

# The European Semester and modernisation of public administration

**Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee  
for Central Government Administrations  
(SDC CGA)**

Brussels, 10 June 2016

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# 1. The OSE report



## The European Semester and modernisation of public administration

Final Report

Peña-Casas R., Sabato S., Lisi V. and Agostini C.

European Social Observatory (OSE)

November 2015

EPSU social dialogue project

Modernising public administration

The implications for social dialogue and collective bargaining



With the financial support of the European Commission



# The OSE report

## 3 main parts:

- *Description* of the European Semester
- *Modernisation of public administration* in CSRs and national level implementation (NRP)
  - All Member states
  - 5 case studies (CZ, FI, FR, IE, IT )
- *Involvement* of the social partners in the ES (at the EU and national level)
  - Recommendations

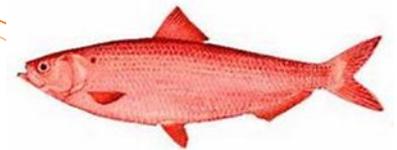
# The OSE report

**6 analytical dimensions** of MPA for assessing CSRs and NRPs:

1. *Governance* organisation & institutions
2. *Tools* for modernisation of public administration
3. *Administrative burden* on businesses
4. *Efficiency* in use of (EU) public investments
5. *Justice system* (quality, efficiency, independence)
6. *Corruption*

## 2. The European Semester and modernisation of public administration

- Relevance: a short detour is needed
- After all, we don't really know (for a fact) whether the Semester really matters at the domestic level...
- Are we taking it too seriously (resources are limited)?
  - Mario Monti recently explained in Politico that the EU may well disintegrate...
- 'Compliance' with CSR's: figures vary dramatically (a lot of flexibility for MS)



## 2. The European Semester and modernisation of public administration

- Member States may not easily ‘comply’ with CSRs...
- However, the Semester increasingly frames (limits) the national policy debates
- Openly or (more so) ‘under the radar’
  - Through its indicators, assessments and jargon
  - Incl. in areas where the EU has little or no competence (health care)
  - CSR’s are also being (selectively) used by domestic actors: ‘creative appropriation’ or agenda setting (incl. MPA)
- So yes, the Semester increasingly matters... and so we felt compelled conduct research

## 2. The European Semester and modernisation of public administration (relevance)

Despite overall *decline* in number of CSRs (streamlining), the number addressed at MPA is *stable*

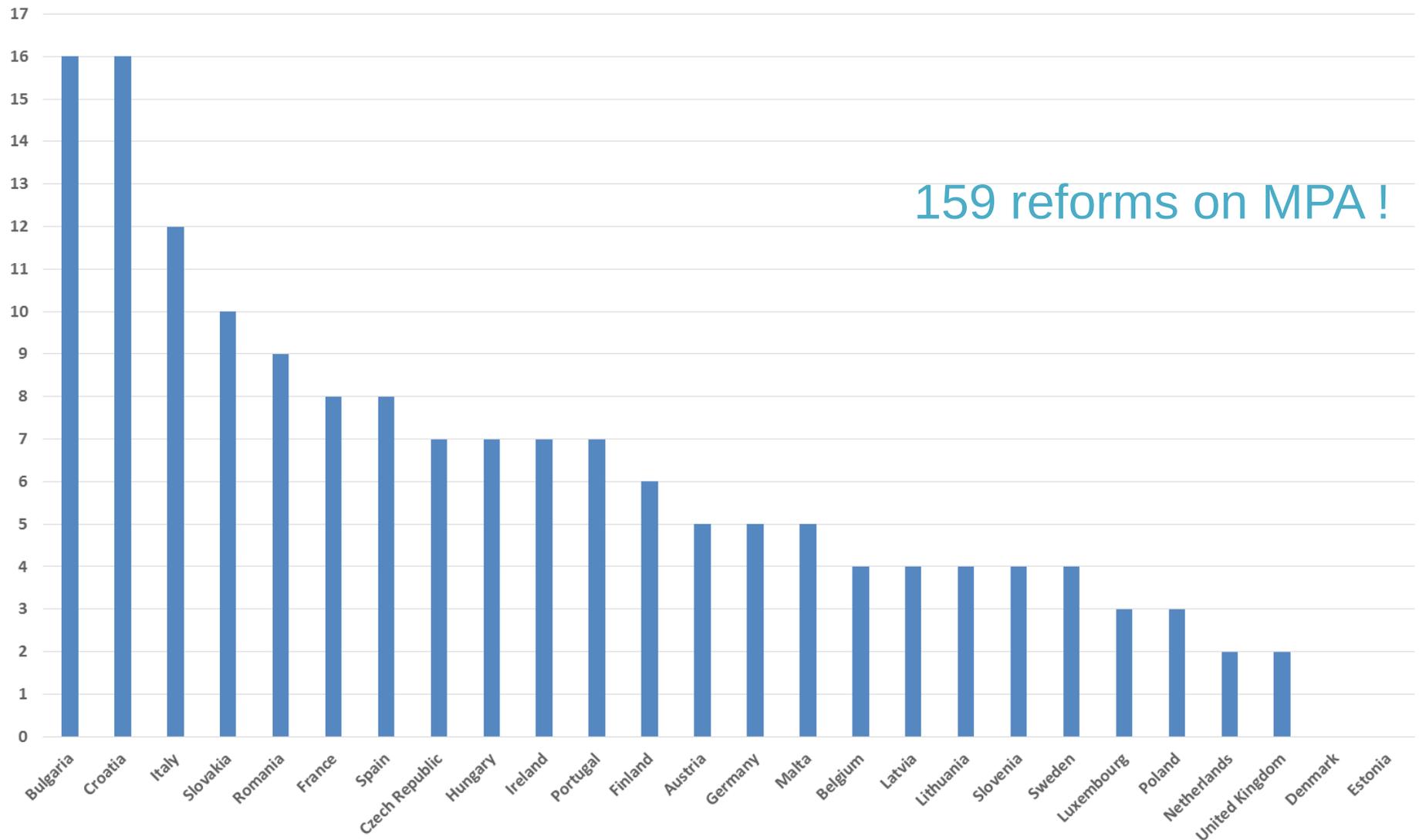
- **Relative importance** thus increased
- Majority of MS received repeated CSR's on MPA since 2012 (but not LU, NL, SE)

# 2.1 MPA in CSRs 2015 - EU overview

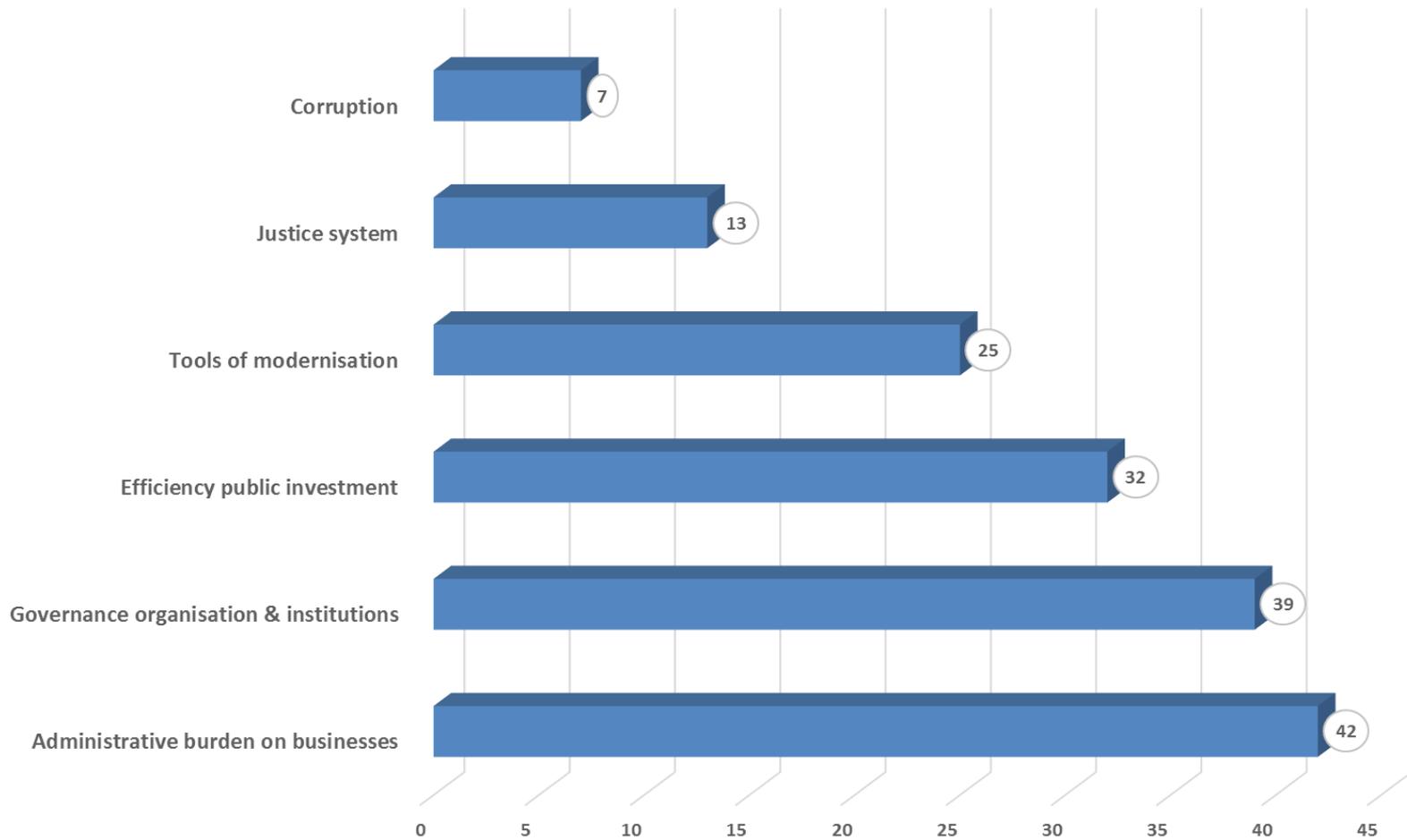
Countries	Governance and institutions	Tools of administration	Administrative burden on businesses	Use of public and EU funds	Justice system	Corruption	Total
Austria	✓						1
Belgium	✓						1
Bulgaria	✓				✓	✓	3
Croatia							0
Czech Republic	✓			✓		✓	3
Denmark							0
Estonia							0
Finland	✓						1
France	✓	✓	✓				3
Germany	✓	✓					2
Hungary	✓			✓		✓	3
Ireland	✓						1
Italy	✓		✓	✓	✓		4
Latvia	✓				✓		2
Lithuania	✓						1
Luxembourg	✓						1
Malta							0
Netherlands	✓						1
Poland	✓						0
Portugal	✓			✓			2
Romania	✓						1
Slovakia	✓			✓			2
Slovenia					✓		1
Spain	✓		✓				2
Sweden	✓						1
United Kingdom							0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>

## 2.2 Reforms on MPA by MS in NRPs

Total identified reforms by countries - NRP 2015



## Total number of identified reforms by MPA dimensions - NRP 2015



# 3. Involvement of the social partners in the European Semester

## 3.1 EU level

**2011-2013**: information rather patchy. Low level of involvement (mostly *'information'*)

**Since 2014**: some attempts to create more structured mechanisms for an *earlier and more systematic 'consultation'*

# 'Venues' for involvement at the EU level

- *Ex-ante* consultation by the Commission on the AGS
- *Informal* exchanges with the Commission on the Country reports (!)
- Employment Committee (2014 cooperation protocol);
- Social Protection Committee
- EPSCO Council (informal meetings)
- European Economic and Social Committee (learning?)
- European Social Dialogue structures
  - Tripartite Social Summits; Macroeconomic Dialogue; European Social Dialogue Committee

# Recent developments in Semester

- Changes to the *timeline* of the ES (e.g. earlier publication of the Country reports) should facilitate the involvement process;
- Proposals for *strengthening the link* between the European Social dialogue and the Semester;
- Social partner peak organisations' attempts to improve the mechanisms for internal coordination

## 3.2 Social partners involvement at the national level

### a. Web survey

- EPSU affiliates and ES process

### b. Main findings from the 5 case studies

- Elaboration NRPs

### c. A concrete example

- France

## a. Web survey with EPSU affiliates

- **Web survey** (June - September 2015) completed by 21 EPSU' affiliates (qualitative)
- **Knowledge of ES:** small majority of affiliates declared to be (very) familiar with the ES (12/21). EPSU is by far the main source of information on ES process (15/21). Main other source of information: national confederation
- **European Semester Officer:** unknown to majority of respondents (14/21).
- **National consultation:** majority of respondents do not know about the existence of national forum to discussion of European Semester developments with trade unions
- **Influence on ES:** for 6 respondents opinions of national confederations are *not* adequately reflected in the NRPs, 3 think that these opinions *are* reflected in the plans

## b. Main findings from the 5 case studies (elaboration of the NRPs)

- A number of ‘venues’ for social partners’ involvement/consultation in the elaboration of the NRPs, including:
  - **Ad hoc ‘thematic’ meetings and workshops** on specific policies (various Ministries and committees);
  - **National Economic and Social committees;**
  - In some cases, participation to **Parliamentary debates;**
  - More recently, **contacts with the European Commission** (through the European Semester Officer, or by attending bilateral meetings).
- However, the consultation process is often **‘formal’** and the **impact** on the content of the NRPs is **limited or negligible.**
- As for trade-unions, consultation often concerns the **confederal level.**

## c. A concrete example: France

- Elaboration of the NRP coordinated by the office of the Prime Minister. Meetings with the social partners in the **Social Dialogue Committee for European and International Affairs (CDSEI)** of the Ministry of Labour.
- Two rounds of consultations in the **Economic, social and environmental Council (EESC)**. Contributions elaborated by the EESC will be part of an Annex of the NRP.
- NRP transmitted for opinion to the Parliament.
- Exchanges with the European Commission in the framework of **bilateral meetings** (April 2015).
- The opinions of the social partners – as reflected in the consultation process led by the ESEC- are included in an **Annex to the NRP**. However, the consultation process is formal, with tight deadlines and short debate, and its influence on the contents of the NRP is limited.

# 4. Getting involved into the ES: «Entry points » for social partners

## Three possible entry points

- 1.The elaboration of the Annual Growth Survey (AGS);
- 2.The National Reform Programmes (NRPs).
- 3.The preparation of the Country Reports & the Country-specific recommendations (CSRs)

# The Annual Growth Survey

## When

Enter into the **debate preceding the adoption of the AGS**  
- published November

## How

1. Coordination with EU peak-level organisation representatives
2. Searching for collaboration with the EP (!) or specific parliamentary groups: perhaps not *powerful*, but *influential* is setting the 'narrative'/frame
3. Commission cabinets: look at the President and Vice-presidents (only)

# The National Reform Programmes (1)

## When

NRPs published end April. Timing and procedures in the MS differ.

## How

1. Pressure on national governments in order to **set-up transparent and timely procedures** for a meaningful stakeholders' involvement in the elaboration of the NRP:

- Acting in coalition with *other stakeholders (sic)*;
- Social partners opinions as Annex to the NRPs or reported in boxes in specific sections
- Commission to provide clear Guidance to MS

# The National Reform Programmes (2)

2. **Direct contacts with the ministerial bodies** responsible for the elaboration of the NRPs or with the ministries responsible for issues related to the public administration.
- NRPS seen as ‘governmental documents’
  - Need to create better links between social dialogue and the European Semester procedures at the national level.
  - However, unclear how important these NRP’s are... so we suggest to balance your investment

# The Country Reports !

## When

Published February

*Providing input in CR represents the most effective intervention if one wants to influence – ultimately - the content of the CSRs*

- Develop a space to talk about how social policies could support economic policies, and vice versa

## How?

European Semester as an 'evidence based' process: it is important to provide evidence justifying their own opinions/recommendations

- Timely/concise input is key (Sept/Oct)

# The Country-specific recommendations (1)

## When

May

## How

### • Draft CSRs (European Commission):

1. Providing the European Commission with **suggestions about CSRs to be issued/ themes to be raised:**

- Analysis of national situations.
- Coordinated by EU peak level originations

# The Country-specific recommendations (2)

2. Contacting the **European Semester Officer** in the respective countries.
3. Getting involved into the 'Fact-missions to Member States' that representatives of the European Commission undertake in January and the bilateral meetings between the European Commission and the Member States (December, March, and April).
4. Contacting the '**country desks**' of relevant DGs

# The Country-specific recommendations(3)

- **After the publication of the draft CSRs in May**
  - Getting in contact with the national ministry attending the formation of the Council of Ministers deciding upon the specific CSRs.
  - But *very small chance* to have any real influence at this stage
  - Again, COM cabinets matter a lot at his stage
- **Implementation of the CSRs after their adoption in June**
  - Important for national social partners to be involved in the activities of broader national networks/coalitions with other actors (e.g. NGOs, academics, political parties)
  - Again Semester Officers can play a key role

# Conclusion: influencing the European Semester ?

- Social dimension of the European Semester has been enhanced over the years –in terms of substantive policy orientations & governance procedures
- But still considerable room for improvement !
- Complex procedures: timeliness, and evidence-based are the key word
- Not so easy to have an impact on them, but it can be done (DG EMPL, SPC and EMCO)
  - Some renewed openness at the level of the COM
- Influencing the European Semester ?
  - Please, start today



# Read more

- Peña-Casas R., Sabato S., Lisi V. and Agostini C. (2015) The European Semester and modernisation of public administration. Final Report, EPSU social dialogue project
- The *full report* is available in English, French and German
- The *executive summary* of the report has been translated into Bulgarian, Croat, Czech, Danish, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.  
Download

## 5. Discussion: Q & A

- Impact/significance of the Semester in your country?
  - Link between CSRs and reform in MPA?
- Have yo been involved, so far?
  - Through which channels?
- *What could be improved* to increase stakeholder involvement?
  - EU and national level

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