Public Sector Reform in Hungary:
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).

About the Author

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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
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1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

As set out by the project’s terms of reference the goal of this large-scale survey is to analyse national administrations (both ministries and agencies) in the participating countries and also to take a closer

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1 This introduction is based on Hammerschmid, 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
look at the policy fields employment and health. The survey aims to explore public sector executives’ 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.  

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 included.

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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.
not included due to their different task repertoire. In the fields of employment and health, as special 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>
<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 Error! Reference source not found.). 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 Hungary 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 Hungary

Hungary is a unitary, parliamentary republic. The executive branch is divided into three levels. The Hungarian central government subsystem is divided into ministries, the number of which ranged between 12 and 18 between 1990 and 2010; at the core of which lied the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) with the head of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister, on its peak. Ministries are chiefly responsible for policy-making while most of the implementation tasks – especially those with a territorial dimension – are carried out by agencies.

At the second, sub-ministerial level one finds a number of agencies – public organizations with nation-wide competence supervised by a ministry or the Cabinet. Many of these central agencies have field offices on county or even lower (local) administrative levels (e.g. employment, tax offices), employing a significant share of civil servants. Between 1990 and 2006 the proliferation of these agencies was a constant trend in Hungary. In this period there were various organizations possibly regarded as agencies, but there were no overarching legal framework for agency type organizations. In 2006 and as part of its attempts to (re)gain control over government apparatuses the second Gyurcsány cabinet initiated a law regulating the basic structural features of government organizations. This regulation included a clearly defined, closed agency typology, which all existing and new agencies had to comply with.

At the third level of administration one finds the local governments. The local government system is a two-tier one involving, at the upper tier, nineteen counties and the capital city Budapest, and, at the lower, municipal tier almost 3200 local governments governed by elected councils. Local governments were, until very recently, responsible for a broad set of public service provision tasks, including child care, education, health, and local physical infrastructure services. Since 2011 however a sweeping wave of centralization reached the local government system, as a result of which much of the health and education services having been taken over by the central government.

Hungary’s state structures as having existed in most of the post-1990 period can be assessed as a relatively unique one characterized by such elements as:
- a strong legislature exercising numerous executive functions too (supervisor of public corporations, elector of key officials of other branches);
- a high proportion of laws requiring a qualified, (two-thirds) majority to be changed;
- a strong and dense system of checks and balances outside the executive branch, including the possibly strongest constitutional court in Europe, a public prosecution not controlled by the executive;
- an entirely autonomous administration of the judiciary; and
- an ever-expanding system of various ombudsmen.

These elements were mostly rooted in the political deals stroke around the system change and were driven, among others, by such factors as (i) an intention to block any future attempts at reverting the liberal democratic political changes and (ii) the partly unfounded idealism – partly fed by a swing-of-the-pendulum-type reaction to the totalitarian past – of major political forces and their partly naive belief in the self-organizing and controlling capacity of politco-administrative systems. These building blocks, in sum, resulted in a governance system – sometimes referred to as “regulatory impotence” (Hajnal 2010; see also Sárközy 2011) – limiting policy makers capability to act to a dysfunctional extent.

From 2010 – the inauguration of the second Orbán Cabinet – a new policy on administrative reform and on cornerstones of the state structure emerged. This spectacular change was driven by a quest to further enhance the political control of administrative apparatuses – this time, unlike previous attempts, backed by a two-third majority enabling the Cabinet. It is important to note that similar attempts could already be observed in the previous years too. In particular, the second Gyurcsány Cabinet took a number of attempts at strengthening central political control over apparatuses and policies (Hajnal 2010, 2011). However these efforts, just like most of the previous ones, were deemed to fail because of the lack of political strength necessary to break through the built-in barriers against major change.

The broad-scope structural changes having taken place in 2010-2011 can best be understood in a broader framework characterized by a decisive and successful attempt to get rid of the extremely status quo oriented system of checks and balances, and to strengthen hierarchical and political control in all spheres and segments of state organization. This quest for enlarging the “action radius” of the political executive was however motivated not only by the quest for power. The extremely harsh external (macroeconomic, financial and social) conditions set, from 2008 onwards, by the economic crisis and the related requirements of the EU and IMF with regards to the containment of public deficit and debt posed a serious additional challenge.

Many of reform measures necessitated fundamental constitutional changes or, at least, involved the adoption by the governing parties with a two-third majority. This series of reforms resulted, in December 2011, in the adoption of an entirely new constitution. It involves a range of elements partly extending even beyond the executive branch, a non-exhaustive, illustrative list of which is given below.

- The ministerial structures underwent far-reaching structural changes, as a result of which eight integrated ‘superministries’ emerged. At the same time the PMO was re-structured into a Ministry of Public Administration and Justice (MPAJ) with a broader task portfolio.
Within this larger entity a new one – called, once again, the Prime Minister’s Office – emerged, exerting control over a number politically highly salient areas.

- The regional (middle-tier) branches of agencies have been integrated to the 20 county level (so-called) ‘Government Offices’ strictly controlled directed by the government and headed by political appointees (MPs, political state secretaries etc.).
- According to the new Local Government Act (in effect from 2013) local governments’ scope of duties and competencies are dramatically reduced (e.g. many important functions in the field of operating secondary education and health care facilities will be taken over by the central government).
- The new civil service legislation put recruitment and hiring of central state administrative apparatus under strict vertical (administrative and political) control. Recruitment is strictly controlled by the MPAJ, which is considered, in the case of managerial appointments, as a veto right enabling its holder to enforce political considerations against administrative/technical ones. It has been an unknown governmental vertical coordination measure in the practice up to now (Müller 2011; pp. 135). Moreover, although the newly introduced provision enabling the employer to dismiss the civil servants without any justification was invalidated by the Constitutional Court, the new regulation assesses the loyalty as an employment requirement for every civil servant. Being contravened of it might result in dismissal.

It should be noted that underlying most of the above changes different kinds of justification appear, oftentimes quite reasonably. For example the – or, rather: some sort of – local government reform has for long been an urgent task given the debt burden trapping a very large proportion of local governments as well as the broadening quality and accessibility gaps of local services they provide.

3. Data and Method

3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation

Organizations involved in the sample
Considering the requirements set by the sampling guidelines, the structural features and sizes of the organizations possibly involved, and the possibilities for access (in particular, the extremely high organizational volatility/continuous structural reshuffling as well as personnel turnover within both changed and unchanged organizations having characterized the organizational landscape) the following organizations were involved in the sampling:

- Central government ministries
- Central government agencies
- Territorial level organizations (regional, county and local level – the latter especially in employment and health sectors)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational level</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Other (General)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central government ministry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central agency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subnational organisations</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Central government
On the level of ministries, all of the relevant contact information of the existing ministries was reachable and the large majority of them were correct. According to the 32 central agencies there were 3 organizations that did not provide any information of the management. These institutions were newly established – mostly in the period when the data collection was carried out (spring 2012) – and the members of the management had not been nominated/appointed then. Other 3 of the central agencies provided contact information only on the top-level. There were some employee fluctuations in the management due to the organizational realignments, so around 30 invitations that have not reached the respondents.

Employment
Organizations of the employment policy sector were included in the sample at all tiers of the administrative hierarchy. These are the following: the ministry and the agency level, and county level and local level field offices of the employment agency (altogether about 150 organizations).
The whole of the employment sector has been realigned in 1\(^{st}\) January 2012. The two major central employment agencies have been merged, the regional offices have been absorbed in the county – level Government Offices, the number of the employees has been narrowed and many personal changes were achieved. There were many overlapping and outdated information available that time concerning the contact data. These facts caused uncertainty both of the central and regional levels, and 60-70 – mostly due to the overlapping, parallel mailing addresses- invitations that have not reached the respondents.

Health
Organizations of the health administration sector were included on all tiers of the administrative hierarchy. These are as follows: the ministry and agencies in charge, the regional (n=7) directorates of the Health Insurance Administration, county level organs, and sub-county (local) level organizations of the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service (83 organizations in total).
On the central level almost the entire targeted population was reachable via e-mail. On the county level (N=20) – with 3 exceptions – only the top-management (first level) could be invited to the survey due to the lack of contact information. It means about 40-50 losses of potential responders. On the sub-county level the entire population was reachable.

\(^6\) Note that oftentimes it is difficult to tell whether one organizational unit qualifies as a ‘separate organization’ or, rather, as sub-unit of a larger organization
Access strategy and response rates

The survey was implemented as an online questionnaire. In a very few cases respondents returned hard copies to the research team; these questionnaires were entered by the researchers manually.

Acquiring an accurate and up-to-date list of organizational managers and their email addresses was a very difficult task, for various reasons:

- Government organizations at all levels were, prior to as well as during the survey, constantly re-organized at a very high rate. For example, the territorial level units of almost all agencies were merged, and a large number of central agencies were re-shuffled or newly created in the months preceding the survey. The IT systems (including the updating of email addresses, websites etc.) could oftentimes not follow this pace of change (for example, three newly established central agencies did not have a web site at the time of the survey). Consequently, a number of employees had more than one email address at a time, while the addresses of many others were not identifiable.

- Apart from the large-scale organizational restructurings there was/is a high rate of turnover, particularly in the managerial positions. Therefore address lists became outdated quickly.

- Finally, despite national freedom-of-information legislation the availability of personnel data is often difficult. Although in many of the cases names and contact details of managers are published on the internet in a number of other cases the researchers had to rely on other (personal, telephone, written etc.) sources of information.

Contact data were entered into a Microsoft Access database. Personalized emails, including follow-up mails, were sent from this application. Invitations were sent as non-identifiable for the sake of ensuring confidentiality.

Note however that one invitation does not necessarily equal one real person since there were a number of emails that either did not reach a real respondent, or reached the same respondent two times (on two different email addresses).

The total numbers (for all three categories) can be estimated as follows:

- non-existing email addresses: minimum 111
- duplicate email addresses: minimum 30 (these occurred in the employment sector)

In addition to these there were presumably a number of other emails which were sent to existing email addresses (not rejected by the mail server) but whose owners had already left the position or did not receive the email for other reasons (organizational restructuring etc.). The minimum number of these addressees is 30.

In total, a minimum of 161 emails did not reach a real recipient. Therefore the number of real addresses can be estimated not more than 1329. On the basis of practical judgement the real number is around 1200, taking into account the fact that in a number of cases the email addresses of invitees could not be revealed and the ‘forwarding-down’ method (by the invitees’ superiors) was relied upon. About three weeks after the first invitations a reminder / thank you mail was circulated.

The composition of respondents (broken down by policy sector) is plotted on the below chart.
3.2 Organizational Context of Respondents

In terms of the administrative tiers involved, more than one quarter of respondents work in a subnational level organizations. Note that all these respondents belong to either the health or the employment sector; administrative organs belonging to other sectors were included only on the ministry and the central government agency level. From among the central (national scope) organizations approximately the same number of respondents are employed by a ministry and by an agency, respectively.

The distribution of respondents across organizational size categories is similar to the one found on the European level. However, smaller organizations (up to 500 staff) have a somewhat smaller weight (about 42% as opposed to 50%). Instead, medium sized organizations (between 500 and 1000) appear in larger a proportion.
3.2 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents

Figure 3 below summarizes the distribution of selected variables describing respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics.

In terms of respondents’ socio-economic characteristics it is surprising that the proportion of women is, compared to other countries, quite high: 43% as opposed to the European average of 32%. It should be noted however that in the top managerial positions males are strongly and significantly over-represented (70%) while in the lower (3rd hierarchical) level under-represented (44%).

The age distribution of respondents is even more spectacularly different from the “typical COCOPS pattern”. At the upper end of the spectrum the share of respondents aged 56 or more is only 20% as opposed to the one-third proportion to be found on the European level. At the lower end the difference is even greater: one fifth of the respondents are 35 or younger, which is in sharp contrast with the ~6% overall European figure. When controlling for hierarchical level the pattern changes nevertheless: in the category of top managers young civil servants are significantly under-represented (3% as opposed to 20% at the level of the entire sample).

These patterns are neither necessarily, nor even probably representative of the entire population of public managers. It is unfortunately not possible, on the basis of available data, to tell whether/to what extent these patterns reflect the population distributions. The following features of the context may however shed additional light on this issue.

The mass “exodus” of senior managers – usually in their forties or rather fifties – from central government organizations started already around 2006-2007. From the term of the second Gyurcsány Cabinet (2006-2008) it became accepted that officials with very modest (even minimal) administrative track record became (deputy) state secretaries in their early thirties. This trend spectacularly accelerated and proliferated after the 2010 elections. The forced (not infrequently unlawful) wave of retirements reached far outside the realm of central government to local governments, the broader public sector (health, education) and even the judicial sector. This sweeping wave was often backed by harsh legislative measures (some of which were successfully
challenged even before the European Court of Justice), and a similar informal / cultural backing. Different stakeholders such as trade unions and civic organizations tried to resist these changes but this resistance was most of the time swept aside. Besides the above factors self-selection may have played some role too. It may be assumed that in the entire population age and seniority are positively correlated while age and responsiveness negatively. Therefore less senior and younger managers are more likely to respond and thus might have become over-represented in the response set.

Figure 3. Socio-demographic shares (f.l.t.r.) Gender, Age, Hierarchy in organization, Educational background

An absolute majority of respondents belong to the second hierarchical level in the organization (bottom-left panel of Figure 3). The proportion of first-level managers is, compared to the overall COCOPS results, modest. According to our judgment it is nevertheless still quite high, compared to the general unavailability and extremely stressed time management of top-level bureaucrats.

In terms of their educational achievement Hungarian respondents are somewhat less educated as less than 10% (as opposed to 15% European figure) has a doctoral degree while 22% has a BA level only – presumably most of whom completed the College of Public Administration. The most remarkable feature of data on education is the high proportion of those having a legal background (40% as opposed to the overall 27% frequency in the COCOPS sample). Note that in addition to the majority of these respondents having an MA in Law graduates having a BA in ‘Public Administration’ (previously: College of Public Administration) are also coded into this category. This is justified by the fact that, in line with the disciplinary traditions of the field in Hungary, approximately two thirds of
program curricula in these programs are of a fundamentally legal character (Hajnal 1999, Hajnal-Jenei 2008).

It is remarkable that public managers with a business / economics educational background are quite significant in terms of their proportion, which is clearly above the European average (29 as opposed to 23%). A third feature to be observed is the minimal presence of graduates of programs specifically designed to staff the public sector (Political Science and ‘real’ Public Administration programs). In order to properly contextualize this figure it is important to know that since the introduction of the Bologna reforms in Hungary only one ‘real’ (i.e., non-legal) Public Administration program operated at the MA level (the so-called MA in Public Policy and Management at the Corvinus University of Budapest). However this has been, and still is, a relatively small program with a few dozens of graduates per year.

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

![Educational fields](image)

The pattern of tenure of respondents revealed by the Figure 5 corresponds to the one identified earlier in relation to respondents’ seniority. In contrast to the European figure averaging at 60% only 40% of respondents have served more than 20 years in the public sector.

One of the most remarkable features of the data is that three fourths of respondents served less than 5 years in their current position. It may well be assumed that a vast majority of these persons took their current position after the 2010 inauguration of the second Orbán Cabinet. The second Orbán Cabinet initiated, immediately after its inauguration, a radical elimination of the civil service dismissal regulations. The new civil service legislation put recruitment and hiring of central state administrative apparatus under strict vertical (administrative and political) control. The new legislation enabled the employer to dismiss the civil servants without any justification – this level of protection is significantly weaker as the one characterizing regular labor law. Although this piece of legislation was later on invalidated by the Constitutional Court, the employment status of those already having been removed (mostly in managerial ranks) was not restituted. Moreover, even the new regulation assesses the loyalty as an employment requirement for every civil servant. Being contravened of it might result in dismissal – a rather easy, and presumably oftentimes relied-upon, way of getting rid of unwanted personnel. (Note however that managerial nomination in the entire
civil service could be withdrawn without notice and without the obligation to justify already under the previous Cabinets!)

Previous exposure to private sector employment experience is, however, higher than the European / COCOPS average (29% as opposed to 19% having more than 5 years of private sector experience).

Figure 5. Tenure of respondents

4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives

When analyzing responses on self-understanding an important hypothesis on the cultural characteristics of Hungarian civil servants should be mentioned. This hypothesis was never proven with academic rigor (as this would be a very demanding exercise) but qualitative / intuitive evidence supporting it was repeatedly confronted in the course of the numerous surveys I conducted in the past 15 years. Namely, respondents’ generally detectable tendency to respond in a way perceived by the respondent as ‘desirable’, ‘fancy’ or ‘polite’ is, in the case of Hungarian civil servants, even larger than it usually is. For example, a trainer scoring 4.2 on a five-point scale after-the-event satisfaction survey might turn out, in the course of a confidential conversation with the trainees, a ‘nightmare’ and a scandal. Actually this cultural feature – presumably present not only in Hungary but in a number of other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (and possibly beyond) too (Gajduschek-Hajnal 2003 p. 53).

The above hypothesized effect should be kept in mind when interpreting survey data; I will however occasionally make explicit reference to it. It immediately seems to appear at the first attitude oriented question, the one on self-understanding. Two general patterns emerge out of the data.

Comparing Hungarian findings with those of Germany (sharing a similarly Law-centered and rule-based tradition; Hajnal 2013, cf. Hajnal and Jenei 2008, Hajnal 2003) one we may, firstly, conclude that Hungarian respondents’ ‘preference profile’ revealed by Figure 6 is rather similar to the German one, emphasizing results, expertise and efficiency, and underplaying cooperation and the representation of societal interests. (Note however one important difference: 90, as opposed to the
56% figure for Germany, agrees with the impartial execution of laws; see next paragraphs.) This similarity is not surprising given the strongly Germanic and legalistic tradition of Hungarian public administration (Hajnal-Jenei 2008, Hajnal 2003 and 2013). Therefore the self-understanding of Hungarian public managers may be interpreted in a way similar to the one found in the German report – that is, a sign of a neo-Weberian attitude set.

Secondly however, Hungarian respondents agree with all of the listed (presumably) positive / appealing values to an extent larger than the German respondents. In other words, they agree with whatever they have to agree with to a larger extent. Therefore a direct comparison of means / distributions with the ones found in other countries may be somewhat problematic; rather, some kind of a normalization of data across countries (e.g. calculation of Z-scores) could provide for a basis for doing so.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ensuring efficient use of resources</th>
<th>Finding joint solutions to solve problems</th>
<th>Providing expertise and technical knowledge</th>
<th>Developing new policy agendas</th>
<th>Providing a voice for societal interests</th>
<th>Achieving results</th>
<th>Getting public organisations to work together</th>
<th>Ensuring impartial implementation of laws and...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

In terms of the competing values facing public service we find a relatively balanced pattern in two dimensions: user charges versus tax financed services, and quality versus efficiency. Along the other four dimensions there is a more definite tendency towards one or the other extreme of the dichotomy. Respondents tend to prefer efficiency over equity, rule observation over the achievement of results, customer focus versus citizen orientation, and state provision over market provision.

The tendency is particularly strong in the case of rule observation and state provision. These patterns seem to be consistent with the data plotted on the previous chart. Hungarian public managers have a strong preference for a Weberian ethos of bureaucracy, focusing on rules and the state, instead of results and the market. On the other hand they underplay the moral dimensions of public service, and assume a more technocratic role instead.
With regards to the personal motivation of public managers the two least characteristic motivators are flexible working hours, and social status (an arithmetic mean of 4.33 and 4.03, respectively). These results are identical with the overall COCOPS findings.

This pattern is understandable in the Hungarian context: public managers working schedule is usually very stretched and rigid, and they do not enjoy a social status that corresponds that of employees with similar educational background and tenure in the corporate or, say, the academic sector. It may therefore be expected that those who have a high preference for these values are likely to choose, in the longer term, another career path.

On the other hand, the two most important motivating factors are – more or less consistently with the overall COCOPS results – interesting work, and room to make decisions (arithmetic mean of 6.07 and 6.09, respectively).

These data suggest that public managers choose their occupation for intrinsic reasons. It should be noted however that the dimensions of intrinsic motivation, in which they score high do not involve such elements as the urge to serve to public interest. Neither do they score particularly high on dimensions related to material rewards. All this adds up to a profile consistent with those revealed by answers to earlier questions: respondents seem to have a personal but technocratic interest in what they do.

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

The value preferences displayed on the figure below suggest that Hungarian public managers have stronger-than-average disagreement with three statements. Interestingly enough, the largest disagreement appears in relation to the status quo orientation: although more than 40% disagrees about 42% agrees with this statement (mean 3.92), which is significantly higher than the 2.8 mean for the entire COCOPS sample. On the other hand respondents do not particularly favor taking risks either (mean 4.23).
Figure 9. Social value preferences (Q: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements)

![Bar chart showing social value preferences](chart)

The proper interpretation of the above findings requires further exploratory and, possibly, explanatory analysis. It may be noted that respondents do not particularly seem to trust other people either. At the other extreme, the largest support appears for the claim that creativity is important for the respondent. Taking responsibility for decisions enjoys an (almost) similarly high support.

These patterns, at large, are consistent with the profile revealed by earlier items: respondents place a value on those aspects of their work that are related to the intellectual challenge and act of deciding and taking responsibility. On the other hand they underplay the human, societal and moral dimensions.

5. Characteristics of the Work Context in Public Administration

Responses on goal ambiguity are interesting (see Figure 10): while respondents think that goals are clearly stated and communicated throughout the organization (about 60% agreeing, mean=5.5, about the same as the overall COCOPS sample), they also think that the organization is characterized by a high number of goals (64% agreeing, mean=5.7 as opposed to 5.0 in the overall COCOPS sample).

Part of the solution to the interpretive problem posed by the above data may be that the feeling of not being rewarded (by the political masters) is primarily related to respondents’ own experience, while the other, more managerial and technical questions of goal ambiguity are interpreted in the context of the entire organization.
The following set of questions (summarized on Figure 11) refers to different dimensions of the autonomy and discretion enjoyed by respondents.

The lowest level of autonomy appears in relation to contracting out services, 62% perceiving very little autonomy (mean=1.9 as opposed to 3.3 in the overall COCOPS sample). This may be related to the high level of centralization (in most organizations service contracts have to be signed by the organization’s no.1 manager, and this decision is often further constrained by budget limitations). Proceeding in an ascending order of autonomy the second-lowest level appears in relation to planning and executing budgets (mean=2.55 as opposed to 3.92 in the entire sample).

At the other extreme, a significant extent of autonomy appears in relation to implementation (44% perceiving a higher-than-medium level of autonomy, mean=4.91), exceeding the European average by 0.3. This dimension of autonomy is significantly higher than the second-highest, policy design and choice (mean=3.71 as opposed to 3.80 in the overall COCOPS sample).

The remaining four dimensions of autonomy may be located between the above extremes.

These data suggest that respondents feel a relative lack of being constrained in terms of the ends to be pursued and the processes and methods chosen to achieve them on the one hand, but a very strong sense of being constrained in relation to deciding the budgetary means and service procurement necessary to perform these tasks.
Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to)

The above data may be supplemented by the following items referring to the frequency of interactions with different actors (Figure 12).

Understandably, administrative superiors and direct staff are in a very frequent interaction with respondents; in these cases a majority of respondents report very frequent contact (in both cases about 50% of respondents have daily contact with them). At the other extreme we find the respective ministers (never: 56% as opposed to 36% in the overall sample), trade unions (never: 44% as opposed to 20% in the overall sample) and international organizations (other than EU entities; never: 49% - similar to the overall COCOPS sample). However if we focus on those relationships where at least monthly contact frequency is reported an interesting picture emerges. Namely, only 6% of respondents have a contact their minister at least once a month – as opposed to the 30% figure for the entire COCOPS sample. The same figure is 12% for other politicians (as opposed 36% for the entire COCOPS sample).

These figures suggest that politicization in terms of personal contact is fairly low in Hungary in a comparative perspective; my personal interpretation would be that it works through channels other than personal contact with politicians – for example, through direct contacts with administrative superiors.
In terms of the perceived quality of coordination (summarized in Figure 13) respondents are relatively more critical towards coordination between different policy areas (mean: 4.1 – note that is still substantially better than the 3.55 mean for the entire COCOPS sample) and coordination between national and supra-/international organizations (mean: 4.1, the lowest among the dimensions examined here). The highest satisfaction appears in relation to coordination quality in the respondents’ own policy area (mean: 4.6). It should be noted however that those unable to assess appear in a high proportion (up to 30% in the case of supra-/international coordination).

Interestingly, the assessment of coordination quality is significantly better in Hungary than in the overall COCOPS sample across practically all dimensions. This fact – and basically any finding related to perceptions on coordination – should be viewed keeping in mind that the very concept of coordination in government is, firstly, barely present and used in the Hungarian context and,
secondly, even if it’s used it is understood in a sense that markedly differs from the common English / international use of the term (Hajnal and Kovács 2013).

Finally, the politicization of administration is examined through a series of questions directly related to different dimensions of political control. These responses are plotted below (Figure 14).

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

Interference with routine matters of the respondent’s organizations appears in only 12% of the cases as opposed to the 21.5% frequency observed in the entire COCOSP sample (values 5 and above). A strikingly low 17% of respondents think that politicians respect technical expertise (as opposed to the 54% figure appearing in the entire COCOPS sample). Since (i) these data seem to contradict to one another to some extent, and (ii) at the same time both of these figures are clear outliers in a comparative perspective further investigation is necessary to properly interpret them. An initial hypothesis would be that by claiming “regular interference in routine activities” the respondent would in fact suspect his/her political master with illegal or even criminal activities – the risk of what is unlikely to be taken even if that was in fact true. In a similar vein, 41% tend to agree with the claim that politicians regularly interfere with senior appointments – the true figure probably being very close to 100%. This is supported by the fact that 64% of respondents (as opposed to the 55% in the total COCOPS sample) tend to agree with the statement that removing issues from the realm of politics would improve things – a figure much higher than the ones appearing in other counties’ data.

6. Relevance of NPM and post NPM Reforms

6.1. Policy field level

Going from the lowest to the highest figuring techniques appearing, according to respondents’ perceptions, in the reform measures characterizing their broader policy field privatization appears as the most unpopular element, 93% claiming rather not using this (mean=1.5 as opposed to 2.58 in the
overall sample), see Figure 15. The same figures are definitely less radical – although still high – for the other two “flagship” NPM technique, agencification (78%) and contracting out (69%). Flexible employment is, likewise, an element definitely not characterizing Hungarian public administrative practice (82% as opposed to the 38.6% characterizing the entire COCOPS sample).

At the other extreme we find downsizing and customer orientation (mean=5.2, 53% rather agreeing). Somewhat lagging behind we find intra-sectoral cooperation and focusing on results.

Differences across organizational type (Q1) appear in relation to

- the creation of autonomous agencies (***, more so in ministries);
- focusing on outcomes and results (*, the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- treatment of users as customers (***, the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- internal bureaucracy reduction (***, the higher the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- flexible employment (***, more so in central organs);
- e-government (***, more so in central organs);
- external partnerships (**, more so in central organs);
- mergers (***, more so in county/regional level organs); and
- transparency (**, more so in central organs).

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

![Figure 15. Importance of reform trends](image)
The different statements about the nature and results of reforms happening to respondents’ own policy field (see Figure 16) are perceived as top-down rather than bottom-up (mean=2.6); cutting costs rather than improving services (mean=3.7); driven by politicians rather than by senior executives (mean=4.1); and contested, rather than supported by unions (mean=4.5). In all but the fourth dimensions Hungarian perceptions lean towards the former (as opposed to the latter) end of the spectrum, compared to the overall COCOPS data.

Opinions on the remaining features of reforms are closer to the mid-point (+/- 1 range of the 5.5 value). This picture seems consistent with findings related to the underplayed role of public managers in substantive decisions affecting resources too (presented earlier).

Figure 16. Dynamics of public sector reform (Q: Public sector reforms in my policy area tend to be)

6.2. Organizational level

The most popular management techniques (values 5 and above on Figure 17) employed in respondents’ organization are internal steering by contract (43%)\(^7\), customer surveys (43%), service points for customers (42%), and performance appraisal (41%)\(^8\). The first two techniques appear in a similar extent in the overall COCOPS data, performance appraisal is however much more frequent elsewhere (almost 80%). At the other extreme of the spectrum we find performance related pay (78% rather not using), cost accounting systems (67%) and decentralization of staffing decisions (64%) and of financial decisions (63%).

Understandably, these elements appear with different frequencies across different organization types (only statistically significant relationships are listed):

\(^7\) Note however that in a vast majority of the cases this presumable does not mean a formal system of management, rather, the existence of individual agreements between (certain) superiors and (certain) subordinates to perform a certain task

\(^8\) Note however that this is usually not associated with performance related pay: 6%
- Strategic / business planning (**; mostly in central agencies);
- Customer surveys (**; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- Service points for customers (**; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- Quality management (**; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- Codes of conduct (*; mostly in central agencies);
- Internal steering by contract (the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- MBO (the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency; note that the understanding of the concept by the respondents of the concept involved is questionable at best);
- Benchmarking (**; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency; the understanding of the concept by respondents is questionable again);
- Cost accounting (*; mostly in central agencies);
- Decentralizing budget decisions (*; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency);
- Performance related pay (**; mostly in central organs);
- Performance appraisal (**; the lower the administrative tier, the higher the frequency); and
- Risk management (**; lowest in ministries, highest in central agencies);

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

When asked about the patterns of using PI’s in the respondent’s organization (Figure 18) the highest frequency occurs, interestingly, in relation to measuring outputs and outcomes (33% rather agreeing); note however that in absolute terms even this seems to be a rather low figure too. This is particularly so as we move down the administrative tiers (**). This frequency is larger than the one...
found in relation to “measuring inputs and processes” (only 21% rather agreeing, lower values in ministries ***). These pieces of information suggest that issues of validity might be present here, given that budget and staffing decisions are, according to both responses presented earlier and expert information, very strongly centralized and regulated. It may be hypothesized that the measurement of outputs and outcomes is perceived by the respondents as a sort of “must”, without which it is difficult for them to appear as legitimate.

At the other extreme, being rewarded for achieving results occurs quite rarely (76% rather not agreeing), especially on the lowest tier of administration (***) , where as much as 93% rather does not agree with this claim.

It may be noted that the (perceived) absence of using PI’s on politicians’ part (54% disagreeing, mean = 3.41, similar to overall COCOPS results) may, in the light of data presented earlier – suggesting that performing well and achieving results is not unimportant for respondents – be interpreted as respondents having a high standard of reference in relation to being rewarded by politicians for high performance, to which standards politicians are oftentimes not up to.

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

The third organizational level set of indicators examined here are related to organizational responses given to coordination problems. It is not surprising that by far the most frequent response to such situations is referring the issue upwards in the hierarchy (49% rather agreeing – interestingly, this figure is 67% in the entire COCOPS sample). This approach seems to be equally present across all administrative tiers (no significant differences across organization types).

All other solutions seem to be unpopular rather than popular (means in all cases below 3.5). The most unpopular are the following.

- Deciding on one lead organization (76% rather not agreeing), minor differences across organization categories (*);
- Setting up special purpose bodies (70% rather not agreeing, no significant differences across organizational types) – it may be noted that the resources / personnel available for such new bodies are usually severely limited; and
- Consulting civil society and interest groups (61% rather not agreeing). It is quite interesting again that there are no significant differences across organization types in this regard, though one would intuitively expect that ministries have a much larger room and tendency to engage in such consultations as, for example, field offices of central agencies. Therefore the validity of this data should be subject to further, more detailed analytical scrutiny.

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

6.3. Individual level
A preliminary analysis (some elements of which are plotted in Figure 20) of the motifs of using performance indicators reveals that PI’s are most of all used in order to comply with supervisors’ expectation (39% rather agreeing, though the same figure being 54% in the entire COCOPS sample), especially at the lower tiers of administrative hierarchy (**). The second most important set of motifs is related to internal control – monitoring subordinates’ performance and identifying problems (32-33% rather agreeing) – the lower the administrative tier, the more so (** in both cases). In overall, relative frequencies in the Hungarian data are similar to those in the overall COCOPS data, the main difference being that use of PI’s is generally more modest in Hungary.

At the other extreme we find that ensuring accountability towards external stakeholders (either through communicating performance information to them or by involving them) is the least important motif of using PI’s (53-55% rather not agreeing); both motifs appearing more frequently in the lower tiers of administrative hierarchy (**/*). These patterns add up to the image of a technocratic, internally focused bureaucracy having appeared in the view of data presented earlier.
Figure 20. Use of performance indicators (Q: In my work I use performance indicators to)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage the image of my organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage with external stakeholders (e.g. interest groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicate what my organisation does to citizens and service users</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfy requirements of my line manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster learning and improvement</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify problems that need attention</td>
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<td>Monitor the performance of my colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess whether I reach my targets</td>
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7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration

In response to the global crisis that broke out in the autumn of 2008, with a government change in January 2009 (Bajnai Cabinet), Hungary took a lot of measures to improve fiscal balances while restraining domestic demand and economic growth. These measures were partly one-off moves, while others were considered of a structural nature (with longer-term effects). Immediate measures were the freeze of public sector wages (but as mentioned, this was antedated with a major 50% payrise in 2002), elimination of 13th month pensions and generally a cheese-slicing cutback used through the adoption process of the year 2010 government budget along with tax cuts planned. The government got also lucky in its external financing: throughout the summer of 2009, the financial market atmosphere got somewhat better, hence there was a “risk appetite” that made selling of Hungarian sovereign bonds easier.

With general elections bringing sweeping victory of the rightist FIDESZ-KDNP, a new government was formed in 2010 summer – which for a while was busy taking over power, change constitution etc. By early 2011 it had realized consolidation action is needed, thus one of its first major interventions was the one-off step to nationalize savings in private pension funds, an amount of cc.7-8% of GDP that was entirely used up for balancing the 2011 government budget. In March 2011, the government announced growth-supporting measures in the structural reform program (Széli Kálmán Plan), aimed at reshuffling and decreasing public expenditures - that was welcomed by market actors (the HUF stabilized at strong exchange rates) and international financial institutions alike. Its major measures affected seven major areas, with planned budget saving effects (for 2013 and additional
352 bn HUF saving was planned, i.e. 902 is the total budget savings planned – supposedly compared to 2010 budget conditions):

The government also introduced additional fiscal consolidation measures in the Convergence Programme of April 2011, and a total of 1500-1700 billion HUF further consolidation measures the 2012 Budget Bill in order to attain the 2012 deficit target of 2.5% of GDP. However by the fall of 2011 it seemed already clear that the government was unable to keep itself to all planned measures, hence the further huge measures in the 2012 Budget Bill. Instead of concentrating on cutbacks in government expenditure as originally planned in the Szell Kalman Plan, for 2012 major tax increases (+2% VAT) and new taxes had been introduced to balance on the revenue side. No pre-calculations are available yet for the performance of the Szell Kalman Plan 2.0.

The above broader picture is necessary to properly contextualize respondents’ views on the impact of the fiscal crisis presented below.

The primary means of achieving savings are twofold, appearing to a roughly similar extent: across-the-board cuts and targeted cuts. Targeted cuts are more characteristic to ministries while across-the-board appear with higher frequency among field services (*). It is particularly interesting that productivity and efficiency savings appear to a minimal extent only (2%, a total of 6 observations) as opposed to the 19% figure appearing in the overall COCOPS sample. This is particularly interesting in the light of the frequently-used argument by the political leadership that large-scale restructuring and amalgamations are justified by the resulting efficiency / economies-of-scale savings.

Figure 21. Overall saving strategy (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis how would you describe the broader approach to realizing savings in your policy area?)

In relation to cutback management at respondents’ own organization the most universal approach is hiring freezes (almost 50% “to a large extent” and a total of 87% rather using it; more so field services of agencies / *). Somewhat lagging behind comes the second most “popular” response, staff layoffs (52% rather using it, as opposed to the 21% overall COCOPS figure; more so ministries and field services, less so central agencies / *).

At the other extreme, introducing user charges and feeds occur more rarely (80%, as opposed to 67% in the overall COCOPS sample, reporting rather not using it). Interestingly enough, reliance on user charges occurs significantly more frequently at higher administrative tiers (***) . This requires further
exploration since almost all administrative services are provided by agencies; it may be that respondents interpreted the question according to where the decision about the introduction of user charges was made, which is the ministry (or a higher instance).

**Figure 22. Cutback measures at organizational level (Q: In response to the fiscal crisis, to what extent has your organization applied the following cutback measures?)**

### 8. Outcomes of Public Administration Performance

#### 8.1. Overall

Respondent’s assessment regarding how public administration changed as compared to five years ago reveals a rather critical picture (see Figure 23). In order to properly contextualize response data to this item one has to keep in mind two things. Firstly, Spring 2007 was in the middle of the legitimacy crisis of the second Gyurcsány Cabinet (a few months after the (partly extremely violent) wave of political protest and unrest strongly supported by the then opposition, now government, party FIDESZ). Secondly, as earlier data on tenure revealed almost all of the respondents got into their current position after the 2010 elections. This means that a vast majority of them may safely assumed to be FIDESZ loyalists.

In the light of (i) these information and (ii) the perceived threat and anxiety on the part of respondents regarding revealing “improper” attitudes it is striking that the majority (53%) or respondents think that the current situation is rather worse than better than it was five years earlier (note that the same figure is 33% for the entire COCOPS sample). Within this overall pattern ministry officials see things significantly rosier (*), as do officials having been employed in their present position for not more than 5 years (*; slightly above the 5.5 mid-point of the scale).
8.2. Policy Field

When asked to compare the current performance of the respective policy field with that of five years earlier along different dimensions (Figure 24) the largest improvement is perceived in relation to the ethical behavior among public officials figures (36% reporting some improvement and another 38% noticing no change; no significant differences across organization types). In order to put these figures into context we should note that in the overall COCOPS sample 46.6% saw some improvement and a similar proportion saw no change. Service quality and cost/efficiency appears next (23 and 25% reporting some improvement (it is interesting again that no significant differences across organization types appear). The same numbers are 61 and 63% in the overall COCOPS data, meaning that Hungarian respondents see trends definitely less positively than their counterparts across Europe.

It should be noted that across all dimensions the largest share of respondents - perceives no change (response category 4). Frequency of “Category 4” responses range between 25 and 30% in the more positively evaluated dimensions, and are significantly higher (32-39%) in the more negatively perceived dimensions (see next). At the other extreme three dimensions appear with very similar patterns: citizen participation, social cohesion and internal bureaucracy reduction (35-40% perceiving a rather worse situation and another 30-38% no change).

These patterns are presumably roughly similar to the general perception of the public; the earlier Socialist administrations were, according to the public image, plagued with corruption whereas serious efforts were taken after the 2010 elections to contain (lower-level / administrative) corruption. On the other hand the top-down nature of administrative routine and the neglect of citizen rights became more expressed.
Respondents’ views on their own organization’s workplace climate – plotted in Figure 25 – are surprisingly positive, all of them averaging well above the mid-point of the scale (4.0). According to these views people in the organizations are trustworthy (mean: 5.4, similarly to the overall COCOPS data), they enthusiastically pursue common goals (5.0), openly communicate and share information (4.9), have confidence in one another and share an ambition for the organization (4.7), and share/accept constructive criticism and view themselves as partners within the organization (~4.5). These data are by-and-large similar to the ones found in the entire COCOPS sample.
8.3. Individual Level

Respondents’ workplace satisfaction is, again, surprisingly high (Figure 26). The mean overall satisfaction is 5.6 on the 7-point scale (61% rather agreeing with the claim and another 9% being on the mid-point of the scale). This satisfaction is similar to the one found in the overall COCOPS sample; it is however significantly (**) lower in ministries than in other organization types however.

Respondents more often than not feel valued for what they do (mean 5.1, 48% rather agreeing; no significant values across organization types), and 39% would recommend the organization as a workplace to others (significantly less so in ministries; ***). 50% rather does not agree with the claim that they are regularly overloaded with tasks (it may be noted that public managers usually work under high time pressure). Interestingly, no significant differences appear across organization types.

Figure 26. Job satisfaction (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for)

Loyalty to the organization seems to be a very strongly held value among respondents across all layers of the administrative hierarchy (51% “strongly”, a total of 83% rather agreeing; no significant differences across organization types). In addition, people personally strongly identify with their organization, which suggests a less professional organizational culture (62% rather agreeing, though significantly less so in ministries; ***). A similar pattern appears in relation to respondents’ willingness to spend the rest of their career within the current organization.

These data suggest, in line with data on personal motivation presented earlier, that public managers are driven by an internal, though strongly technocratic, intellectual and power-related, motivation of performing “well”, largely despite / irrespective of external motivators (or the lack thereof).
9. Findings from the Employment and Health sector

In relation to the reform / management instruments applied a number of significant differences appear between Employment (E), Health (H) and Other (O) types of policy field. The most important ones are as follows:

- Strategic planning more frequently appears in O (*);
- Customer surveys are much more frequent in E (***)
- The same is the case with service points for customers as well as
- Quality management systems and
- Internal steering by contract (except that in the latter three dimensions H organizations figure also significantly higher than O);
- Benchmarking is, again, significantly more frequent in E (***)
- Decentralization of budget decisions is, again, significantly more characteristic for E (***) interestingly however E is significantly less decentralized in this respect than O.
- Performance related pay is significantly less characteristic for H and E than for O (***) finally
- On the other hand, performance assessment is most characteristic for E and the least for O (**).

These data suggest that the employment sector is rather different – and, specifically, much more reformed along managerial lines – than other segments of the administration. It should however be noted that the number of respondents from the employment sector is much higher than from the other sector (30% of all respondents are from the employment sector). Moreover, the composition of these respondents is different too as many of them are from the lowest (sub-county) tier of administration.

Another respect, in which it is worth comparing the different sectors is the extent of politicization. In this regard we may note that interaction with the relevant minister is the lowest in the E, somewhat higher in the H and much higher in the O sector (***) A similar though less marked (*) pattern
appears in relation to interactions with other politicians. Nevertheless, little or no significant difference appears in relation to the politics-administration dichotomy (Q12).

Finally, there are a number of significant differences in relation to how the outcomes of public administration reforms are evaluated.

- The overall assessment of reforms is the worst in H, somewhat better in E, and the best in O (***)
- Within this general assessment, cost and efficiency is significantly poorer in H (**) ;
- The same is the case with service quality and
- Innovation (***) , except that here O are significantly better than E too;
- The same order (highest: O, lowest: H) holds for policy effectiveness (*** ) as well as
- Policy coherence and coordination (***) ,
- Attractiveness of the public sector as an employer (**), and
- External transparency and openness (*);
- In terms of internal bureaucracy reduction O are better than H and E (***) ;
- The only dimension where H and E outperforms O is fair treatment of citizens (*), although with little difference

In sum, the evaluation of performance for the past 5-year period is, throughout a large number of dimensions, consistently the worst in the health sector, somewhat better in the employment sector, and significantly better in the other sectors / general government (note that the scale reliability as measured by Cronbach’s Alpha is very high, 0.92, for the Q19 variables!).

These findings form an interesting contrast with the stronger managerialization of the field detected a few paragraphs earlier. It is of course not possible to detect a cause-and-effect relationship between the two phenomena; however the hypothesis definitely deserves a closer and more in-depth scrutiny.

10. Conclusion
Surveying senior public managers is a difficult task involving many foreseen as well as possibly unnoticed caveats anytime and anywhere; so was the case in Hungary throughout the past 10-15 years too. The situation however became markedly more difficult as a result the sweeping changes having taken place after the 2010 elections. These – partly formal-legal (e.g. dismantling the labor protection of civil servants) and partly informal or cultural – changes presumably led to a deepening distrust and increasing fear of retaliation on the part of respondents. Since these features had already characterized the Hungarian civil service before the post-2010 changes to a significant extent it may be safely assumed that the resulting problems of validity have an effect on data quality indeed. Therefore accepting data and findings at face value, making direct comparisons with other countries etc. poses serious potential problems that can be lessened only by careful analysis based on a sound qualitative familiarity with the setting.

This note of caution is in order before I set out to summarize, in an admittedly somewhat arbitrary manner, the most significant findings of this preliminary analysis.

Hungarian senior public managers seem to be driven by an internal motif of achievement and task fulfillment rather than external incentives. They do not feel to be particularly appreciated by their
political masters, neither are they driven by a wish to help others, lessen societal problems, or the like. Rather, they perceive their tasks in more technical terms, appreciate the intellectual complexity and possibly the power and influence associated with their position.

Respondents are, in the view of the circumstances outlined in the introductory paragraph to this concluding section, surprisingly critical regarding the process and particularly the results of the achievements of the current Orbán Cabinet. The Socialist governance characterizing 2007 (as well as the preceding and succeeding years) had an outstandingly bad image not only among the Center-Right opinions leaders but throughout the whole spectrum of news media. It was this notoriously poor perception (involving severe corruption at all levels, inefficiency and lack of direction) that most significantly contributed to the landslide defeat of the Socialists in 2010 and the 2/3 victory of the current FIDESZ party alliance. Despite all this, a majority of respondents hold the view that the current performance of the public administration is not better or even worse than that of five years ago – both in general and in a number of particular sub-dimensions.

The situation regarding the outcome and the general perception of ‘public administration reforms’ (whatever this means) is somewhat even worse in the two focus sector of the present study, employment and – in particular – health. This is so despite (or partly possibly because?) the fact that these sectors were and are characterized, according to insider respondents’ view, by the reliance on modern management concepts and techniques to an extent larger than other segments of the administration.

On the other hand – and in the view of the previous findings somewhat surprisingly – public managers perceive their own working environment in a surprisingly positive way. They derive significant personal satisfaction from their job, and the workplace morale seems to be relatively good, especially if one contrasts this with the lasting and severe budgetary squeezes etc. This positive evaluation significantly decreases however as one gets closer to the realm of politics (from field services of agencies towards ministries). Moreover we should keep in mind that since respondents are top level managers in their organizations these data are most probably systematically biased upwards.

The findings and hypotheses formulated throughout the report and above need, of course, further specification, theoretical contextualization, and careful analysis.
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