



COCOPS Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe
Research Report

Gerhard Hammerschmid
Anca Oprisor
Vid Štimac

December 2015



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) aimed 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 analyzed 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 was a key part of assessing these impacts. The project was funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014).

About the Authors

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hammerschmid is Associate Dean and Professor of Public & Financial Management at the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin.

Anca Oprisor and Vid Štimac are Research Associates at the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin.

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.

Contents

- I. COCOPS Work Package 3: Executive survey on public sector reform in Europe 3
- I.1. Background and aims of the survey 3
- I.2. Main steps in survey implementation..... 4
- I.3. Survey design and content 7
- I.4. Questionnaire and country variations..... 9
 - I.4.1. Structure of the questionnaire* 10
 - I.4.2. Country variations – core questions* 11
- I.5. Sampling and access strategy 14
 - I.5.1. General sampling principles and country variation* 14
 - I.5.2. Access and data collection strategies* 16
 - I.5.3. Survey webpage* 17
- I.6. Survey Implementation 18
 - I.6.1. Survey translation* 18
 - I.6.2. Survey pre-testing and pilot* 19
 - I.6.3. Data collection phase* 20
- II. Data processing and final sample..... 26
- II.1. Data cleaning 26
- II.2. Data harmonization 27
- II.3. Data validation 28
- II.4. Final sample..... 29
- IV. Dissemination of results..... 30
- V. Bibliography 32
- VI. List of Figures and Tables 35
- Figures 35
- Tables 35

I. COCOPS Work Package 3: Executive survey on public sector reform in Europe

I.1. Background and aims of the survey

The COCOPS project has aimed to assess the impact of New Public Management-style (NPM) reforms on public administrations in Europe, as well as, more particularly, on public services attending to citizens' service needs and on social cohesion. The research explored trends and development of future public sector reform strategies, especially given the context of the financial crisis, by drawing lessons from past experience, exploring trends and studying emerging public sector coordination practices. The research design was comparative and evidence-based, drawing on both existing data and innovative new quantitative and qualitative data collection, at both national and policy sector levels. As one of the largest comparative public management research projects in Europe, the project therefore intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the European public sector of the future.

The consortium implementing the research consisted of a group of leading public administration scholars from eleven universities in ten countries. The project was funded through the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project, and ran from January 2011 to June 2014. More information on the project is available at www.cocops.eu. The research data and materials produced through the COCOPS project are published under the EU Open Access regulations for FP7 research projects (see OpenAIRE, Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe, www.openaire.eu) and the European Commission's Open Access websites http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/open_access.

The third phase of COCOPS (or its 'Work package 3') has been a cornerstone of the project by producing an original, large-scale survey exploring the opinions and perceptions of public sector managers in ten European countries with regards to NPM reforms. The work package has thus provided novel quantitative data regarding NPM reforms and their impacts in Europe, coming from the actors involved at close range in the conception and especially in the implementation of reforms: public sector executives across Europe active in the areas of (as delineated in the project's reference points) general government, employment and health. Moreover, the data resulting from the survey constituted a building block for other project phases which, based on an analysis of trends and opinions identified by the civil servants surveyed, established innovative practices in tackling unintended consequences of NPM reforms, effects of the financial crisis and also possible scenarios for the future of the public sector.

The objectives of the Work package were:

- To gain insight into how public managers in Europe perceive the impact of new public management-style reforms on
 - public sector efficiency, effectiveness and economy (performance)
 - public sector values, equity, professionalism
- To study public managers' experiences with and attitudes towards the New Public Management and their perception of emerging public sector management/governance practices, including network governance, e-governance, integrated or joined-up governance, and related developments
- To measure and compare the perceived impact of New Public Management-style reforms on public sector fragmentation, coordination and social cohesion
- To generate a cross-national, cross-sector database that will be of integrative value for all subsequent work packages in the project
- To develop a standardized web-based and multi-lingual survey targeting public managers from three sectors in ten countries that captures the variety of administrative traditions and structures in Europe
- To collect data using this survey, interviewing min. 3.000 European public managers (10 countries x 300) based on comparative national samples

As agreed by the project terms of reference, the Work package produced the following **deliverables**:

- D 3.1. Ten national reports (by 30-4-2013)
- D 3.2. Cross-national report (by 31-5-2013)
- D 3.3. Presentation of collected data to practitioner groups (by 30-6-2013)
- D 3.4. Policy brief, based on 3.2 (by 31-7-2013)
- D 3.5. Validated dataset (by 31-12-2012)

The present Research Report is meant to offer interested researchers and the wider public an overview of the survey methodology employed and of the survey's content, as well as a first-hand introduction to its general results (for the latter point in particular, please go to section III where you will find the descriptions of all questions of the integrated survey dataset). A few additional documents are complementing this report:

- the core questionnaire
- the survey codebook, which accompanies the dataset and contains a thorough description of the variable/item definitions

the key materials describing the implementation of the survey and its results (the Survey Codebook, together with this Research Report, twelve country reports and the cross-country report describing national and comparative results respectively), together with a list of presentations and academic publications based on the results are available on the COCOPS webpage www.cocops.eu. Following data sharing principles jointly agreed upon by the COCOPS team, the integrated dataset was not publicized in full for the period in which the COCOPS project was ongoing. As the project has now come to an end, and in agreement with EU FP7 open access regulations, the survey database is archived by the GESIS – Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences.

I.2. Main steps in survey implementation

Running from June 2011 until mid 2014, the Work package 3 was one of COCOPS' most extensive phases. Its core output, the survey was the result of a joint effort of all partners. A core survey task force was created by five teams (Hertie School of Governance Berlin – also the coordinating team of the survey, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) University Panthéon-Assas Paris II, Cardiff University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Bergen), which worked intensely on the survey design and met on four different occasions. During the initial stage the Hertie team compiled relevant survey instruments and bibliography, which together with similar materials collected during other project phases (COCOPS Work package 1) were used to draft and test the new questionnaire instrument. Several additional feedback rounds gave all partners the possibility to comment on the core team proposals, make recommendations and suggest additional topics and items. After each round, the survey was adjusted accordingly. The original English questionnaire was then translated in the languages of the participating countries and replicated in each of them following standardized, jointly-agreed sampling and access strategies.

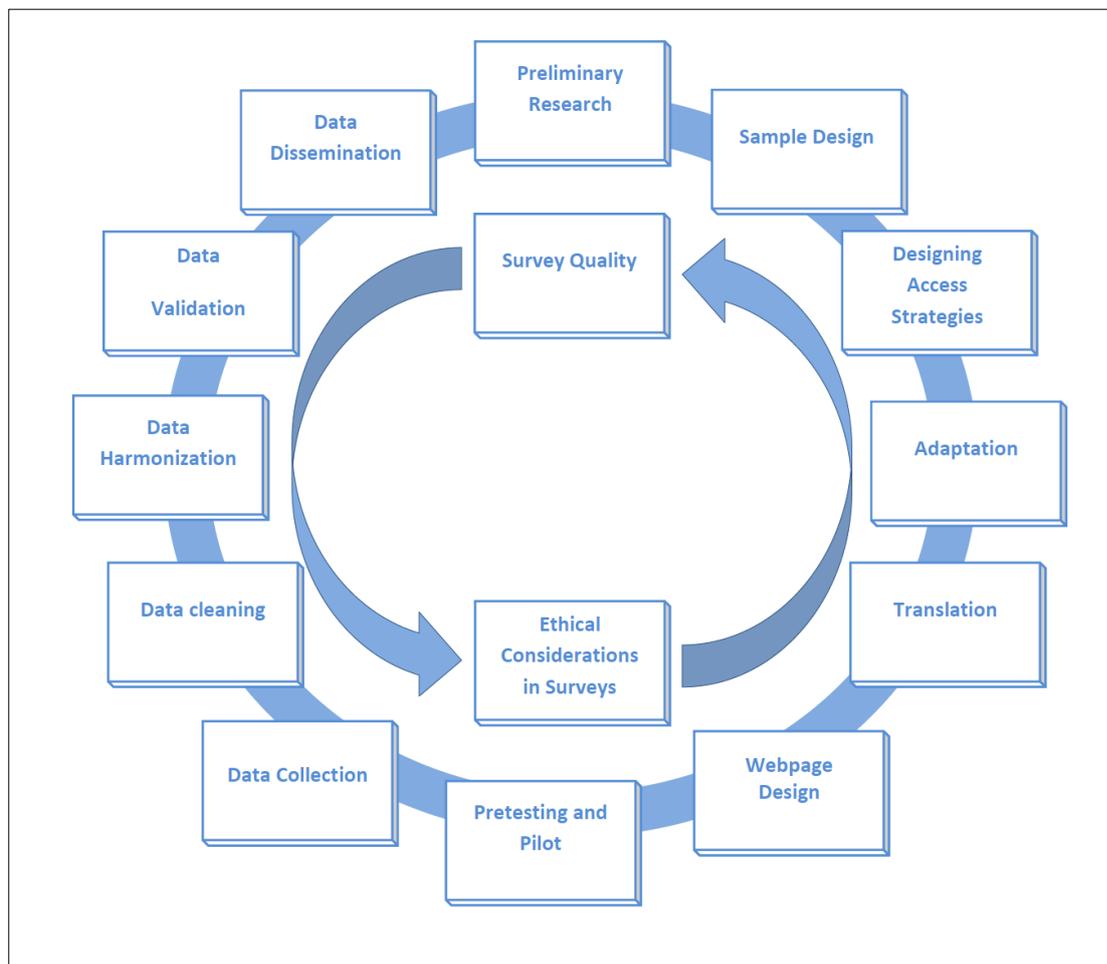
The guiding principles of the design process were to achieve relevant, qualitative and comparable results, to adequately reflect established theoretical and methodological standards and to follow the COCOPS terms of references as set out in the grant agreement. Given the scope of the survey, the conceptual phases focused on three main challenges:

- Defining a comparable sample across all countries.
Please see section 1.5. below for a more detailed description of sampling.
- Finding an effective access strategy for each country.
Teams had to find the most appropriate way to reach respondents, given the trade-offs between different access strategies (post via online, personalized via anonymous access, forwarding vs. direct access etc.).

- Designing a questionnaire fitting to the goals of the research project, and at the same time, to the various research interests and experience of the COCOPS teams and the national administrative context.

In order to ensure the collection of high quality comparative data/results, with regards to the methodology of the survey the team also used as reference a set of internationally established guidelines for implementing cross-national surveys (e.g. the cross cultural survey guidelines developed by the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, but also experiences from other research networks at the EU level such as the COST-Action network or the EU-CONSENT network). In particular, most of the suggested steps/phases for cross-cultural surveys from the University of Michigan were followed (see figure 1), while also being adapted to the specific context and needs of the COCOPS survey.

Figure 1. Main steps in the design and implementation of the COCOPS survey. Adapted from 'Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys', Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan



More concretely, the following steps lead up to the current status quo:

- **Kick off meeting, core survey team: Paris, May 2011**
 - Meeting of the core survey team (Hertie School of Governance Berlin, CNRS Paris, Cardiff University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Bergen)
 - First agreements on research design, questionnaire and sample principles
- **Mapping national administrations: July-August 2011**
 - Based on the same template, all partners provided a first overview of their national administrations (main levels, structures, numbers) and a proposal for the national sample and most appropriate access strategy.

- **COCOPS meeting at the Annual Conference of the European Group for Public Administration: Bucharest, September 2011**
 - Discussing questionnaire concept, sample principles, and methodological issues related to the survey design and implementation
- **Core survey team meetings – Berlin, October 2011 & Berlin, December 2011**
 - Collection/discussion of other existing surveys
 - Operationalization of interesting variables and items
 - Discussion on structure and questions/items to be selected
 - Agreement on preliminary questionnaire text
- **Coordinating preliminary version with other team members, October-December 2011**
 - Feedback on first draft version with regard to appropriateness for national contexts and other WPs
 - Integrating feedback and updating questionnaire
- **Pretesting draft version, core survey team: December 2011-January 2012**
 - A first external test of the survey: 5-10 practitioners and colleagues in each of the core team countries were asked to give their feedback on the English survey text and to check understanding and quality of questions
- **Final feedback round with all partners: January-February 2012**
 - Feedback on questionnaire and choice of optional questions
 - Final adjustments to the questionnaire, based on feedback from the teams
- **English survey text ready, circulated to teams for translation: 28th February 2012**
- **Decision on sample and access strategies for each country: February-March 2012**
- **Translation of survey into 9 languages: March-mid April 2012**
 - Translation of survey text and online fill-in guidelines
 - Necessary adjustments following translation check
- **Setting up 10 country web-pages: March-May 2012**
- **Collecting contact data for invitations, securing official approvals: February-May 2012**
- **Pilot, all partners: April-mid May 2012**
 - Around 10 practitioners in each country
 - Testing both translation and functionality of the webpage
 - Adjustments made to the text and webpage based on feedback from respondents
- **Final checks with teams: May 2012**
- **Launch of survey: mid-May-beginning of June 2012; surveys ran until 31 July 2012**
- **Measures to enhance response rates: September-October 2012**
- **Data cleaning, harmonization and validation: October-November 2012**
 - Cleaning the data and ensuring that all items are coded correctly and consistently
 - Validation of the country data by each team
- **Surveys closed in the ten core countries: Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom (as well as Austria, as partner country): December 2012**
- **Writing ten national reports based on first survey results in each country: December 2012 – April 2013**
- **Writing the cross-national report, based on the integrated dataset: March – June 2013**
- **Dissemination of survey data: January 2012– June 2014**
- **The COCOPS survey has also been conducted in ten partner countries, following the same survey implementation standards as the core countries: Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden: November 2012 – May 2015**

I.3. Survey design and content

The main research goals of the survey were clearly set by the overall COCOPS research framework. The aim of the survey was to capture experiences and perceptions of public sector executives as key knowledge carriers in the public sector in Europe on:

- the current status of management, coordination and administration reforms (especially NPM style reforms)
- the effects of NPM-style reforms on performance, but also on other factors such as public sector values/identities, coordination or social cohesion
- the impact of the financial crisis

Lastly, the survey also aimed to explore various factors influencing and shaping these perceptions/experiences, such as: institutional/organisational context (e.g. country, policy field, organisation type, size of organisation, socio-demographic factors (education, age, work experience), and individual values and attitudes.

The driving principles behind the survey were established during the design phase of survey. As such, the content of the questionnaire was shaped by the following factors/considerations:

- Building the survey on a theory-driven basis, integrating different research disciplines and interests: the content of the questionnaire therefore links with central research concepts in different disciplines such as public administration, public policy, organisation theory, management theory and psychology; the survey mirrors this diversity and allows for a broad spectrum of research papers and analyses based on the resulting data.
- A major theoretical framework underlying the survey/questionnaire is the distinction of three different reform paradigms (New Public Management, Public Governance and The Neo-Weberian State) as suggested by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011). The survey tries to capture how far these three different reform paradigms have spread on the three different levels.
- Allowing for analysis of different levels/perspectives: the survey combines questions at macro-level (institutional/policy field), meso-level (organisational level of ministry or agency) and micro-level (individual executive)
- Based on the overall research goals and a literature review (see Hammerschmid/ Van de Walle 2011) a set of key topics/issues was developed (e.g. public sector ethos/perception of work, political/administration relation, social cohesion decentralization/management autonomy, target/performance management, coordination/network governance) as the basis for the questionnaire items.

The survey design process took as reference for methodological issues, topics/issues and operationalisation of variables of interest other public administration executive surveys. Some of the examples include:

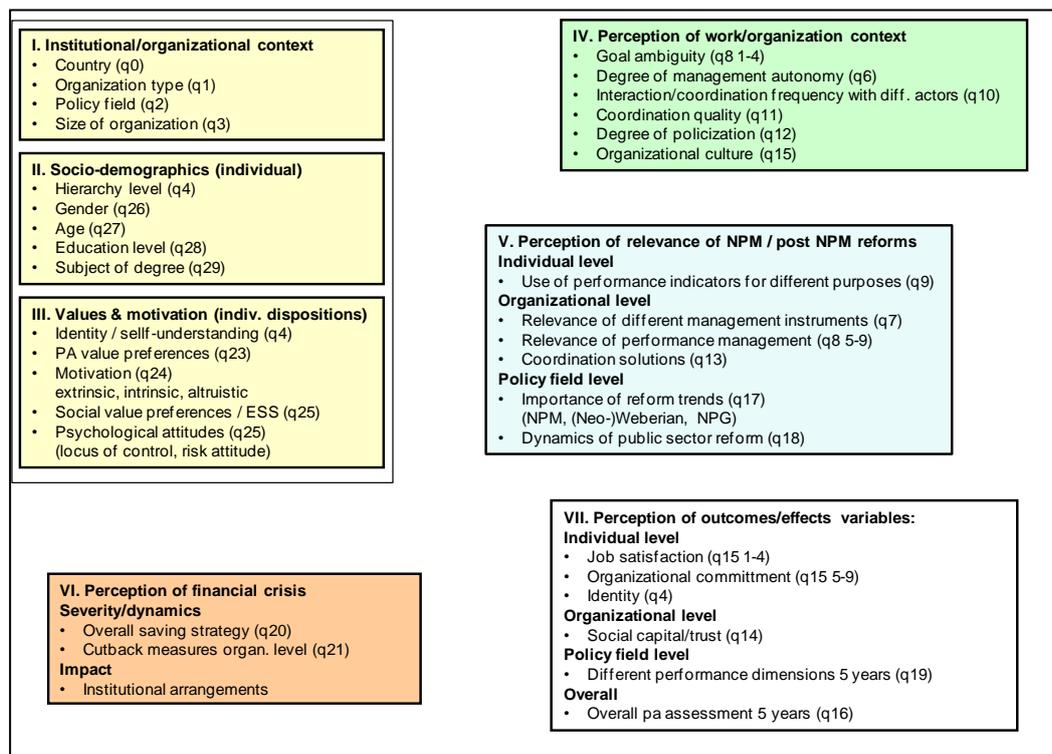
- Well established elite studies, such as the Aberbach et al. 1981 and Derlien 1988
- The COBRA/CRIPO survey on autonomy, steering and performance of agencies
- The EU-Consent survey on the reform and future of the EU Commission (see Bauer et al. 2009)
- The UDITE survey on Leadership experiences of local government CEOs (see Mouritzen and Svava 2002)
- A survey on the Future of Government Service (SFGS) by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University (Volcker et al. 2009)

In addition, findings from meta-analyses of survey research in public administration (e.g. Lee et. al 2011), the current status of comparative public administration (e.g. Fitzpatrick et al. 2011; Pollitt 2011) also informed the design process.

The survey also combined experiences from previous major public sector executive surveys in Norway (Christensen and Læg Reid 1996, 2007), Austria and Germany (Hammerschmid and Meyer 2005, Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006 or Hammerschmid et al. 2010), and elements of previous surveys as part of the COST-CRIPO project.

Based on these considerations and in several steps the survey team developed an overall concept with certain clusters of questions/variables (see figure 2), which can be linked for future research in a flexible form depending on the specific research interests:

Figure 2. Central issues/content of the questionnaire

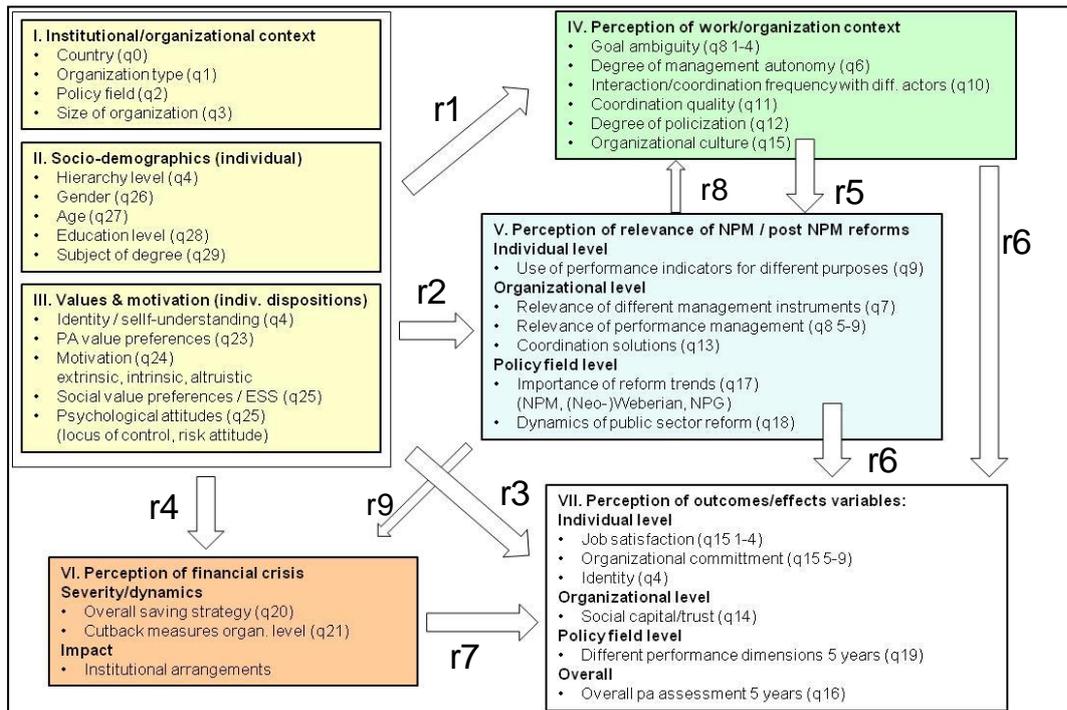


A look at the various relationships between these sets of variables (see figure 3) already allows to foresee interesting directions of future research, for instance:

- What factors do influence the perception of central aspects of the work/organisation context such as goal ambiguity, management autonomy, coordination quality, politicization (r1)
- What individual/organisational/institutional factors do explain the relevance of NPM at individual/organisational/policy field level (r2/r5)
- What factors (organisational context, various reforms at organisational and policy field level, severity of financial crisis) do have a positive / negative impact on social cohesion/organisational social capital (r6/r7)
- What factors do influence the internal/external use of performance indicators (r2/r5)
- How do organisational/contextual factors and previous NPM reforms (eg. spread of performance management) have an influence on the way public administrations do cope with the financial crisis? (r4/r9)

It also becomes clear that certain variables can be used both as independent or dependent variables, e.g. identity as a factor explaining the perception of management reforms vs. identity changes as a consequence of certain reforms.

Figure 3. Various relationships/causalities between the variables



I.4. Questionnaire and country variations

As previously mentioned, one of the key concerns of the survey team¹ was to ensure a high quality for the survey, by building it on a strong methodological basis, according to established standards of elite and public administrations surveys, but also ensuring in an original manner its representativeness for the country administrations involved. Therefore, the survey was first of all based on a set of key principles regarding methodology agreed on through discussions and meetings of the survey team and feedback with all COCOPS teams, which then guided the development of the questionnaire:

- Creating one joint questionnaire, to be distributed to the central ministries and the two policy sectors (health and employment) with only few, country specific questions added, depending on the relevance of proposed questions from the perspective of the local teams.
- Collecting three types of information/data regarding:
 - Characteristics of the individuals and their position, identity, preferences etc (as control variables)
 - Management practices/reforms in the respondents' employing organisation/government
 - Perceived outcomes of the work of the employing organisation and the policy field.

These aspects were intended to cover the wider range of topics allowing researchers to then explore developments, and in particular NPM reforms, in the public sector across Europe, together with data that could offer explanations regarding these developments.
- Focusing on current management practice rather than past reforms and placing less emphasis on normative assessments ('How it should be') and views on the future of the public sector (It was considered by the team that the first were easier to observe through direct experience by the respondents, and a more reliable research path than exploring normative aspects, subjective beliefs etc).

¹ Hertie School of Governance Berlin, CNRS Paris, Cardiff University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Bergen

- Avoiding questions asking directly for a specific impact of certain management practices on particular outcomes, as well as questions on causalities (to avoid putting pressure on respondents, but also to avoid producing subjective, hard to verify replies).
- Describing management practices and outcomes generically, simply and clearly, avoiding public management jargon, to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts used in the survey by the respondents targeted.
- Referring to a standard period of 5 years throughout the entire survey when time periods are mentioned in the questions. Any longer period of time would have been too long, respondents might have not been in their positions as long and would not have realistically been able to make correct judgements. With regards to the time span used, see also the Special Eurobarometre 370, on assessment on how government works.
- Employing 7-point scales for answers. Starting from the examples of other public administration surveys (see the surveys mentioned above), the survey team considered that a 7-point scale would allow for sufficient variation in responses, while not burdening respondents with irrelevant scale values, as would have been the case if a longer, 9- or 10-point, scale had been applied to most questions.
- The 'Don't know / cannot answer' option was used scarcely /; following discussion among the project members, it was decided to preferably allow respondents to skip questions rather than allow for this 'opt-out' alternative and thus to complicate the later analysis of results.
- Refraining from open questions, to avoid interpretation issues during the data validation and analysis phase; in some instances respondents were offered the possibility to choose item 'Other' and offer further information, but these were mostly limited to situations where a full coverage of the national context would not have been possible through the item formulation.
- Use multi-item variables, reflecting the complex research dimensions of the survey
- In areas covered by the survey, well-established item operationalizations already existed, the survey tried to take them up and use them either directly or with little variation. Some examples from which specific items have been (partially or completely) taken include:
 - OECD 'Classification of the Functions of Government' (COFOG): policy fields in question 2
 - Special Eurobarometer 370, on Social climate, assessment about how public administration is run: question 16 in particular
 - Leana/Pil 2006, and Nahapiet/Ghoshal, 1998, on organisational social capital with a distinction of structural, relational and cognitive dimensions: see question 14
 - Allen/Meyer 1990, organisational commitment types: selected items in question 15
 - Public Service Employee Survey (Treasury Board Canada 2008): selected items in question 15
 - Rotter score for 'locus of control' (Carpenter and Seki 2006): see question 25
 - International Social Survey Program 2005, work motivation/orientation bases more generally
 - European Social Survey, items related to 'Human Values'

1.4.1. Structure of the questionnaire

Based on the research goals, principles and content areas described above, the questionnaire for the 'Executives Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe. Views and Experiences from Senior Executives' is structured in four parts:

- Part I: General Information
4 questions with 31 items
- Part II: Management and Work Practice of Your Organisation
11 questions with 97 items
- Part III: Public Sector Reform and the Fiscal Crisis
7 questions with 61 items

- Part IV: Attitudes, Preferences, and Personal Information
9 questions with 47 items

A few concerns emerged throughout the survey design phase, and during the feedback rounds with the COCOPS teams: The potential negative effects on response rates of a survey that was too lengthy; the need to adapt to the limitations of the survey as research instrument, and that of reflecting the key NPM developments and concepts; grant requirements. To address these issues, some of the topics and questions proposed in the initial design phases were dropped from the survey. In particular, the sections on normative aspects of public administration and the public sector of the future, as well as questions regarding individual opinions and characteristics (e.g. belonging to political parties, ideological positioning) were dropped; they were seen as too difficult to interpret in relation to NPM impacts and especially the latter as too sensitive for respondents.

Special attention was given to the order of the survey sections. As it was expected that a bigger number of drop outs would be observed towards the end of the survey, priority was given to control questions that would offer information on the nature of the respondent's organisation, also considered as appropriate introductory questions (Part I), and to core issues related to NPM (Part II: Management and Work Practice of Your Organisation).

The introduction text was created in order to both clarify the objectives of the survey, but also to motivate respondents to participate. Other accompanying texts, introducing the various sections, or defining 'organisation' and 'policy area'² were meant to ensure a standard understanding of key concepts and survey approaches across all respondents, regardless of their country or administrative structure/culture.

1.4.2. Country variations – core questions

While the intention was to keep all country versions homogenous, certain differences could not be avoided if the surveys were to look convincing and plausible to local respondents. Respecting established cross-national survey standards (see in particular 'Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys', Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan), teams were allowed to adapt their country versions to fit national context, and especially, to match national administrative structures, but had to clearly protocol all deviations.

In this context, especially questions 1 ('What type of organisation do you work for?') and 4 ('What kind of position do you currently hold?') offered particular difficulties. Keeping in mind concerns for comparability, teams were nonetheless allowed to modify (add or delete) items in such a way that they would fit administrative structures, but could also later be clearly re-coded along the original items in order to secure equivalence. This was the case for the government level dimension proposed by question 1 (e.g. differentiating central, state/regional and other subnational level), which was not applicable to many countries. The agreement with teams was that in the phase of data harmonization, they would provide a clear explanation of the equivalence of these terms, in order to ensure that the final dataset could be used in a comparable manner.

With regards to the introductory definition of organisation and policy area, for many countries the terms were self-explanatory and in some surveys the definition was not even included; for others the definition needed to be adapted to the specific administrative structures.

² To avoid misinterpretations of these crucial concepts leading the respondents' positioning towards the survey, the following two definitions were offered at the beginning of the survey:

'Your organisation refers to the organisational entity for which you work. Usually, it is a ministry (in the UK this is a 'Department') or an agency. It is never only a section, division, or subunit within a ministry or agency. Agencies or other subordinate bodies that have autonomy versus the Ministry should be regarded as their own organisation and not as part of the Ministry.' 'Your policy area refers to the wider set of policy topics or issues to which your own work mainly contributes. It usually coincides with the policy issue in which your organisation is designing and implementing policy.'

Other slight modifications were also made in the introductory text, to make it more relevant or motivating for national audiences (underlining for instance the large scope of the survey, its European, comparative dimension, or the relevance of its insights for understanding the changes in public administrations). Please see below a summary of the country variations to the core survey text.

While concerns for the survey length and other research limitations mentioned above (see section 1.4.1) did not allow for the use of all questions initially discussed by the survey team, it was felt that a few of these were of particular interest for some of the teams involved and, while not relevant for the survey in its entirety, could offer relevant insights from narrower, national contexts. Therefore a list of optional questions was proposed, containing suggestions from teams, which had been excluded in the core survey. In the first phase of the survey, COCOPS core teams selected a maximum of 3 questions from this pool to be used in their national surveys, in addition to the core questionnaire. As these were not common to the teams, they were not included in the integrated results.

Table 1. Country-specific deviations from core survey

	Austria	Belgium	Estonia	France	Germany	Hungary	Netherlands	Norway	Spain	UK
General					Separate survey version for the Federal Employment Agency (EA)					Skipped Part I for online survey; skipped several questions in second, postal survey
Q1 Organisation type		Q1 and OPT 1 have been merged and adapted to the Belgian administrative context	1 item less (only Ministries and Agencies or subordinate gov. body at central government level, three types of the latter)		Skipped in the EA survey	1 item skipped (Agency or subordinate government body at state or regional government level)	Specified as org. branches in EA survey; 2 items less in general survey (only Central government level Min., Agencies or sub. gov. bodies)	1 item (Min. at state or regional government level) skipped		
Q2 Policy field								1 additional item (i14 – religion)		
Q3 Size of organisation					Skipped in the E.A. survey					
Q4 Hierarchy level	4 additional items to match the national context		1 additional item, in the end recoded into three hierarchical levels	5 additional items, grouped in 3 new categories	4 additional items in general survey separate categories for EA survey				1 additional item, in the end recoded into three hierarchical levels	
Q11 Coordination Quality				1 additional item on vertical coordination						
Q12 Politicization										Skipped in postal survey
Q13 Coordination sol.										Skipped in postal survey
Q22 Financial crisis – inst. impact										Skipped in postal survey
Q28 Education Level				2 additional items: Bachelier (BAC) and Grandes Ecole (ENA etc.)			Humanities and Social sciences split up in original survey			

I.5. Sampling and access strategy

I.5.1. General sampling principles and country variation

The COCOPS survey follows the tradition of elite studies (see for instance Aberbach et al. 1981; Putnam 1976; Derlien 1988; Mouritzen and Svava 2002; Trondal 2010). In these studies, administrative elites are considered to be members of organisations with expected higher reliability, knowledge or experience, usually senior bureaucrats. This type of approach has been debated intensively over the last years (eg. Moyser and Wagstaffe 1987; Enticott et al. 2008; Walker and Enticott 2004). Defenders of this method argue that top managers should be surveyed because they have the best vantage point for viewing the entire organisational system (Enticott 2004, p. 320), and that addressing questions to anyone other than the chief executive will lead to considerably less accurate information than might have been presumably assumed. On the other hand, elite surveys can nonetheless introduce significant sources of bias. Elite surveys only focus on one actor's perception, which cannot necessarily be taken as representative for the whole organisation. Chief executives may have a vested interest in reporting favourable outcomes from new policy initiatives in order to present a positive and successful image. They also can be expected to have different interests, needs and experiences than frontline bureaucrats or simply overestimate results (Frazier and Swiss 2008).

In trying to balance these positions in practice, the target population of the COCOPS survey was defined as: top and medium-high level civil servants who, in their respective positions, are most likely to hold the relevant knowledge regarding (NPM-type of) reforms and developments within the public sector. The COCOPS survey did therefore target the higher ranking managers in the respective public administrations, taking the point that persons on this level are more likely to have an overview of existing NPM type of instruments and practices in public administration. However, in order to address such representativeness and social desirability issues, the survey covers the entire population defined, usually stopping at those tiers that are more regularly in charge of service delivery, and thus outside the scope of the survey.

Given the expected differences in the national administrations, some variation in the country samples was accepted. The guiding principle in creating the survey sample was to a lesser extent that of ensuring similarity, but rather that of achieving comparability between all of the samples.³ Therefore, this general definition was applied at each country level in order to include the relevant organisations and administrative tiers, according to a commonly agreed set of principles, as will be described in more detail below.

Other key methodological concerns considered were:

- Fitness of intended use: sampling respondents that would be best positioned to offer relevant insights into NPM reforms, according to the survey goals
- Full census avoiding random samples
- Non-response
- Quality of responses

In order to establish the degree of variation and the sample definition in each country, the first step taken was a mapping of the administrative structures of all the participant countries, with the help of a template developed by the coordinating research team. This standardized mapping template requested from teams both qualitative and quantitative information regarding their respective country administrations in each of the areas of focus in the survey (central government, employment and health), and in particular: the type and number of organisations and respectively, the approximate number of civil servants at each administrative tier included in the population definition, along with information on the overall number of potential contacts corresponding to

³ For a methodological background to this, see the recommendations of the 'Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys', Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, regarding flexibility in samples designs; and also European Social Survey Round 4 Sampling Guidelines.

the definition; as well as information regarding expected response rates, recommended ways of access and availability of the contact data about the targeted organisations and respondents.

The mapping exercise offered a helpful overview on public administration structures in all participating countries; more importantly it also confirmed the initial set of sampling principles agreed upon and raised a few general conclusions regarding both sampling and access, which were discussed with all teams during the COCOPS meeting in Bucharest, September 2011. The most important of these points were: the inclusion of state secretaries (considered to be too political in some countries), and achieving a representative and sufficiently large sample in the health and employment sectors (which were from the beginning proportionately smaller than general government in the administrations)⁴. This space for 'manoeuvre' was, however, still created in a manner that would not affect the overall comparability of the sample.

Two other aspects that were taken into consideration when tackling potential adaption of the national samples: varying expected response rates⁵ and the project terms of reference (which stated a minimum of 300 valid responses per country). As a result, the minimum target in each country was set around 1200 respondents (a number that was confirmed as realistic following the mapping exercise).

Based on the initial mapping exercise and discussion with all participating teams, a core body of sampling principles was reached, which were followed by all national teams:

A. Central government:

- Within all central government ministries the two top-administrative levels (below politically appointed state secretaries) were to be addressed. Whether or not to address the level of state secretaries and their deputies, given the high degree of politicization and low number of persons at this level, was left to the choice of each team. In some particular cases, where deemed necessary by the teams, the third level was also approached or allowed for answers.
- All central government agencies were included, but restricted to the first two executive levels (directors/board members/deputies + level below).
- State-owned enterprises and audit courts were not included due to their different task profile.
- In case expected numbers of respondents were too low to achieve these criteria, teams were advised to also use a forwarding strategy, if and where appropriate: asking respondents in higher organisational levels to forward the questionnaire to subordinate levels. Or, in particular cases, if deemed appropriate by the teams, they could also target third administrative levels in central government ministries.
-

B. Employment

- The central government ministry level was targeted, according to the definition above
- For central government employment agencies the first two hierarchical levels were targeted, along with the heads of larger regional-agencies in countries with a more ramified and complex administrative structure
- Regional and state government ministries and agencies were also included to the extent that they were relevant, in order to reach a higher number of executives, following the same rules as defined for central government levels (i.e. the two top hierarchical levels). However, public sector bodies at the local government level and service delivery organisations were out of the scope of this survey and were therefore generally not targeted

⁴ The countries that opted for including state secretaries in their sample were Estonia, Germany and Spain.

⁵ Based on previous survey experience (see I.3) and recommendations from the teams, the average expected response rate for the COCOPS national surveys was established at around 20-25%.

C. Health

- The central government ministry level, agencies and the state and regional levels were targeted in the same way as described for the employment field.
- In the health sector in particular, in certain countries special organisations such as committees were also involved in health policy; provided that such committees were equipped with their own budget and staff, and were proven to be policy-relevant, they were also included in the sample with their first two executive levels.
- As in the employment sector, bodies at the local government level were not covered and in addition, health insurances and hospitals, and bodies that were not directly involved in policy making processes were also excluded from the sample.

In all participating countries the entire target population was covered; hence, there was full census avoiding random sampling.

1.5.2. Access and data collection strategies

The mapping overview also showed the variation in preferred access strategies in each country. Based on this and given a concern for non-response, country teams were offered flexibility in their strategies of reaching respondents. The key criteria in the decision were the previous team experience with survey implementation and their expectations regarding administrative cultures. For instance, previous surveys (eg. Hammerschmid et al. 2010) showed that in more hierarchical and legalistic contexts a strategy of reaching respondents via post would be significantly more effective than trying to reach respondents via email invitations, and would render far higher response rates. In countries such as Norway, however, such an access path was considered by the local team unlikely to be successful, and preference was given to email invitations.

Together with the coordinating team, the various national teams therefore decided on an access strategy that would fit best to the specific context and sample specification. Points and options to be taken into consideration were:

- Accessibility of names, emails and addresses at the various sample levels
- Invitations via email or post, or possibly a mixed strategy between these two (considering administrative culture)
- Personalized access with individualized access codes , versus anonymous access to the survey
- Accessing respondents directly or via superiors (superiors could have both a motivating effect, but the survey could also be blocked, respondents potentially being less inclined to answer due to anonymity concerns)
- Ethical considerations and need for centralised approvals
- Possible endorsement from national or international/European institutions
- Regarding the time period for the running of the survey, any aspects that might influence response rates (such as elections, holidays etc.)

As the personalized/anonymous version is more complex and also requires some additional information, the anonymous access version was the default option offered to teams; with it the invitation sent contained a general, non-personalized link, which was open for access to all respondents. Respondents could not close and continue the survey, which had to be therefore filled in one go. It was also more difficult to monitor survey completion from the perspective of the managing team, but unlike a personalized link, this could easily be included in postal invitations, where necessary, or forwarded by respondents to their employees.

The personalized option consisted of offering each respondent a unique link to their country's survey, which they could access repeatedly, allowing for interruptions and for the re-opening of the survey, until the

respondent would have filled it in completely; this allowed for more flexibility from the perspective of respondents, but also gave the survey team the possibility to send targeted reminders and to make a better analysis of non-response behaviour; the concern here was a potential perception of anonymity risks on the part of respondents (although, given the very working protocol of the software used, any linkage between a given respondent and their answers would not have been possible). Due to the technical difficulty associated with the creation and management of the personalized invitations, this process was managed entirely by Hertie, and invitations were sent using Unipark software, based on the sample data provided by teams; in the case of anonymous access, teams were in full control of the invitations, although in close collaboration with the Hertie team – to minimize potential inconsistencies across teams and similar risks linked to the email distribution, Hertie advised all teams to use a standard mail-merge function available in Microsoft Outlook.

Starting from the common sample definition, different countries adapted their samples and access strategies, in close coordination and agreement with the lead survey team. Regardless of the chosen data collection mode, the survey was self-administered with strong support from the coordinating Hertie team.

As the survey aimed at a full census, teams have gathered all of the contact information needed to access all respondents in the population. The process has been different in each country, depending of the availability of such – normally quite sensitive – data. Some of the data was readily available through civil service official directories. In other cases, the data had to be collected either individually from organization websites, or by contacting individual organizations in order to receive the contact data (which would otherwise not be made public). In cases where the full contact (for instance the name of the person occupying a respective position) was not available, the invitations were sent, but not personalized.

1.5.3. Survey webpage

Regardless of the chosen access strategy, a web-version of the survey was set up in the respective language(s) for each participating country. The link to the survey (as mentioned above, either a personalized, or an anonymous-access link) was included in the invitations sent, so that all respondents had the possibility to visit the webpage and fill in the questionnaire online; alternatively, as the invitation clearly stated, respondents could go online, download and print the questionnaire, and after filling it in, send it to the national coordination team via post or fax.⁶

In order to ensure a standardized survey design and thus mitigate any effects due to differences in web structure and design, the Hertie team created all the country versions centrally, by using a well-established survey software, tailored for use of academic research: Unipark (see <http://www.unipark.com/>). Each country version was built using the questionnaire translations provided, and in close collaboration with the respective teams. Also, once the survey was launched, all teams received access to the survey, allowing them to check the response rates, but not allowing them to intervene in the survey implementation. To avoid any inconsistencies or technical problems, Hertie also managed the survey infrastructure and covered any technical issues raised – although all other aspects related to the local implementation of the survey stayed with the country team. Each webpage created had a corresponding dataset, where all respective responses were gathered (in case surveys had been received by the local team they were filled in online by the country team and fed into the dataset). For countries that had more than one page, the datasets were merged together after the closing of the survey, to create a unitary country dataset for all responses.

Given the particular nature of the online survey, a few additional issues were considered:

⁶ This option was offered in all countries with the exception of Estonia, where the local team felt that respondents would not be inclined to use it.

- Fill in instructions: Hertie proposed an original set of fill in instructions, which had the role of guiding respondents through the survey completion (how to navigate from one page to the other, how to submit the survey, how to make corrections etc.); the instructions were translated by each team.
- The web-pages were built with a concern for methodological issues specific to online surveys (the number of question per page, visual elements etc.).

I.6. Survey Implementation

I.6.1. Survey translation

The translation of the questionnaire was set up with a view to quality assurance and control, as well as to conceptual equivalence across various country versions. The goal was to produce high-quality national versions of the questionnaire, which would appear natural and easy to understand to local respondents and fit the national context, as well as, by keeping as close as possible to the original, to guarantee comparable results. Deviations from the original were therefore only allowed in exceptional cases, where a word-to-word translation would have not made sense to respondents.

A first key distinction made was between the core language questionnaire (English), which was to be taken as reference, and the target language questionnaires. After the translation process there were 21 different versions of the COCOPS survey – one for each of the participating countries and two respectively for Belgium – in 18 different languages: Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, all based on the original core version.

The translation was done by each national team, in collaboration with Hertie. To ensure an efficient and standardized process, Hertie centralized and managed translation concerns through a set of Survey adaption & translation guidelines. The goal of these guidelines was to ensure that the translation in each country followed a common procedure, and that key methodological and content aspects were observed by all teams. They contained the main steps, suggestions and a description of the procedure, as well as a checklist of important issues. They were also accompanied by an excel translation record, which offered each national team a framework for recording difficulties encountered and for discussing translation alternatives together with Hertie.

Some of the key issues discussed with the teams were the translation of central recurring concepts in the questionnaire (for instance ‘organisation’, ‘experience’, ‘preference’, ‘coordination’) to ensure that terms appearing several times in the text would be translated in the same manner and using the same definition, to avoid confusing respondents. Some more difficult public administration concepts (e.g. coordination) were also pointed out by teams (in many languages it was difficult to find an accurate concept for translation, and partial synonyms such as collaboration were preferred). Other sensitive issues were the translation of response scales (avoiding any reversals of the scales, adapting the scale meanings to local contexts (e.g. differentiating between cannot answer/cannot assess can be difficult in different languages), and gender-appropriate addressing of respondents.

Following the guidelines, each team decided how to approach the translation, by having either one central member doing the translation, with the others checking; or with each team member doing a parallel translation, which would then be cross-checked with the others. Given the specialized content of the survey, no external translators were used, and local teams had the final control over the translated versions. For the same reason and capacity considerations, a back-translation procedure was not done.

Based on discussions with and recommendations from the teams, following the translation process, Hertie proposed a set of general modifications to be applied across all country versions, thus modifying the original

text of the survey. For example In question 6 ('In my position, I have the following degree of decision autonomy with regard to'), item 1- budget allocation, could have been interpreted in two ways: firstly, as budget planning in advance of the budget year, and secondly, as spending the budgets over the year. In keeping with the original intention of the core questionnaire, teams were asked to adapt the translation so that it would cover both meanings, and that no confusion would be created among respondents. Changes were also made for question 7/item 10 and question 9/item 1. For question 20 ('In response to the fiscal crisis, how would you describe the broader approach to realizing savings in your policy area'), it was decided that respondents should be offered the possibility of skipping all further questions related to the financial crisis if they chose item 'None/no approach required.' In the online version of the questionnaire, those respective questions were skipped automatically, when respondents clicked 'none'. At a later stage, following the pilot and feedback from national respondents, additional changes were made to the text resulting into a final country version.

In the case of Belgium, France and the Netherlands, given the overlap between the languages, the three teams coordinated and cross-checked the translation, in order to create a homogenous result. The differences accounted between these language versions (other than the country variations already mentioned), are due to local particularities of each of the languages.

1.6.2. Survey pre-testing and pilot

Given the scope of the survey and the variation between administrations in the participating countries, testing the survey and its national versions was essential before launching it in full scale. This verification had two phases: a pre-testing and a pilot.

A. The survey pre-testing

The pre-testing took place during the design phase, using a preliminary version of the English survey. This was a narrower test, meant to collect content-related observations from practitioners and external observers, before finalizing the core version.

The preliminary English version of the survey was circulated to 5-10 practitioners in each of the five countries composing the core survey team (France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, UK), who were asked to comment primarily on the content of the questions. The input received from practitioners helped the core team in finalizing the survey: deciding on its final structure (a survey section regarding normative aspects and the future of the public sector was given less importance in the end, was reduced and merged with another section); as well as on which questions to keep or exclude from the survey (the input received from teams and external practitioners disfavoured normative questions, some of the questions regarding respondent preferences, or some detailing aspects of coordination). Following the joint discussion with all project teams, the input was incorporated in the final form of the core survey.

B. Survey pilot

While the pretesting in December 2011-January 2012 checked for the core understanding of the key concepts of the preliminary survey draft, the pilot was a larger exercise, which all teams underwent, to check the exact implementation of the survey at a smaller scale, before launching it on a national level. The goal of the pilot was to verify:

- Concept understanding issues
- Translation of terms
- Webpage functionality and clarity of fill in instructions

A survey invitation was sent to around 10 external respondents (practitioners) in each country based on Pilot guidelines circulated by HER (these included suggestions on who to target, how to send the invitation, how to do the follow-up and collect pilot conclusions). Also, a general check was done concerning sending out Outlook invitations in the case of countries opting for an open access link (in this case teams were sent out the survey invitations themselves). Hertie circulated a document with guidelines on using Outlook for this purpose.

The pilot was an important step especially for the teams, as it revealed inconsistencies and the need to modify some translated terms. No major changes were made to the questionnaire content; however a few suggestions were made regarding the webpage. Among these the most important one, which was applied to all survey webpages, was related to the inclusion of new instructions that would clarify how to submit the survey and confirm the survey submission to the respondent.

Before the final launch in all survey countries, a last check was conducted with all teams in which members were asked to verify and confirm:

1. The consistency of the translated version with the core English survey
2. The consistency of the translated paper version with the webpage
3. The correctness of issues related specifically to the webpage and its functioning

1.6.3. Data collection phase

The data collection phase was planned and implemented on a bilateral basis with each national team, based on an overall time span and general guidelines proposed by Hertie. Given the heterogeneous access and sampling strategies, as well as contextual factors, teams had for quite a large degree of flexibility in implementing the survey, however without losing sight of the key survey concerns:

- **Comparability:** one important goal was to keep the launch date and implementation period similar enough across all countries in order to still allow comparability of results (launch dates spread too far apart would have potentially allowed for – hard to verify – contextual effects).
- **Goodness of fit:** relevance of the access strategy to the goals of the survey; consideration of any national particularities when launching and implementing the survey or any response enhancement measures.
- **Survey quality and minimizing survey error:** respecting survey best practice (sufficient time for implementation, efficient communication with respondents etc.)

The data collection process followed the major steps detailed below (for a country specific description of these steps, please see table 2 below):

- **Survey launch:** in the case of the ten core survey countries, the launch was within a span of about two weeks (end of May-beginning of June 2012); a few country particularities lead to different survey launch dates:
 - France: the first country to launch the survey; the team launched the survey earlier due to the impending elections.
 - Hungary: a parallel national public administration survey was launched only 2 weeks before the planned COCOPS survey date; therefore the launch was delayed by 2 weeks, to avoid overburdening respondents.
 - Norway: a general strike prevented the team from launching the survey earlier, and here too the survey launch date was delayed by approximately 2 weeks.
 - UK: the planned survey launch date turned out to overlap with bank holidays, so it was preferred by the local team to wait until public servants returned to office.
 - Netherlands: due to major difficulties in accessing respondent contact data, the survey experienced a considerable delay and was launched at a later date than the others.

- Duration: the suggested duration for the survey was 4 weeks; countries where the response rates were not sufficiently high prolonged the deadline; in some cases, it was preferred to wait until after the summer break to send an additional round of reminders and/or use further measures of response enhancement (see a more detailed account in table 3 below).
- Second survey round: following the launch of the core survey, several teams decided to undertake a second survey round, to tackle either low response rates or technical issues; a second survey round was interpreted as a new survey launch to respondents who had not previously received an invitation, and so reminders sent to the same respondent group do not belong to this category
 - Netherlands: the Dutch team experienced significant challenges in collecting the necessary contact data and therefore had to wait until the end of the summer to launch the invitations to the bulk of its sample; only a smaller sample of 160 respondents (agency employees) was reached in the summer, while the rest of the respondents received the invitation to the survey in September, once the contact data was available.
 - Norway: a firewall prevented all invitations sent to the Agency for Labour and Welfare to reach respondents; once this technical issue was solved at the end of the summer, a second round of invitations was sent to the same Agency respondent group, this time successfully.
 - Spain: the team experienced significant difficulties in getting the contact data for the set sample; a major reason for this was the change in government that took place during the period of survey implementation and respectively of contact data gathering; given the period needed for some of the new administration members to take their office and also a government policy of limited disclosure of administration member contacts, the team finalized the contact data gathering at a later stage, and therefore launched a second survey round, to more than half of the total sample, in September 2012.
- Reminders: to tackle non-response, teams followed some established response enhancement measures (see Lee et al. 2011): phone follow up and reminders in particular. All countries were recommended to and have sent out at least one email reminder, possibly more, depending on response rates; reminders were usually sent 2, and then 3 weeks after the survey launch; reminder texts were modified in some cases (especially in countries where response rates were low, to attract more responses: including information on the local response rates in comparison with the other countries in the sample etc.); no reminders were sent for invitations distributed by post.
- Other measures for response enhancements (including phone or postal reminders) were implemented in countries with low response rates (at various stages of the data collection process), as can be seen below
 - Estonia: the team complemented the email reminder strategy with 3 different phone-call rounds in the period between August-September 2012, addressing each time a different group of respondents (in total 69 people).
 - Netherlands: given low response rates in the second survey round, after sending 3 email reminders to the sample respondents, the team decided to also send a letter reminder accompanied by a copy of the survey to all respondents who had not yet filled in the survey .
 - UK: after the launch of the survey, the UK had a rather low response rate; approximately one month after the initial launch of the survey a set of 2891 reminders were sent via post to all those respondents that had not already replied through Unipark; this included a copy of the survey and an invitation letter.
- Survey Monitoring
 - All teams had access to their own datasets and survey statistics and were able to check response rates.
 - Teams had a postal and email address where respondents could and did send questions or signalled difficulties.
 - Hertie was actively in contact with teams and also monitored response rates in each country case; when necessary response enhancement measures were discussed with teams.

- Filling out postal surveys: in the case of surveys submitted in any other way than through the online platform (i.e. received via fax/ post/ email), each team had the possibility to fill out the surveys online, using either the survey link or a copy of the respective country survey.
- New survey countries: several research teams outside the core COCOPS team have shown strong interest and have implemented the survey in their countries: Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden. The survey has been conducted in partner countries using the same methodology as all core project countries, following the steps mentioned above. Additionally, based on the COCOPS methodology, the datasets from all additional survey countries has been included in the COCOPS comparative dataset.

For an overview of the key aspects and dates related to the survey implementation in each country, please see table 2 below.

Table 2. Data collection overview. Part I

	Austria	Belgium	Croatia	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Hungary	Iceland
Access strategy: email (personalized or anonymous link); postal invitation	email, anonymous link	email, personalized and anonymous; postal invitation	postal invitation	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link; postal invitation	postal invitation; email, anonymous for the Federal Employment Agency (BA)		email, anonymous link
Pre-announcement of the survey (through letters, emails etc)	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	email announcement set by the Head of the Federal Employment Agency (BA) to all employees		no
Forwarding out option	for 2 nd level executives in agencies							forwarding request sent to 2 nd and 3 rd hierarchical levels		no
Institutional endorsement/Partners for the survey	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	head of the Federal Employment Agency (BA)		no
Authorization needed	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Survey launched	13.11.2012	05.06.2012	17.02.2014	18.11.2013	01.06.2012	17.02.2014	23.05.2012	25.05.2012	08.06.2012	18.02.2014
Survey closed	07.12.2012	31.07.2012	28.03.2014	18.12.2013	16.07.2012	09.03.2014	22.06.2012	29.06.2012	06.07.2012	10.03.2014
Response enhancement measures	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	several rounds of phone calls were made to reach the 300 respondent threshold	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary

Table 2. Data collection overview. Part II

	Ireland	Italy	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Serbia	Spain	Sweden	UK
Access strategy: email (personalized or anonymous link); postal invitation	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	email, personalized link	email, personalized link	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	postal invitation	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous link	email, anonymous, postal reminders
Pre-announcement of the survey (through letters, emails etc)	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Forwarding out option	no	forwarding request sent to the head of the public health agency	no	no	no	no	no	No	yes to all levels	no	no
Institutional endorsement/ Partners for the survey	no	no	no	head of the Employment Agency (Divosa); the Senior Civil Service (ABD)	no	no	no			no	
Authorization needed	no	no	no	no	from the Data Protection Office for Research	no	no	no	no	no	
Survey launched	25.09.2013	01.06.2012	13.05.2013	1st round: 12.07.2012; 2nd round: 10.09.2012	1st round: 07.06.2012; 2nd round: 10.10.2012; 24.09.2012:the Norwegian Employment Agency (NAV)	23.03.2015	15.11.2012	03.06.2013	1st round: 04.06.2012; 2nd round: 12.09.2012	04.11.2013	11.06.2012
Survey closed	28.10.2013	16.07.2012	10.06.2013	1st round: 10.08.2012; 2nd round: 01.11.2012	1st round: 22.06.2012; 2nd round: 24.10.2012; 15.10.2012 for NAV	30.04.2015	28.02.2013	15.08.2013	1st round: 29.06.2012; 2nd round: 15.10.2012	09.12.2013	27.07.2012
Response enhancement measures	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	not necessary	2nd survey round for new respondents	not necessary	9/10 July 2012 a postal invitation sent to 2891 respondents

A difficult situation, deserving a separate explanation, occurred in the case of Belgium. With a rather small original sample of 1105 respondents and only 86 valid responses, Belgium had the lowest rate of all participating countries. Several reasons might possibly account for this:

- The complexity of the bilingual federal Belgian administrative structure, making the design of the access strategy particularly difficult.
- The lack of contact data in the case of a large part of the sample; to respond to this, invitations were sent in both Dutch and French as follows:
 - a. when all necessary contact information (including position in the organisation, gender etc.) was available, personalized email invitations were sent through the Unipark system
 - b. when only the name and email were known, more general email invitations were sent through Outlook by the local team
 - c. when a name but no email could be found, invitation letters and copies of the questionnaire in both languages were sent by post
 - d. when neither name nor email, only a position could be found, the team was forced to rely on a forwarding request to the heads of the organisations of those respective respondents; this was the case for 63% of the sample respondents in federal government, and respectively 35% of the entire sample.

II. Data processing and final sample

For a number of methodological reasons described below, the raw responses needed to undergo a process of revision. The following sections provide a description of the steps taken to create first a valid dataset for each country, and then an integrated dataset.

II.1. Data cleaning

To begin with, there is a discrepancy between the number of completed surveys indicated by the Unipark system and the number of respondents kept in the final sample. There are two reasons for this and both cause distortions in opposite directions.

On the one hand, the Unipark system is unable to distinguish between a respondent viewing a question and actually answering it. This implies that a respondent clicking through the entire survey without answering any of the questions is listed as having completed the survey. This causes an *upward* bias in the reported number of completions. On the other hand, a respondent that answers all the questions except the last few – which for most practical purposes can be considered a completed survey – is listed as not having completed it. This causes a *downward* bias in the reported number of completions. This section stipulates a simple rule for dropping respondents from the sample.

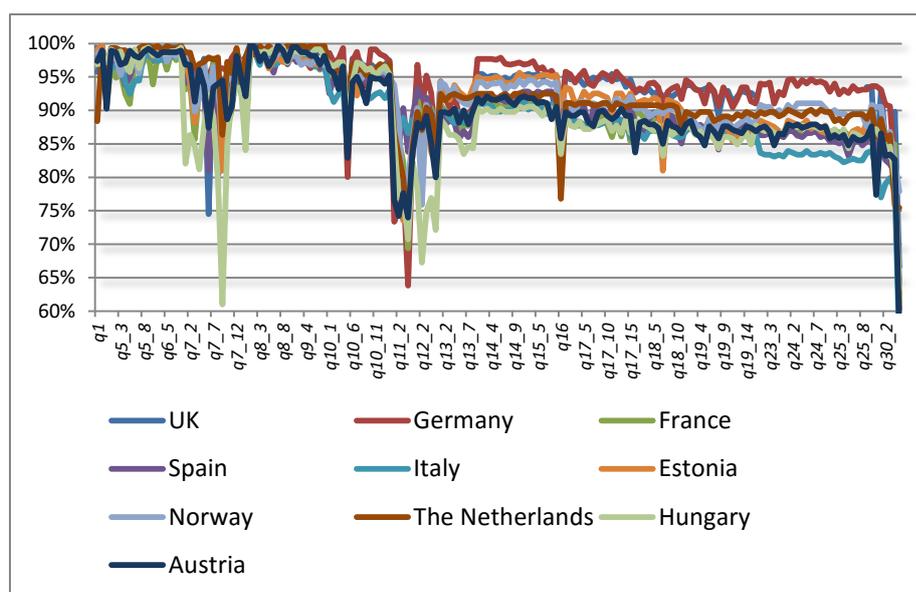
Before describing the data cleaning procedure we note that while the Unipark system cannot distinguish between a view and an answer, in most cases a more thorough analysis of the data allows us to do so. For instance, a respondent failing to answer a 7-point Likert scale item (e.g. “Not at all ... To a large extent”) will be assigned a value equal to 0 for that question, which the Unipark system doesn’t recognize it as a non-answer. Valid answers however result in values ranging from 1 to 7, implying that any 0 is in fact a missing value. An exception are the ‘Quoted’/‘Not quoted’ type questions (e.g. policy fields) where we are unable to observe the difference between a ‘Not quoted’ and a non-answer. The cleaning procedure involves dropping all respondents who failed to answer at least 25% of the survey items. In other words, if more than 75% of the items are missing the observation is dropped from the database.

Cleaning rule for observation removal

A case, or respondent, is dropped if she or he answered less than 25% of the items.

Figure 4 below depicts the item response rates for the ten core survey countries after the cleaning rule was applied. In some instances, respondents arguably had a valid reason for skipping a question. For example, Question 10 item 5 where we inquire about the frequency of interaction between the respondent and subordinate agencies and bodies was left blank by many subjects (see minor ‘dips’ at q10_6 in Figure 4 below). However, in these instances the respondent usually was employed in an organisation with no subordinate body or agency. Furthermore, the downward spikes in the item response rates also include respondent missing values such as ‘Cannot assess’. Note that these were not counted as ‘missing’ when applying the cleaning rule.

Figure 4. Item response rates after cleaning (for the ten core countries)



II.2. Data harmonization

In order to produce a comparable integrated dataset, a key condition is that all items under each question across all survey countries, to be comparable. Given the questionnaire variations described in earlier sections (see chapter I.4.) a necessary step in the data processing process was to harmonize the existing country datasets. There were two areas of focus where recoding was necessary:

- **Country variations:** items which were adapted to the national administrative context and so differed in the respective country surveys; all of these needed recoding under one of the items in the original survey; the optional questions were not a part of this process, as there was no actual item variation involved.
- **Open items:** all items that were left open for respondents; some of the answers provided by respondents were indeed left under the category 'other'; however, as it became obvious from the first data overview, some answers were equivalent to one of the existing survey items, and could be recoded to fit these.

For both of these areas the harmonization process consisted of a set of standardized steps, guided by Hertie, but, as with all the preceding ones, in close cooperation with the teams.

1. **Creation by Hertie of a template** (one containing country variation, the second – the open items) where the recoding could be entered by teams:
 - The templates included a full overview of existing items with the initial recoding, question by question; and next to them a blank template for each of these items, where teams could enter the new recoding values, if appropriate; detailed instructions regarding this process were offered in the introduction to the template.
 - An additional goal of the template, apart from recoding items, was also an extra check for any missing values or items from the list.

2. Countries filling in the recoding information
3. Check and adjustments was performed by Hertie or further discussion with the team when necessary.
4. Adapting the datasets and recoding a) varying items and b) open items, according to the input received from teams.

The country specific variables (original variables, before recoding) were kept in the national dataset along with the recoded variables and the optional questions; the integrated database however only included the variables based on the core questionnaire and without the optional questions.

II.3. Data validation

Following the harmonization phase each national team received a word document with descriptives/frequencies for each question, and asked to check its country data/results for plausibility and possible errors or inconsistencies that could have intervened in the cleaning and harmonization phase (excluded were questions asking for respondents' personal opinions, which could not be verified for validity). Based on feedback from the teams, Hertie integrated the modifications needed and produced a final, validated national dataset, which was then used for the integrated dataset. As a result of the harmonization and validation phase, each participating team received their respective country dataset (including the original country items). An integrated dataset was also created, containing all common harmonized items for all countries. The integrated dataset is made available through the GESIS archive under the conditions set out through the GESIS Archive Agreement and following on Open Access rules for FP7 projects of the European Commission. Following the terms of reference, the dataset, together with the Codebook and Research Report were also delivered to the European Commission as part of COCOPS Deliverable D.3.5 and are also available on the COCOPS project website: www.cocops.eu.

II.4. Final sample

Table 3 below provides a per-country overview of the number and type of invitations sent along with central response information, and the number of responses received following the cleaning procedure.

Table 3. Total response rates per country

No.	Country	Invitations		
		Sent	Responses	Response rate
1	Austria	1745	637	36,5%
2	Belgium	1105	86	7,8%
3	Croatia	1000	338	33,8%
4	Denmark	787	153	19,4%
5	Estonia	913	321	35,2%
6	Finland	1742	739	42,4%
7	France	5297	1193	22,5%
8	Germany	2295	464	20,2%
9	Hungary	1200	351	29,3%
10	Iceland	392	205	52,3%
11	Ireland	1620	529	32,7%
12	Italy	1703	343	20,1%
13	Lithuania	1850	466	25,2%
14	Netherlands	977	293	30,0%
15	Norway	1299	436	33,6%
16	Poland	3040	318	10,5%
17	Portugal	1234	371	30,1%
18	Serbia	2522	880	34,9%
19	Spain	1778	321	18,1%
20	Sweden	1293	536	41,5%
21	United Kingdom	3100	353	11,4%
Total		36892	9333	25,3%

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

A look at research literature based on public administration executive surveys shows considerable variations of response rates across countries, as well as generally lower response rates than those usually expected in population surveys, due to several reasons such as anonymity concerns, higher sensitivity of the data gathered, high work pressure of executives and the increasing prevalence of surveys addressed to them. Response rates for executive surveys in Europe in the past did reach up to 61% (Danish state administration; Vrangbaek 2009) or 56% (European Commission survey, albeit based on direct contacts and interviews; Bauer et al. 2009), but are mostly in the area of 25-35%: e.g.-Austria 41.5% (Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006), Austria/Vienna 38.5% (Meyer et al. 2013), Netherlands 33% (Vos en Weterhoudt 2008), Catalonia 30% (Esteve et al. 2012), Netherlands 30.2% (Van der Wal and Buberts 2008), Germany 29.8% (Kröll 2013), Germany 24.3% (Hammerschmid et al. 2010) or Netherlands 19.5% (Torenlid and Akkerman 2012). Also for the US we find rather similar response rates with e.g. a response rate of 46.4% for the large scale and often used NASP-IV survey (e.g. Moynihan et al. 2011), an executive survey on the Future of Government with 33% (Volcker et al. 2009) but mostly in the range of 30 to 35% as reported by Hays and Kearney (2001); there is also a visible decrease of response rates in time, as shown by Burke et al. (2008): the response rates for a longitudinal survey of state government they conducted went progressively down from 68% in 1968 to 29% in 2004). Another large

scale European comparative survey, the UDITE survey of local government elites, conducted in the mid-90s, had an overall response rate of 33%, with great differences between countries (e.g. 7% in Spain, 27% in Italy, compared to 56% in the UK, 75% in Norway and 80% in Sweden) (Mouritzen and Svava 2002).

The overall response rate of 25.3% for the COCOPS survey is rather consistent with response rates from other executives surveys in public administration. An important aspect, which sets the COCOPS survey apart from most other executives surveys in public administration is that fact that it represents a full census of the target population defined and that there has been no sampling process. We cannot claim full representativeness for the data and the results cannot be generalized to entire target population of senior public sector executives in European administrations. However the response rates are well in line with other public sector executive surveys, cover a substantial part of the targeted population and the distribution of respondents with regard to policy field, hierarchical level and organization type rather closely matches the distribution in the full target population and can be regarded as a good proxy and by far the most representative dataset for European public administrations collected up till now.

A few notes referring to the use of data. Throughout the reports describing national and cross-national results the teams have referred to the 'COCOPS overall sample' or to their national samples. As the survey currently includes validated results from twenty-one European countries, we believe these results to be a solid basis for analyzing trends and developments across different public sectors and administrative traditions in Europe. Nonetheless, as not all European countries are included and full representativeness cannot be claimed, we have to refrain from making further generalizations to all European public administrations and encourage all researchers using this data to take this into consideration for their interpretations.

The survey team also underlines that the results reflect the opinions and perceptions of the civil servants surveyed, with any potential limitations such data might have. Nonetheless, we take the position of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman that, 'opportunities permitting', beliefs are reliable predictors of actual behavior (1981: 32), and can be considered a proxy for civil servants' actions and decisions.

IV. Dissemination of results

After the surveys were closed and the joint survey datasets finalized, the next steps for the COCOPS team were to analyse the survey results and to disseminate the findings both in academia and practice. The survey results were presented to a wide range of practitioners, academics and general public through several types of activities:

Special Reports and materials outlining the general findings of the survey:

- Country reports for the ten core countries, underlining the main national findings – Deliverable 3.1.
- A cross-national report presenting the main findings and conclusions from the overall results in a comparative perspective with regards to NPM type of reforms in European administrations – Deliverable 3.2.
- A policy brief, summarizing relevant findings for public sector practitioners; the brief was based on practitioners' input collected during result dissemination events, as well as on the country reports and the cross-national report – Deliverable 3.4.

Academic publications:

- Individual articles presenting in-depth analysis of the survey results, as well as an edited volume analysing country and comparative survey results, due for publication in 2016 by Edward Elgar Publishing: Hammerschmid, Gerhard/ Steven Van de Walle/ Rhys Andrews / Philippe Bezes (eds.) (forthcoming). Public Administration Reforms in Europe: The View from the Top, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Events and practitioner workshops:

- Practitioner-oriented events – Deliverable 3.3. – was organized on a national level, by local teams, but also as overarching events, with international participation for instance at the EUPAN network meeting, under the Irish EU presidency (April 2013) and the Lithuanian EU presidency (autumn 2013), as well as at the COCOPS High-level conference, Brussels, June 2014.

In selected publications, including the Edward Elgar edited volume, a central government filter was added to the comparative dataset. The filter permits the use of a reduced integrated database, containing the responses from central government levels in all countries, and removing responses from regional and local levels.

An important topic of discussion is the availability and sharing of the survey data. As this is original data, created by the various national research teams, the datasets initially was originally only shared internally by COCOPS team members and other researchers contributing to the joint dataset based on a jointly-agreed data sharing policy. The key principles included in the data sharing policy were:

- Ensuring full anonymity of the respondents and the public sector organisations they represent;
- Protecting (both national and comparative) survey data based on anonymity and intellectual property criteria, as jointly agreed by all individual users;
- Encouraging co-operation, joint research and joint publications and the mutual availability of scientific data;
- Full transparency and mutual information among involved researchers on the use of the comparative dataset.

Following the end of the COCOPS project the data has been made widely accessible to interested parties through the GESIS – Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences and in accordance with EU Open Access Regulations.

V. Bibliography

- Aberbach, J.D., Putnam, R. D., Rockman, B. A. (1981). *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*. Cambridge/Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press
- Aberbach, J. D. and Rockman, B. A. (2006). The Past and Future of Political-Administrative Relations: Research from “Bureaucrats and Politicians” to “In the Web of Politics” and Beyond’. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 29(12):977-995.
- Allen N.J. and Meyer, J.P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organisation. *Journal of occupational and organisational psychology*, 63:1-8
- Bauer, M., Dehouse, R., Hooghe, L., Kassim, H., Peterson, J., Thompson, A. (2009). *The European Commission of the 21st Century: Views From the Inside*. The EU-Consent Network: Last accessed 01.12.2012 at http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/eu_consent/commission_survey
- Bertelli, A., Lewis, A., Nixon, D. (2007). *Survey on the Future of the Government Service Survey on the Future of Government Service*. Last accessed 09.12.2012 <http://www.princeton.edu/sfgs/>
- Burke, B. F., Cho, C.-L., Wright, D. S. (2008). Continuity and Change in Executive Leadership: Insights from the Perspectives of State Administrators. *Public Administration Review*, December 2008 , Special Issue
- Carpenter, J. P. and Seki, E. (2006). Competitive Work Environments and Social Preferences: Field Experimental Evidence from a Japanese Fishing Community. *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy*, 5(2)
- Christensen, T. and Lægreid, P. (1999). New Public Management: Design, Resistance, or Transformation? A Study of How Modern Reforms Are Received in a Civil Service System. *Public Productivity & Management Review* 23(2):169-193.
- Christensen, T. and Lægreid, P. (2007). *NPM and beyond: leadership, culture, and demography*. Paper prepared for: The Leading the Future of the Public Sector: The Third Transatlantic Dialogue University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, USA, May 31–June 2, 2007
- Comparative Public Organisation Data Base for Research and Analysis Network - COBRA. *Survey and database on autonomy and control of agencies*. Last accessed 09.12.2012 at <http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/cost/survey/index.htm>
- Enticott, G., Boyne, G. A., Walker, R. M. (2008). The Use of Multiple Informants in Public Administration Research: Data Aggregation Using Organizational Echelons. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 19:229–253
- Esteve, M., Boyne, G., Sierra, V., Ysa, T. (2012). Organizational Collaboration in the Public Sector: Do Chief Executives Make a Difference? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Special Issue.
- European Commission (2011). *Special Eurobarometer 370 Report –Social Climate*. Last accessed 05.12.2012 at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_370_en.pdf
- European Social Survey. Last accessed 01.12.2012 at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>
- Fitzpatrick, J., Goggin, M., Heikkila, T., Klingner, D., Machado, J., Martell, C. (2011). A New Look at Comparative Public Administration: Trends in Research and an Agenda for the Future. *Public Administration Review*, 71(6): 821-830
- Frazier, A. and Swiss, J. (2008). Contrasting Views of Results-Based Management Tools from Different Organizational Levels. *International Public Management Journal*, p. 214-234.
- German Marshall Fund and Compagnia di San Paolo (2011). *Transatlantic Trends: Leaders*. Last accesses 15.03.2013 at http://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_6_raporlar/1_3_diger/TTL_2011_final_complete.pdf

- Hay, S. W., Kearney, R. C. (2001). Anticipated Changes in Human Resource Management: Views from the Field. *Public Administration Review*. 61(5): 585–597
- Hammerschmid, G., Proeller, I., Reichard, C., Rober, M., Geissler, R. (2010). *Verwaltungsführung heute – Ergebnisse einer Führungskräftebefragung in der deutschen Ministerialverwaltung*, Institut für den öffentlichen Sektor e.V., Berlin
- Hammerschmid, G. and R. E. Meyer (2005). New Public Management in Austria: Local Variation on a Global Theme? *Public Administration* 83(3): 709-73
- International Social Survey Programme. Last accessed 01.12.2012 at <http://www.issp.org/>
- Kroll, A. (2013). The Other Type of Performance Information: Nonroutine Feedback, Its Relevance and Use. *Public Administration Review*. 73(2): 265–276
- Leana, C. R. and Pil, F. K. (2006). Social Capital and Organisational Performance: Evidence from Urban Public Schools, *Organisation Science*, 17(3):353-366
- Lee, G., Benoit-Bryan, J., Johnson, T. P. (2012). Survey Research in Public Administration: Assessing Mainstream Journals with a Total Survey Error Framework. *Public Administration Review*, 72(1): 87-97
- Mayntz, R. And Derlien, H.U. (1988). Comparative Elite Study II: Einstellungen der politisch-administrativen Elite des Bundes 1987. Universitaet Bamberg
- Meyer, R.E, Egger-Peitler, I., Höllerer, M.A., Hammerschmid, G. (2013). Of bureaucrats and passionate public managers: institutional logics, executive identities, and public service motivation. *Public Administration*. Forthcoming.
- Meyer, R. E. and Hammerschmid, G. (2006). Public Management Reform: An Identity Project. *Public Policy and Administration*, 21(1): 99-115
- Moynihan, D. P., Pandey, S.K., Wright, B. E. (2012). Setting the Table: How Transformational Leadership Fosters Performance Information Use. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. 22 (1), 143-164.
- Moyser, G. and Wagstaffe, M. (Eds.) (1987) *Research Methods for Elites Studies*. Allen & Unwin, London
- Mouritzen, P. E. And Svava, J. H. (2002). *Leadership at the Apex. Politicians and Administrators in Western Local Governments*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Nahapiet, J. and Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organisational Advantage. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(2):242-266
- OECD (2011). Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG). Last accessed 09.12.2012 at http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2011/classification-of-the-functions-of-government-cofog_gov_glance-2011-68-en
- Pollitt, C. and Bouckaert, G. (2011). *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis - New Public Management, Governance, and the Neo-Weberian State*. Oxford University Press
- Putnam R.D. (1976). *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- Richard, M.W. and Enticott, G. (2004). Exploring variations in management reform values and actions: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, 14:417–34.
- Survey Research Center. (2010). Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Last accessed 01.12.2012 at <http://www.ccsr.isr.umich.edu/>

The Sampling Expert Panel, European Social Survey (2008). *Sampling for the European Social Survey – Round 4: Principles and requirements*. Last accessed 03.12.2012 at <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.de/dokumentation/vierte.stichprobenziehung.pdf>

Torenvlied, R., and A. Akkerman (2012). Effects of managers' work motivation and networking activity on their reported levels of external red tape. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. JPART advance access.

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2008). *Public Service Employee Survey 2008*. Last accessed 05.12.2012 at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2008/index-eng.asp>

Trondal, J. (2010). *An Emergent European Executive Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van der Wal, Z. & Huberts, L. (2008). Value solidity in government and business. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 38(3), 264-285.

Van de Walle, S., Hammerschmid, G. (2011). *Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future*. COCOPS Working Paper No. 1. Last accessed 09.12.2012 at www.cocops.eu.

Vrangbæk, K. (2009): Public Sector Values in Denmark: A Survey Analysis. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 32(6):508-535.

Volcker, P.A., Barron, Jr., W.G., Colagiuri, E.L, Haass, R. N., Krueger, A. B., Marquis, S. McCarty, N., Nye, J.S., Slaughter, A.-M., Stanger, A., Stier, M., Thoman, L. B., Corwin, A. D., Lewis, D. E. (2009). *The Changing Nature of Government Service. Final Report*. Woodrow Wilson School. Last accessed 12.01.13 at <http://wvs.princeton.edu/gstf/Volcker-Report.pdf>

Vos, M. & Westerhoudt, E. (2008). Trends in government communication in the Netherlands. *Journal of communication management*, 12(1), 18-29.

VI. List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1. Main steps in the design and implementation of the COCOPS survey. 5
Figure 2. Central issues/content of the questionnaire..... 8
Figure 3. Various relationships/causalities between the variables..... 9
Figure 4. Item response rates after cleaning..... 27

Tables

Table 1. Country-specific deviations from core survey 13
Table 2. Data collection overview 23
Table 3. Total response rates per country 29