 4), the highest percentage of respondents comes from the field of law studies (32%) confirming a traditional dominance of the professional group of lawyers in Italian public administration (Borgonovi et al., 2008; Capano, 2003; Ongaro, 2009, 2010 and 2011; Ongaro and Belle’, 2010). The administration is also populated by professionals with an economics and business administration and management background (23%) and the medical profession (21%); this last datum reflects the high responses received from the healthcare sector where most of the general directors of healthcare organizations have a background as clinicians.
Political science is also a popular field of education (15%), followed by natural sciences and engineering, and humanities and other social sciences (7% each). By comparison, in the overall COCOPS sample a smaller share of 28% of respondents has a background in law, the same share of respondents have a background in economics, business, management (23%), while medical science overall represents only 6%.

**Figure 4. Educational fields (respondents could check more than one field)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Field</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/management/economics</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science/public administration</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social sciences and humanities</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical science</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences and engineering</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tenure** (see Figure 5). Working experience outside the public sector of top Italian executives is limited: on average, experience within the non-profit sector is absent (79%), whilst about 40% of the respondents had a 1 to 5 year-period working opportunity in the private sector; however, by far the longest part of the working life was spent most within the public sector. One third of respondents worked in the public sector for more than 20 year (33.3%), and a half of the sample have between 10 and 20 years (50.4%) working experience, while we got fewer responses from less-than-10-year-experienced public executives (15.5%). The rather low mobility also within the public sector is indicated by a share of 48.7% of respondents who have been working in the current organization for more than 10 years, and a quarter of them kept the same position for at least the previous 10 years. Compared to the overall COCOPS survey, it is striking the difference between the average value of the working years spent in the public sector by top executives in Italy: only one third of respondents have more than 20 years of experience compared to the COCOPS average of 58%; this is probably explained by the rather young age of Italian respondents to the survey (see Figure 3).

**Figure 5. Tenure of respondents**

- ...in the non-profit sector
- ...in the private sector
- ...in your current position
- ...in your current organisation
- ...in the public sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives

This section presents data on the identity and role perception of public sector executives in Italy, motivation and value preferences. In examining the data, we couldn’t avoid a feeling that on certain issues, especially sensitive in terms of the legitimacy and social recognition of the role of the public executive, there might have been some trend towards expressing higher values (where these were normatively perceived as “positive”) associated to specific items, perhaps discounting a shared “need” for Italian public sector executives to publicly legitimize the role of the state and their own role vis à vis society. It is equally plausible, however, that it was us – the allegedly neutral observers – to be biased in our perceptions. We will thus report the data pointing out on occasion this alleged discrepancy of perceptions where we felt it useful for a more complete and supple understanding of survey responses.

Identity and role perception as executive (see Figure 6). When asked about the way they understand their role as public sector executive, respondents pointed out the following statements as highly valued: ‘achieving results’ (90.7 %), ‘ensuring an efficient use of resources’ (87.5%), and ‘ensuring impartial implementation’ (75.2 %) as the main criteria guiding their working behaviour. Regarding the other self-understandings, respondents in Italy rate them at a lower level relative to the first three. There is no evidence of differing values if we single out the health care sector. Interestingly, the answers from Italian public sector executives have a higher means than the overall COCOPS sample, with one exception: providing expertise and technical knowledge (70.4% average COCOPS level vs. 67.0% Italy). In trying to outline, in necessarily a bit of an impressionistic way, the profile of Italian public sector executives as emerging from these answers, we find a clear dominance of roles which are in line with a Weberian self-understanding (e.g. providing expertise and technical knowledge, ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules) and a managerial self-understanding (e.g. achieving results, ensuring efficient use of resources) indicating a certain hybridization of these two reform paradigms, which could perhaps be interpreted as a Neo-Weberian model, as argued by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) and critically discussed for the case of Italy and the other ‘Napoleonic’ administrative systems in Ongaro (2009, chapter 7). This may be read also in contrast to a more ‘political’ self-understanding of role and behaviour in line with a more networked-governance reform model: statements that might be predicated of this model (e.g. ‘providing a voice for societal interests’) are clearly resonating to a lower degree to the ears of Italian public executives.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring efficient use of resources</td>
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<td>Finding joint solutions to solve problems of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing expertise and technical knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing new policy agendas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing a voice for societal interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieving results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting public organisations to work together</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules</td>
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Value preferences for public sector priorities (see Figure 7). In another question it was asked for more general preferences with regard to public sector priorities based on polarizing options. Certain results seem to indicate a prevalence of values that – the obvious major caveats applied – we may associate to the traditional Weberian bureaucratic model. These include an emphasis on citizen focus rather than customer focus (48.4% agreement vs. 6.7%). With regard to other values, we find an even distribution of preferences (around 15%) between civil service values such as equity and quality, a lesser percentage privileging efficiency. A substantial share of respondents shows a positive assessment of achieving results (36.4%) vs. following rules (9.4%); a less marked imbalance may be found as regards other values: the preference for market provision (11.5%) vs. state provision (24.5%), and similarly as regards user charges/fees (16.8%) vs. tax financed services (25.3%). There is no evidence of differing values if we single out the healthcare sector. Surprisingly, however, the healthcare sector is rather a bit polarized towards non-NPM elements rather than NPM ones when contrasted with the overall results for the Italian public sector in its entirety (see e.g. the score for the preference for tax financed services (33.7%), state provision (28.4%), citizen orientation (54.7%), and achieving results (44.2%). This is surprising to the extent that the healthcare sector underwent a massive process of NPM-inspired reforms – although these were countered by an emphasis on universal service (Italy has a UK-patterned NHS) that put emphasis on public funding, and by an emphasis on ‘putting the person at the centre’ which may explain findings such as those on customer ‘vs.’ citizen-orientation. In comparison with the overall COCOPS sample we find a relatively higher penetration of NPM doctrines (usual caveats about definitions apply) in the Italian public administration, except the datum on customer focus (6.7% It vs. 17.5% COCOPS average).

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

Motivation (see Figure 8). A central research theme is the question about the drivers of motivation in the public sector. Adopting the widely used distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, our results seem to confirm a clear prevalence of intrinsic motivations among Italian public servants. By far the greatest importance is in fact given to intrinsic factors such as ‘interesting work’ (89.2% agreement) and room to make ‘autonomous’ decisions (66.9%). The other important factor – extrinsic in nature – is ‘good opportunities for promotion’ (61.2%). Other extrinsic factors such as job security (25.5%), flexible working hours (46.3%), status (24.8% - albeit admittedly this factor is difficult to classify) and high income (38.7%) are much less relevant as motivational factors, albeit they all find a relative agreement among the respondents. With regards to altruistic motivators, the picture is more blurred: within Italian top executives responses we find a strong agreement on the possibility of doing something useful for society as a motivator (79.7%); opportunities to help other people seem to play a lesser role (59.8%), though a significant one. We did not find significant variations in the respondents from the health care sector, nor did we find significant differences
between the Italian and the overall COCOPS survey when it comes to motivational factors. The only apparent differences relate to a higher importance given to opportunities to help other people (59.8% Italian responses vs. 45.0% average COCOPS value) and a lesser importance attributed to job security (25.5% Italian responses vs. 42.5% average COCOPS responses) - this latter datum we found (perceptively, subjectively) quite striking, based on our direct experience with Italian public servants.

Figure 8. Motivation (Q: How important do you personally think it is in a job to have...)

Social value (Figure 9). The comparison with the COCOPS survey overall values report a datum for Italy of a relatively more ‘pessimistic’ view than their European homologues when asked about their social value.

Figure 9. Social value preferences (Q: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements)
5. Characteristics of the Public Administration Work Context

The success of introducing management practices like performance management to the public sector depends on the extent to which the specific work context in public administration resonates with the underlying logic behind the chosen tool. This chapter analyses how Italian top civil servants perceive their work context and attempts to appraise to what extent certain management practices might be transferred – and with what expected effects – to the public Administration.

Performance management and result-orientation is difficult to implement if goals are perceived to be ambiguous and activities are less measureable and easy to observe (Rainey and Jung, 2010). To reliably measure performance, goals would have to be limited, clearly stated and communicated, and activities would have to be easily observed and monitored. When asked about these characteristics of their work context (see Figure 10), Italian public sector executives have a relative high degree of acceptance of the idea that goals are clearly defined (73.5%), although more controversial is agreement on how easy to observe goals are (43.7% vs. 38.1%). This datum displays a profoundly different value if the health care sector is singled out. In fact, here we have that 85.6% of respondents assess goals to be observable in a straightforward way; also different, but apparently in the opposite way, is in the healthcare sector the way goals are perceived, i.e., as being less clearly stated (45.9%) and communicated (60.6%) compared to the overall Italian respondents (73.5% and 64.8%). Compared with cross-national data, Italian public data are much aligned.

![Figure 10. Goal ambiguity and measurability (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?)](image)

**Management autonomy** (Figure 11). What emerges as very striking is the very low autonomy managers enjoy with regard to decisions about hiring (24.8%) and dismissing staff (15.6%): perhaps a consequence of more than a decade of freezing of the recruitment of staff as the main measure to rein the dynamics of the state budget, combined with what used to be and still remains a heavily unionized public sector. It might be noticed, however, that regarding other managerial choices (budget reallocation, contracting out, organizational and structural design and effecting policy formulation and implementations) Italian public managers perceived a higher level of autonomy than the COCOPS average. The picture is radically different if we single out the healthcare sector. Here managers enjoy a much higher level of autonomy throughout all the dimensions along which autonomy is measured if we compared to the overall Italian dataset (budget allocation 76.6% vs.
56.4%; contracting out 58.6% vs. 36.4%; promoting staff 62.2% vs. 38.9%; hiring staff 56.5% vs. 24.8%; dismissing staff 29.4% vs. 15.6%; structural design 74.8% vs. 49%; affecting policy choice 62.4% vs. 48.2%; influencing policy implementation 81.8% vs. 68.1%).

**Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to)**

**Interaction frequency** (Figure 12). Much in line with what could be expected, interactions are mainly along hierarchical lines, and more within the organization (inwardly rather than outwardly directed). Interestingly, the frequency of interactions with trade union representatives is much higher in Italy than the COCOPS sample (67.5% vs. 42.4%), further corroborating the picture of a unionised public sector. Another interesting element of evidence is the frequency of interaction with the Minister of reference: here the frequency is also much higher than the European mean average value (55.5% vs. 28.8%). Interestingly, the occurrence of interactions with other government departments is much lower in Italy than the COCOPS average (50.3% vs. 69.5%), perhaps highlighting a silos mentality.

**Figure 12. Interaction frequency (Q: Please indicate how frequently you typically interact with the following actors or bodies)**
In contrast to interaction frequency, **coordination quality** (Figure 13) is a more qualitative than quantitative measure of fragmentation in public administration. Much in line with what could be expected, collaboration occurs to a higher level within the policy sector than between policy sectors, and limitedly with supranational and international bodies. A datum at 53.1% characterises the quality of collaboration with private stakeholders. The healthcare sector displays a higher level of collaboration than the average with local/regional government bodies, a fact which may be due to the institutional allocation of competences in the Italian healthcare sector which identifies in regional governments the pivotal policy makers. It is attributable to the healthcare sector also the only discrepancy between the Italian and the COCOPS average values, whereby it is the institutional collaboration of the healthcare sector to explain the high collaboration with regional governments.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Interference</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>90%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government bodies and private and voluntary sector stakeholders</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and supra-national bodies/international organisations</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and local/regional government bodies</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government bodies from different policy areas</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government bodies within the same policy area</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
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<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
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**The degree of politicization** (Figure 14) indicates to what extent public sector institutions can make decisions on technical criteria or are subjected to being influenced by political processes. In commenting the degree of politicization, the most interesting aspect is that an important percentage of respondents (70.4%) agree with the assertion that “removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better policies” contrasted with a European COCOPS value of 54%. The datum points to a deeply felt sentiment about the importance of safeguarding administration from the interference of politics and politicians. An ideological tenet that seems to have deep roots amongst Italian civil servants (the 1993 Reform of the Civil Service, carried out by a ‘technical government’ filled with non-elected technicians, was centred on re-drawing the borders between politics and administration and making them much less porous, mainly in the direction of insulating tenured officials from interferences at the micro-management level by elected officials and their appointees, see Cassese, 2002 and Ongaro, 2009). The other interesting element of evidence is the percentage of respondents that agree with the sentence “senior executives and not politicians initiate reforms or new policies” (64.5%, against a European COCOPS value of 32.4%), a datum which provides a rather sceptical view held by senior public sector executives about the role of political organs as promoters of new policies, or even of reforms of the public sector. Data are even higher for the healthcare sector (75% agreeing with the sentence ‘removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better policies’, and 70.7% stating that ‘senior executives and not politicians initiate reforms or new policies’). Regarding the extent of interference of politicians with routine activities or
senior level appointments, data are much in line with what could be expected, and with the European COCOPS average.

One final observation is that from data it emerges that the transfer of managerial approaches to the public sector is in Italy rather different when we single out specifically the healthcare sector contrasted with the overall public sector. The former is characterized by a more frequent inclusion of performance-oriented management tools, higher level of management autonomy with extensive decentralization of decision-making compared to the overall Italian public sector - whereas lack of autonomy and pervasiveness of politicization seem to be a major concern for the vast majority of Italian public managers.

Figure 14. Degree of politicization (Q: What is your view on the following statements)

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 (the latter being 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

Public sector reform trends (Figure 15) can have very different characteristics. Figure 15 illustrates the perception about the relative importance of different reform trends in the Italian public sector. Counter-intuitively if we consider the contents of the reform cycles in Italy, the finding concerning the importance assigned to reforming in the direction of developing the e-government as well as enhancing transparency and open government (percentage of respondents agreeing being respectively 84.8% and 80.7%) display values much higher than the COCOPS mean value; also citizen participation is perceived as an important reform trend by the majority of respondents (52.3%). Such types of reform, however do not figure prominently on the governmental agenda as accounted in the
international literature on public sector reform in Italy (Ongaro, 2009, chapter 2; Ongaro, 2012b; Pollitt and Bouckaert, chapter 4 and Appendix on Italy). Another interesting element of evidence is that reform trends at the policy field level (see Figure 15) we find clear evidence that the arguably most pronounced NPM types of reform, such as privatization, contracting out or agencification are (still) high in Italy (privatization 51%; contracting out 46.9%), though less so regarding processes of agencification of the public sector (29.4%). These figures (with the exception of agencification; for an overview on Italy and Napoleonic countries, see Ongaro, Barbieri, Fedele and Galli, 2012; and Ongaro, Parrado and Verhoest, 2012) are much higher than the COCOPS mean value; if we focus the healthcare sector, values are even higher (privatization 64.7%; contracting out 57.4% and also agencification scores at 40.2%), which might suggest that it is especially the healthcare sector to have been effected by NPM inspired reform trends (Belle’ and Ongaro, forthcoming).

Figure 15. Importance of reform trends (Q: How important are the following reform trends in your policy area?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reform Trend</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<th>...</th>
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<th>To a large extent</th>
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<td>Transparency and open government</td>
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<td>Mergers of government organisations</td>
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<td>External partnerships and strategic alliances</td>
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<td>Collaboration and cooperation among different public...</td>
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<td>Treatment of service users as customers</td>
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<td>Extending state provision into new areas</td>
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<td>Focusing on outcomes and results</td>
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<td>Contracting out</td>
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<td>Creation of autonomous agencies or corporatization</td>
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<td>Citizen participation methods/initiatives</td>
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<td>Public sector downsizing</td>
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When probing into the dynamics of public sector reform (Ongaro and Valotti, 2008), with regard to the overall assessment of the success of public administration reforms in Italy the responses are rather mixed: whereas 17.6% of the respondents perceive the reforms as not successful (scales 1-3), a similar share (21.7%; scales 8-10) of the respondents is of the opinion that the reforms were successful (see Figure 16). With regard to the drivers and dynamics, public sector reform in Italy seems to be implemented predominantly ‘without public involvement’ (45.9% of agreement with this statement vs. 10.1% that deem to have been a significant involvement of the public), to be a top-down exercise (46.8% vs. 11.7% that consider reforms as mainly bottom up), and to have been more contested than supported by the union (32.6% vs. 11.7% uncontested). As already confirmed by the previous question, reforms seem to be more about cost-cutting and savings (40.7% of agreement) than about service improvement (16.3% agreement).
6.2. Organizational level

Respondents report a significant usage of management instruments (Figure 17), a datum generally higher than the COCOPS mean value. The only values significantly below the 50% threshold are related to ‘decentralization’, of both financial and staffing decisions. Values are even higher for the healthcare sector up to the reported 97.1% that appraise ‘management by objectives’ as being used quite or to a large extent. An interesting aspect is the usage of performance related pay (56%, a datum which may be contrasted with the average COCOPS value of 25.4%), probably due to the emphasis that the most recent public management reform (dated 2009) - although substantially stifled by the freezing of the financial resources required - put on this managerial approach. Also interesting is the lower level in Italy (66%) vs. the average COCOPS value (67.7%) of staff appraisal talk, a management instrument which should go hand in hand with performance-related pay.

Figure 17. Relevance of different management instruments (Q: To what extent are the following instruments used in your organization?)
Performance management (Figure 18). Literature on the Italian healthcare sector management is consistent in pointing out that performance management – with measurement and goals/targets as core elements – is more institutionalized in the healthcare field than the rest of the public sector, probably due to the high level of managerialization introduced in the last two decades (Anessi Pessina and Cantu’, 2000 and 2006; Cantu’, 2012). From the questionnaire we added confidence to the assumption that performance management (rewarding and sanctioning on performance) is widely employed in the healthcare sector, values (strongly agree) are much higher than both the aggregate Italian data and the COCOPS overall survey. Perhaps surprisingly, Italian values (strongly agree) display higher values than the COCOPS survey, apparently indicating a wider usage of a performance management logic in terms of a connection between measures (higher than the COCOPS average) and rewards/sanctions (more widely used than COCOPS average), including the usage by politicians of indicators to monitor public managers’ performance (a datum which collides with both shared perceptions and analyses of the politics-administration dynamics, see Borgonovi and Ongaro, 2011; Cassese, 2002; Ongaro, 2009).

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

The only coordination solutions (see Figure 19) that is reported to be agreed upon by the majority of respondents are, first and foremost, referring the issue upwards along the hierarchy (69.9%), followed at a distance by ‘setting a cross cutting policy arrangement or programme’, mentioned by a narrow majority (51%). This value is much higher than the COCOPS mean value (30%).

Figure 19. Coordination solutions (Q: To resolve coordination problems when working with other organizations, we typically)
6.3. Individual level

Asking for the use of performance indicators (see Figure 20) aims to identify the fields of application where public sector executives are most likely to use performance indicators. Surprisingly, respondents report to use performance indicators in their own work to an important extent for all the purposes identified in the survey (all values are above 50%). This datum is not aligned with common experience with public sector organisations by observers, although performance indicators may have penetrated working habits and entered organisational routines more extensively than usually recognised (see e.g. Nasi and Steccolini, 2008). Performance indicators are more likely to be used to monitor the performance of colleagues, to assess whether executives reach their own targets, and to foster learning and improvement and to identify problems that need attention.

Figure 20. Use of performance indicators (Q: In my work I use performance indicators to)

In sum, we observe that certain reform contents ascribed to the NPM, like performance measurement and management, are perceived as especially influential in the healthcare sector, on the work of Italian healthcare senior executives, than they are in the overall national sample. Again, managerialism provided public healthcare executives with greater decision-making autonomy, but required them to improve their performances (or at least to be able to demonstrate they did) and encouraged them to adopt private-sector management techniques (Anessi Pessina and Cantù, 2006). Overall, the healthcare sector, starting with the major reform of the mid 1990s (L. 502/1992), struck a different balance among the three, often conflicting dimensions that characterise all kinds of governments (Borgonovi, 2000: 50–51): constitutional, guided by the principle of legality; political, guided by the need for consensus; and managerial, guided by the search for efficiency, effectiveness and economy.
7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration

Italy initiated and implemented a range of policy responses to the global financial, economic and fiscal crises (for an overview, see COCOPS Work Package 7, short country report and full case study on Italy, Ongaro et al., 2013). However, it should also be observed that when the crisis burst, Italy had already been struggling for years to tighten public spending, in order to make more manageable its large stock of public debt (always above 100% over the past two decades), and restrictive policies of expenditure containment were already in place (mainly in the form of the freezing of hiring), notably in the healthcare sector\(^7\). Consequently, the main effect of the fiscal crisis on the healthcare policy was to further reinforce containment measures rather than triggering a radically new healthcare policy. In general, efforts to contain public expenditures were increased, especially through policies aimed at increasing the efficiency of public spending through improved accountability of the different level of governments for the provision of essential services and respect for financial constraints (Ferré et al. 2012).

In response to the fiscal crisis and the stricter public budget imperatives issued by European institutions within the frame of a transforming relationship between the European and the national level of governance, notably in Mediterranean countries (Ongaro, 2012a), the national government proceeded to cuts of financial transfers to regional and local governments pertaining to a number of policy sectors, including healthcare and welfare policies (see WP7, short country report and full case study on Italy, for details and explanations). It might be hypothesized that these severe measures would have occurred irrespective of the global economic crisis (due to issues of sustainability of the welfare state in Italy in its extant configuration), but they may have been accelerated by pressures to contain the dynamics of public debt accretion (DeBelvis et al., 2012). To counter risks of fiscal default and restore the national fiscal credibility, the technical government chaired by Mario Monti pushed through certain structural reform, including a labour regulation reform (so called “Fornero” reform, in 2012).

Cutback measures (Figure 21). Regarding the broader approach to realizing savings in response to the fiscal crisis, there is in Italy a clear prevalence of linear ‘across the board’ cuts, as the main saving strategy (50%); the datum is especially significant when contrasted with the COCOPS average (30.4%). Correspondingly, approaches centred on productivity and efficiency gains as well as approaches orientated to targeted cuts according to priorities display a lower level than the COCOPS average (productivity and efficiency is at 8.8% contrasted with COCOPS sample 18.8%; targeted cuts are at 37.8% contrasted with COCOPS sample 40.6%).

\(^7\) For example, restrictive policies targeting the healthcare sector include the introduction of regional prescription charges; the adoption of extensive efficiency mechanisms on goods and health services procurement; the inclusion of more stringent quasi-market contracts with private health care providers; a partial block of personnel turnover and incentives for early retirement; the reclassification of drugs that are charged to the INHS; the introduction of extended forms of co-payment; the imposition to increase mark-ups to the regional tax rates (e.g., business tax IRAP; surtax on the national personal income tax IRPEF and vehicle tax); and the rationalisation and reconfiguration of hospitals together with incentives to sell properties.
**Saving strategy** (Figure 22). The approach to cutback management in Italy is clearly centred on freezing both hiring (71.8%) and pay (60.6%), without resorting to staff layoffs (a mere 2.5%). The other measures (cuts or postponement of existing programs, downsizing of the back and front office) are also used though to a slightly lower extent than the COCOPS average. Increases in fees and user charges are also limitedly employed (22.9%) with the notable exception of healthcare (35.8%).

**8. Impact of Public Administration Reform**

One main goal of the present study is collecting systematic information about how public sector executives assess the impact of the various managerial reforms at the organizational level, as well as at the policy level. In this chapter, we present the results of such evaluative questions.

As concerns the overall assessment of public administration and how it is run (see Figure 23) contrasted with five years ago (problematic as it may be from the methodological point of view to ask for cross-temporal comparisons), most of the responses are in the range of 4 to 8 scale - on a 10-
point scale, which means that respondents appraise the way public sector organizations are run as either relatively improved or substantially the same.

**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?)**

Over 50% of the respondents’ preferences have been attributed to the following **performance dimensions** (see Figure 24): engage in open and honest communication with one another (69.6%); willingly share information with one another (62.7%); are trustworthy (70.1%) and share the same ambitions and vision for the organisation (51.8%), whilst the other values scored below the 50% threshold. The picture that emerged is one in which people within the organization are deemed to be trustworthy, but too only limitedly act as cohesive teams – a pattern which evoked to our mind the old Latin maxim “Senatores boni viri, Senatus mala bestia” (that we might translate as “individual senators are good people, it is the senate to be an intractable beast”, where senate in general terms for any “organisation”). It is striking to notice how significantly lower than the COCOPS mean value is the response to the question ‘having a strong team spirit’ (32.1% contrasted with 61.3%). Also interesting is observing that for all responses with one exception (namely view themselves as partners in charting the organisation’s direction) are lower than the COCOCPS sample.

**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?)**
Social capital and trust (Figure 26). Surprisingly, respondents widely share a positive attitude towards the satisfaction they get from their job, much in line with the COCOPS average.

A further related question aims to assess the executives’ organizational commitment (see Figure 27) a concept used in (public) management research as an important proxy variable for organizational performance (e.g. Moon 2000). The feeling of emotional attachment to the organization is important when considering responses like ‘It really feels as if this organizations’ problems are my own’ (83.8%) although this is not related to an ideological stance: in fact the responses to the question “Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their career” only scores a 10.2%.
Figure 27. Organizational commitment (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for)

- Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their career
- I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization
- It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to
- I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization
- I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own

Strongly disagree  ...  ...  ...  ...  ...  ...  Strongly agree
9. Findings from the Employment and Health sector

Social security (i.e. pensions) and healthcare are the two main pillars of the Italian welfare system and have been traditionally considered fertile grounds for reform (Ongaro, 2009), whereas employment services (job-related benefits and allowances) represent a residual component of the system – also in terms of public expenditures.

From the data gather through the COCOPS survey we expect to find a difference in the level of adoption and implementation of the various NPM-style reforms between the two selected sectors, especially in relation to performance oriented-management tools, decision making autonomy and job motivation / satisfaction. Below we synthetically present the results for the two sectors.

9.1 Health Sector

The analysis for the healthcare sector considers 112 valid questionnaires and yields the following results.

Values and attitudes

On the whole, executives working in the health sector have a fairly similar self-understanding and similar identity patterns like their colleagues in other policy fields. Even in regards to priorities as public servants, motivation and social value preferences. Executives in the healthcare sector seem not to differentiate much form the overall sample.

Work context

Goal ambiguity is a much prominent feature among healthcare sector executives (health mean of 5.7, overall mean of 5.2). Also, degree of management autonomy is perceived much higher in the health sector. Executives tend to feel more autonomous than their colleagues with respect to hiring and promoting staff, contracting out services and changing the structure of the organization (all mean value for health are over 1 point different with overall Italian mean value). Interaction frequency is relatively similar to the overall sample, besides that executives in the health sector interact somewhat less frequently with other governments departments outside their organization (here a mean value of 2.8 is observed, compared to a value of 3.2 for the overall sample). Coordination quality with other bodies relevant to health services is generally perceived in line as the other policy fields. To note, that Italian healthcare executives rate coordination with national and local/regional (health mean of 5.6, overall mean of 4.7) much higher than the overall Italian sample because of the nature of the health system organization (decentralised national health system). Within the healthcare system the level of politicization is in line with the overall sample, and there is the perception of a lower interference from politics when appointing senior-level mangers (health mean of 3.6, overall mean of 4.4).

Overall, healthcare is characterized by a more frequent inclusion of performance-oriented management tools, higher level of management autonomy with extensive decentralization of decision-making compared to the overall Italian public sector - whereas lack of autonomy and pervasiveness of politicization seem to be a major concern for the vast majority of Italian public managers.
Relevance of NPM reforms

The relevance of NPM reform trends in the Italian health sector is for the most part higher compared to the overall sample. In particular, contracting out (health 4.8, overall 3.9), focus on outcome (health 4.6, overall 3.9), privatisation (health 4.8, overall 4.2), and creation of autonomous agencies or corporatization (health 3.9, overall 3.4) were all more in evidence as trends according to our health respondents. Health sector executives tend to be less critical of the dynamics of reform in their policy field. In particular, they are more likely to regard reforms as: planned (5.7 vs 3), successful (6.2 vs 3.7), and about service improvement (4.9 vs 3.1).

Within the health sector the adoption and implementation of management instruments is perceived as more substantial than the other policy fields. In particular, risk management (5.6 vs 4.3), cost accounting system (6.1 vs 5.1), performance related pay (5.3 vs 4.5) and decentralization of staffing decisions (3.5 vs 2.8). Also, the use of performance indicators is more developed in the healthcare sector compared to the other policy sectors.

Impact of public administration reform

Among the different dimensions of performance, the healthcare executives have a rather similar perception of performance levels registered by the top management of the other policy fields. Surprisingly, attractiveness of the public sector as an employer has the highest positive evaluation among the sector’s achievements. No differences were observed for the levels of social capital within health organizations, a slightly positive difference is experienced in the work satisfaction by health executives (5.5 vs 5.7).

9.2 Employment Sector

The analysis for the employment sector – albeit based on a rather small sample of 45 answers – yields the following results.

Values and attitudes

Executives working in the employment sector have a similar self-understanding and similar identity patterns like their colleagues in other policy fields. There are small differences concerning the priorities they have as public servants. Employment sector employees give equal weight to ensuring quality and equity as opposed to efficiency (mean value of 4) while citizens’ orientation is a less prominent feature than in the other public sectors (mean value of 4.4 is observed compared to a value of 5.3 in the Italian sample). Finally, their orientation is slightly more towards results than towards rules (4.9 vs 4.8 average Italian sample) and they prefer tax financed services over user charges (4.1 vs 3.9 average Italian sample). Employment service top management have a very similar motivation like their colleagues in other policy fields.

Work context

Executives working in the employment sector perceive their goals as less clearly stated (mean value of 4.8 is observed compared to a value of 5.3 in the Italian sample) and communicated to all staff (a mean value of 4.6 in the employment sector vs 5.3 of the Italian sample). In addition, they feel less
autonomous than their colleagues in other policy fields in dismissing or removing staff (mean value of 2 in the sub-sample of employment compared to 2.42 of the overall Italian sample) but an higher level of autonomy is perceived in the policy implementation phase (4.7 mean value in the employment sector vs 4 of the Italian sample). Senior executives in the employment service area perceive a slightly higher degree of politicization. In particular, they agree more often with the statement that politicians regularly influence senior-level appointments (mean value 4.7 in the employment sector vs 4.4 in the overall sample) and interfere in routine activities (mean value of 3.5 vs 3.3 in the overall Italian sample).

**Relevance of NPM reforms**

A mixed perception about NPM reform trends emerge from the survey when we compared employment executives’ responses with overall Italian sample. Introduction of flexible forms of employment, development of external partnerships and strategic alliances, reduction of internal bureaucracy and increased level of transparency appear to be more relevant in the employment sector compared to the overall sample.

Management instruments are less used in the Italian employment sector than in the overall sample. This is especially the case for code of conducts (a mean value of 4.3 in the sub-sample for employment, one of 5 in the overall sample), benchmarking (4.5 vs. 4.8) and service points for customers (4.5 vs. 4.7). In general, some management instruments including cost accounting, decentralization of staff and risk management are less relevant in employment than in other policy fields. Performance management practices in the employment sector are similar to the overall sample, with a perceived greater emphasis on measuring results. The way of coordination is perceived as more politicized than in the overall sample but civil society organizations are heavily included in resolving coordination problems when working with other organizations (a mean value of 4.1 vs 3.6 in the overall Italian sample). At individual level the use of performance indicators in the employment sector are used more to engage with external stakeholders (interest groups and similar), to communicate to citizens and identify problems that need attention rather than to monitor and evaluate single management performance and targeted achievements.

**Impact of public administration reform**

As concerns the overall assessment of the performance of public administration, employment executives had a similar view to that which is observed in overall sample. However, across the range of different dimensions of performance, the executives in the employment sector give – on average - a more positive evaluation of the sector’s achievements when compared to the overall Italian sample. In particular, policy effectiveness (a mean value of 4.9 in the sub-sample for employment, one of 4.3 in the overall sample), citizen participation (4.4 vs 4), equal access to service (4.6 vs 4.3) and fair treatment to citizens (4.7 vs 4.4) are all regarded as being much stronger in the employment sector than across the whole sample.

Regarding the levels of social capital within employment organizations, team spirits and feeling as partners in charting the organization’s direction are the two aspects more relevant compared to the overall Italian sample. When we look at job satisfaction the average level expressed by employment service executives are slighter lower than overall policy fields; in particular, the sense of satisfaction (a mean value of 5.3 in the sub-sample for employment vs 5.6) and a commitment to recommending the organization as a good place to work (4.9 vs 5.1).
10. Conclusion

Italy has undergone an intense period of reform during the 1990s, inspired by a combination of NPM doctrines and more endogenous doctrinal elements (Ongaro 2009, chapter 2), followed by a period of less extensive and radical – if at all – reforms during the 2000s. An interesting finding points to the usage – or at least availability – of a range of management tools: a result perhaps corroborating the picture of a not irrelevant penetration of managerial tools (at least at the formal/rhetoric level) in the Italian public sector, at a level higher than the COCOPS average (whilst statistical analysis is required before any further implication may be drawn, these data might indicate a higher level of managerialisation in Italy than other areas of Europe, like continental European countries). This picture seems consistent with a layering of managerial tools and logics with underlying Weberian elements: a frame that is amenable to interpretation along the lines of the Neo-Weberian model. Such model, originally conceived for depicting the trajectory of reform in continental European countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004/2011; see also Lynn, 2008, Pollitt, 2008), is in important respects problematic to apply to Italy (and the other European Mediterranean countries), inter alia because these states in many respects had previously never fully been Weberian (Spanou, 2003 and 2008), because of certain societal premises in these countries, and because of the European multi-level governance framework, which leads to reconsidering important Weberian premises about state autonomy and self-sufficiency (Ongaro 2009, chapter 7). To the extent, however, that the reading of the Italian reform trajectory along the traits of the Neo-Weberian model holds, data from the survey do add confidence to such interpretation: the picture that comes out of the data is one in which the underlying values and accountability logics are Weberian (see ‘Identity and role perception as executive’ and ‘Priorities as public servants’ – figures 6 and 7 respectively), whilst the tools of the administration are widely picked from management (see in particular Figure 17 and 18).

Singling out the healthcare sector, the interpretation of it being a managerialised sector is broadly confirmed (Belle’ and Ongaro, forthcoming). Furthermore, some qualifications may be added. The emphasis respondents gave to a preference for tax-financed services, state provision, and citizen orientation may perhaps be interpreted as a firm endorsement of the universalistic nature of the National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale): the sector may well be managerialised and resort widely to private sector techniques in its means (thereby encompassing planning and programming systems, managerial autonomy, and the like), but regarding its aims it is and should eminently public in its nature and basic orientation, hence funded through general taxation. At the same time, healthcare managers share with their colleagues in the rest of the public sector the view that politicians interfere too pervasively into managerial decisions.

Finally, it may be observed the (declared) importance attributed to motivations that we may categorise as intrinsic. Such finding might be questioned on methodological groundings: respondents might be assumed to ‘self-declare’ higher levels of values usually held – from a social and cultural point of view – to be more ‘legitimate’ than utility-maximising behaviours might be; moreover, poor performance of the Italian public sector according to a range of indicators, most notably perception of corruption, cannot and should not be underestimated. However, such finding is broadly consistent with the findings of another piece of research – drawing from a different theoretical framework – recently completed on Italy, a survey-based research design on the level and profiles of ‘Public Service Motivation’ (PSM) of Italian public servants, whose results are reported in a recent study by Belle’ and Ongaro (forthcoming). Both the extant and the Belle’ and Ongaro study point to intrinsic
values as being (still?) significantly high amongst Italian public service organisations. In a period of 
fiscal stress (and the claim is certainly not overstated), in which public service organisations operate 
in conditions that may well be qualified as detrimental to performance and effectiveness (the Italian 
public sector has some hundred thousand staff that have been hired on a temporary basis for several 
years, at times decades; policy consistency is too often badly lacking, and reform interventions have 
at times sent quite contradictory signals), it appears that intrinsic values and the ‘call of the public 
service’ remain a fundamental asset of Italy’s public sector on which Italian - and European – citizens 
may still rely.
Tables
Table 1. Number of invitations and response rates of the COCOPS survey (by end of December 2012) ........... 6
Table 2. Sample size and response rate ........................................................................................................ 14

Figures
Figure 1. Policy field sample shares .............................................................................................................. 15
Figure 2. Organization type and size shares ................................................................................................. 16
Figure 3. Socio-demographic shares. Gender, Age, Hierarchy in organization, Educational background .... 17
Figure 4. Educational fields (respondents could check more than one field) ............................................... 18
Figure 5. Tenure of respondents .................................................................................................................. 18
Figure 6. Role and self-understanding (Q: I mainly understand my role as public executive as...) .......... 19
Figure 7. Priorities as public servants (Q: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position?) ................................................................. 20
Figure 8. Motivation (Q: How important do you personally think it is in a job to have...) ...................... 21
Figure 9. Social value preferences (Q: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements) ............................................................................................................... 21
Figure 10. Goal ambiguity and measurability (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?) ........................................................................................................... 22
Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to) ........................................................................................................... 23
Figure 12. Interaction frequency (Q: Please indicate how frequently you typically interact with the following actors or bodies) ....................................................................................................... 23
Figure 13. Coordination quality (Q: How would you characterize collaboration in your own policy field between) ........................................................................................................................................ 24
Figure 14. Degree of politicization (Q: What is your view on the following statements) ..................... 25
Figure 15. Importance of reform trends (Q: How important are the following reform trends in your policy area?) ........................................................................................................................................ 26
Figure 16. Dynamics of public sector reform (Q: Public sector reforms in my policy area tend to be) .... 27
Figure 17. Relevance of different management instruments (Q: To what extent are the following instruments used in your organization?) .................................................................................. 27
Figure 18. Relevance of performance management (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?) ........................................................................................................... 27
Figure 19. Coordination solutions (Q: To resolve coordination problems when working with other organizations, we typically) .................................................................................................. 28
Figure 20. Use of performance indicators (Q: In my work I use performance indicators to) .................... 29
Figure 21. Cutback measures at organizational level (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis, to what extent has your organization applied the following cutback measures?) .......................................................................................................................... 31
Figure 22. Overall saving strategy (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis how would you describe the broader approach to realizing savings in your policy area?) ........................................................................... 31
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?) ................................................................. 32
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?) .......................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................... 32
Figure 25. Social capital and trust (Q: People in my organization) ............................................................... 33
Figure 26. Job satisfaction (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for) .............. 33
Figure 27. Organizational commitment (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for) .... 34
References


