

IV Congreso Europeo de Proximidad, Participación y Ciudadanía

“Gobernanza Local y Agenda 2030: Comunicar para entender”

Innovación del Sector Publico y Transformación Digital

By Alexander Heichlinger

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AJUNTAMENT DE VALÈNCIA



Alexander Heichlinger (AT)

- ECoD Barcelona Envoy, European Capital of Democracy (2023-)
- Member of the Board of the World Triple Helix Association (2022-)
- Executive Board Member City Management Chair, University of Pompeu Fabra (2022-)
- Former Senior Member (Expert) & Manager, European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), EIPA Barcelona (1996-2020)
- Member of the Jury of the Austrian Public Sector Awards (2017-)
- Co-Founder & Chair of the *European Cities for Sustainable Public Finance (CSPF)* by KDZ – Centre for Public Administration Research (2020-), successor of the *European City Economic and Financial Governance Group (CEFG)* (2014-2020)
- Co-ordinator and facilitator of the *City Manager Community (CMC)* by Metropolis – World Association of Metropolises (2017-)
- Creator & Leader of the '*City Public Management Excellence Cloud*' (2012-2013)





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Increasing mistrust in institutions

EUPACK 2020 - COUNTRY REPORT FOR SPAIN

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE:

SPAIN

OVERALL PERFORMANCE AND MAJOR REFORM INITIATIVES

International data indicate high levels of distrust in national government (75 %) or regional/local public authorities (57 %).⁽¹⁾ The perception of corruption is particularly directed towards local authorities and the regions (see below). The inability to form a long-lasting stable government in recent years at the central level and the limited success in reducing unemployment are impacting considerably on the trust in government and public administration. Until the arrival of COVID-19, the conflict between Catalonia and the rest of Spain monopolised the government agenda, which also may have contributed to low trust in government.

However, the lack of trust in government makes the fact that citizens value considerably well individual public services. When asked about their last interaction with a public authority, over 70 % were quite or very satisfied in the last year for which data are available.⁽²⁾ The user satisfaction with public services has declined but is still high. This is of little help with rising unemployment (19.2 % respondents mention it as the first problem) and economic issues (9 %) as being the major concern during the COVID-19 crisis. Health is the first concern for only 3.8 % of the population.⁽³⁾

After the ending of the 2016 CORA (Comisión para la Reforma de la Administración) and the dismantling of the OPERA office (Oficina para la Ejecución de la Reforma Administrativa), there has not been a replacement of the reform package and there is no unit formally in

charge of monitoring the implementation of some of the unfinished activities foreseen in the CORA reports. The Ministry of Finance and Civil Service published an outline of a Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Public Administration in March 2018 (MFPF 2018).⁽⁴⁾ It never materialised because of the fall of the government and there has not been a replacement of this programme with the new government formed in January 2020. The National Programme of Reforms (NPR) for Spain (2020) focuses on administrative reforms aiming at the management of the crisis caused by Covid-19. Most measures are related to administrative processes.⁽⁵⁾

STRUCTURES AND ORGANISATION

The size of the Spanish public sector is situated in the middle range in the EU with a share of 41 % of total expenditure as a percentage of the GDP. This share has steadily declined since 2010 (45.6 %). In terms of public expenditure, Spain is the third most fiscally decentralized country of the EU with only 43.7 % of government expenditure at the central level.

Public sector employment, 7 % of the labour force, is lower than the EU average. This share has slightly decreased since 2011. Successful freezing and dismissal measures caused the reduction of public sector size between 2010 and 2016. However, public employment started to recover since 2016 with an increase of public employment vacancies.⁽⁶⁾ Staff distribution clearly shows the strong decon-

centralization of the system. The share of the regional staff is 58 % compared to around 19 % working at the centre and 22.3 % at the local level.

More than half of the policies are subject to shared powers between the centre and the regions. However, there is a recurrent debate how to balance the allocated responsibilities with accountability. With the declaration of emergency due to COVID-19, the state centralised the powers on health. This created tensions with the regions, which normally have unrestricted competences on health matters.

Several central government reforms have tried to simplify the legal typology of autonomous bodies as well to reduce its number. At the same time, the ministries have attempted to increase their autonomy through diverse legal organisational formulas. The number of public bodies with some degree of autonomy was 416 in 2016 and it increased to 452 at the end of 2019.⁽⁷⁾

The CORA commission proposed to merge back-office services of ministries and agencies. The Royal Decree 52/2015, initiated the process of the merge of central services of four institutions. This shared back-office has not materialised as intended and this measure has been abandoned.

Spain has maintained the same score in the dimension of 'strategic planning capacity' (P) as in previous years, and it still ranks in the first third compared to other countries. The score of 'interministerial coordination' (P) has improved slightly. 'Interministerial committees' role is restricted to the exchange of information or the solution of interdepartmental conflicts but positive coordination is very limited.⁽⁸⁾ More effective informal coordination mechanisms are achieved through the membership to cross-departmental corps.

CIVIL SERVICE AND HRM

The proportion of civil servants is 16 % in the total government workforce. The share of civil servants is 16 % in the total government workforce. The share of civil servants is 16 % in the total government workforce.

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The Civil Service Statute (2007) established a homogeneous model for all public employees, territorial levels and policy sectors. Central, regional and local authorities may adapt the basic principles and regulations of this model to their specific conditions. The 2007 Act raises three criticisms that have not been addressed after thirteen years. First, the Law is incomplete because most public authorities have not enacted the legislation that further develop the 2007 Act, as they do not feel compelled to do so in the absence of a deadline. The national mission in charge of the civil service promoted in February 2020 in the Congress a new civil service law for central government.⁽⁹⁾ Second, the promoted individual performance appraisal system of all civil servants has been neglected. Third, the establishment of senior civil service, with separated working conditions, has not been implemented either in most governmental levels.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Directorate-General for the Civil Service was part of the Ministry of Finance. Since 2018, it became part of the newly established Ministry for Territorial Policy and the Civil Service. Although creating a ministry with half of the functions devoted to the civil service might seem an upgrade of its leverage, the focus of the ministry on territorial issues and the disconnection from the Ministry of Finance limit the influence capacity of the person responsible for the civil service at the central level.

A considerable pillar of the HR system is related to the lack of assessment of competences and performance. There are no competency frameworks in most administrations except for some experiences at the regional level and performance or competency appraisal are not practised.⁽¹¹⁾ A lack of a competency framework has been apparent in the management of the pandemic when all public employees had to work from home. The civil service was ill-prepared to monitor work by results.

Indicators related to professionalism and impartiality are

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Indicators on transparency and accountability offer a mixed view. On the one hand, the transparency of government⁽¹²⁾ is improving slightly or more relevantly in access to government information.⁽¹³⁾ In any case, the position of Spain in this dimension is below the average.

In general, until the launch of the Freedom of Information Act in 2013, most authorities have been rather reluctant to disclose information to citizens. The Law launched the Transparency Portal and created a Council of Transparency and Good Governance (CTGG). The Act has some limitations. Recent cases in which the CTGG has cleared the government rather than the individuality asking for information is blurring the political support for transparency according to critiques voiced in the media.

The middle-rank score of executive accountability⁽¹⁴⁾ shows that there are institutions that exert monitoring like the Parliament, the Audit Office and the office of the Ombudsman, still, they need more resources to hold the executive to account.

The State is implementing several measures to curb corruption or making it more difficult: the control of high-value euro notes, the different pieces of legislation to enhance good practices in procurement and to implement electronic invoicing, the use of central platforms for procurement, the legislative changes on party financing or amendments to the criminal code. Still, the impact on public opinion is limited as one can see from the TI Corruption Perception Index indicator⁽¹⁵⁾. The coalition government formed in January 2020 proclaimed an ambitious set of measures against corruption, a reform of several laws including the Penal Code, the Transparency Law and the Law against Fiscal Fraud. At the time of writing, no progress has been identified in this area.

SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIGITALISATION

The decentralisation process caused a considerable transfer of most relevant functions to the regions: education, health and social services. This might give the impression that the responsibilities are clear-cut and each level of government delivers their services. However, this is misleading. The CORA report of 2013 identified a considerable number of services

that could be streamlined between the national and regional administration⁽¹⁶⁾, but no major reform was achieved.

The reforms launched since 2013 have relied mainly on new technologies and e-government to overcome the austerity measures on public employment. The trend is to have e-government by default for all services. There has been a considerable effort to compel public authorities to offer digital services, citizens have been nudged to opt for electronic services, and business must do this compulsorily for areas like taxes or invoicing. The effort, at least of the central government, to make all phases of service delivery digital is reflected in the indicators.

In e-government, for instance, the percentage of users is increasing steadily since 2013 from 44 % to 75 %.⁽¹⁷⁾ The percentage of positive evaluations of public services⁽¹⁸⁾ remains at the same level and, surprisingly, the level of online service completion is over 90%.⁽¹⁹⁾ However, work is needed to better integrate digital services that have dramatically expanded at different levels of government and the information that citizens can access about their digital interactions.

Behind the average values of 'services to business' and the 'ease of doing business' (77.9 score out of 100 and place 30 in the 2020 ranking), a similar critic can be exerted. In general, businesses cannot receive authorization earlier because they must interact with all levels of government for different permits, authorizations, and services. A higher level of cooperation is required for getting a better score and position in the ranking in this area.

The Government adopted the Digital Transformation Plan for Central Administration (2015-2020). The Plan has ambitious targets and five strategic goals, which set the input and process-oriented. The document has three pillars: a digital strategy would require an umbrella nationwide strategy, it has a strong internal perspective and finally, the implementation of the plan is behind schedule. The process to draft a new strategic plan of digital administration that covers the period 2021-2024 was initiated in October 2019, but the Plan has not seen the light yet.

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The satisfaction degree with public services has experienced a zig-zag trend. The highest satisfaction peak took place in 2011 when more than 60 % of the citizens were quite or very satisfied with the public services. Since 2012, this percentage fell under 50 % reaching 47.6 % in 2017, although the satisfaction with the last transaction with public authorities at the central level is generally very high (over 70 %).⁽²⁰⁾

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Regulatory density (red tape)

| High | Medium | Low |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|
| AT, BG, HR, CY, CZ, FR, HU, ES , DK, DE, SK, RO, PT, PL, LT, IT, EL | BE, EE, FI, SI, NL, MT, LU, LV, SE | IE |

Public sector openness

| Open | Medium | Closed |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| EE, FI, DK, LV, SI, SE | BE, BG, CY, HU, IE, PL, NL, MT | AT, CZ, HR, FR, ES , DE, RO, PT, LU, IT, EL, SK |

Managerial vs. procedural

| Managerial | Mixed | Procedural |
|------------|---|--|
| NL | AT, BE, HR, EE, FI, IE, DK, PL, MT, SE | BG, CY, CZ, FR, HU, ES , IT, SI, DE, SK, RO, PT, LU, LT, LV, EL |

Clear country variations with regard to reform/innovation activity and progress

| Countries | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Reform activity (number of reforms and share of high/medium importance reforms) | High BG CZ ES HR HU IT MT NL SE SI | Moderate AT BE CY DE EE FR IE LT LV PL RO UK | Low DK EL FI LU PT SK |
| Emphasis of reforms | Cost-saving focus CZ ES PT | | Improvement focus AT BE BG CY DE DK EE EL FI FR HR HU IE IT LT LU LV MT NL PL RO SE UK |
| Progress of reform projects | High CY ES FR HU IE LT NL PL SE | Moderate/mixed AT BG CZ DE DK EE EL FI HR IT LV PT RO UK | Low LU |

EUPACK 2020 FINDINGS IN SPAIN

- **High levels of distrust** in national government (75 %) or regional/local public authorities (57 %). The perception of corruption is particularly directed towards local authorities and the regions. However, the lack of trust in government masks the fact that **citizens value considerably well individual public services**. Over 70 % were quite or very satisfied in the last years with the public service delivered.
- Several **national strategic plans** for the transformation of the PA launched, but with **limited tangible results**.
- Unsurprisingly, Spain scores low in the use of '**societal consultation**', although increasing in 2018 because of the implementation of compulsory consultation for the draft of any norm at the national level.
- Indicators on **transparency and accountability** offer a mixed view. *Transparency* of governments is improving or more relevantly in access to government information. The middle-rank score of executive *accountability* shows that there are institutions that exert monitoring like the Parliament, the Audit Office and the Ombudsperson, still, they need more resources to hold the executive to account.
- The item of **online service completion** is over 90! However, work is needed to better integrate digital services that have dramatically expanded at different levels of government.



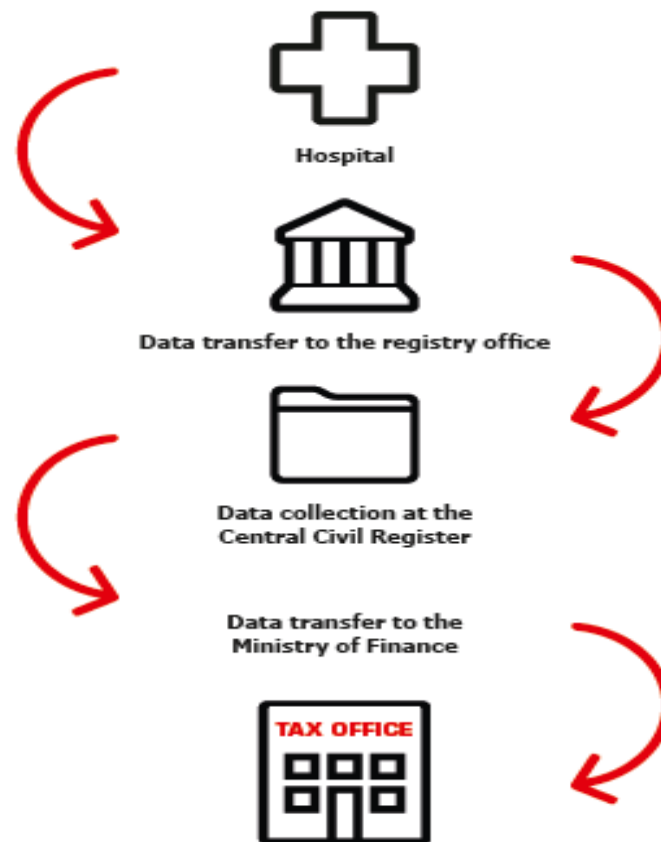
ALF (Child Benefit without Application)
By the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF)

PROJECT CONTEXT

- The “one stop shop” in case of birth was one of the topics in the government programme for a long time
- The framework:
 - Implementation of the central register of births, deaths and marriages (in the Ministry of Interior) since November 2014
 - Legal chance for the Ministry of Finance to get electronic personal data
 - Further development to a **“No stop shop”** for granting family allowance without an application
 - Planning and implementation in form of a common project (duration 7 month) between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Families and Youth
 - Available since May 2015

PROCEDURE

Procedure



BENEFITS

■ For citizens

- Saving time and costs, because there is no need to contact the local tax office (no travel time, no waiting time) and to submit an application or further documents.
- Saving per year – **39.000 hours** (estimated ca. 30 minutes per application)

■ For administration

- Savings and reduction of workload because of automated data collection and data check (this was done manually by employees), no application handling, less citizen contact in the info-centre.
- This saving is used for other (more) relevant tasks!

■ For both “No-stop solution”:

- The core functionality of the project is the elimination of the necessity to make an application for getting child benefit after childbirth.



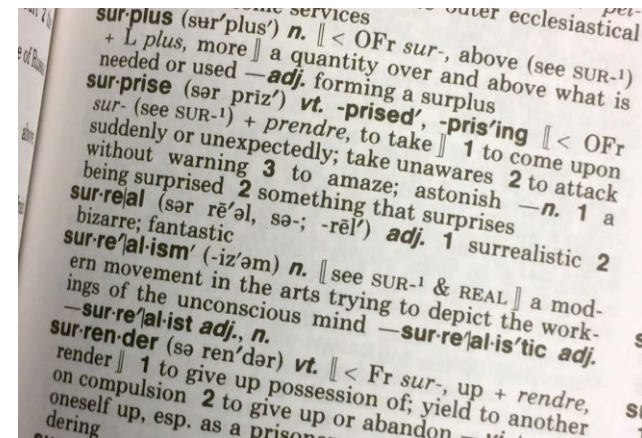
BMF

BUNDESMINISTERIUM
FÜR FINANZEN

“Verständliche Sprache”

By the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF)

Introduction of modern and comprehensible language, especially for legally relevant matters (letters/notifications). The aim was to achieve a high level of customer orientation and to reduce time/costs for citizens and in the administration. For this purpose, there is a language guide, text coaching and language learning workshops. Automated texts are reformulated and adapted to the changed (new) language standards.



**Gracias por la
atención!**



Alexander Heichlinger

Co-Founder & Chair of the European CSPF by KDZ

Founder & CEO, GovInsight

ECoD Barcelona Envoy



www.govinsight.eu



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexander-heichlinger>



aheichlinger@govinsight.eu

