



**European Cooperation  
in the field of Scientific  
and Technical Research  
- COST -**

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**Secretariat**

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**Brussels, 5 December 2006**

**COST 318/06**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

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Subject : Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS0601: Comparative Research into Current Trends in Public Sector Organization – CRIPO

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Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action IS0601 as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 166th meeting on 20/21 November 2006.

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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A EUROPEAN CONCERTED RESEARCH ACTION  
DESIGNATED AS**

**COST ACTION IS0601**

**“Comparative Research into Current Trends in Public Sector Organization – CRIPO”**

The Signatories to this ‘Memorandum of Understanding’, declaring their common intention to participate in the concerted Action referred to above and described in the ‘Technical Annex to the Memorandum’, have reached the following understanding:

1. The Action will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of document COST 299/06 ‘Rules and Procedures for Implementing COST Actions’, or in any new document amending or replacing it, the contents of which the Signatories are fully aware of.
2. The main objective of the Action is to increase knowledge about current trends in public sector organization in Europe from a European perspective, in an international context, in order to deepen theoretical rigour and optimize methodologies, which will inspire sound and policy-relevant research conclusions.
3. The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at approximately 14 million EUR in 2006 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being signed by at least five Signatories.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of 4 years, calculated from the date of the first meeting of the Management Committee, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

**COST ACTION IS0601****Comparative Research into Current Trends in Public Sector Organization – CRIPO****A. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS**

New trends changing the structuring and functioning of the public sector are observed. Specialization within large bureaucracies results in the establishment of autonomous “agencies”, urging stricter coordination of policy sectors and governmental levels, and new ways of contract-based result control. Although governments are adapting to these trends at an increasing pace, there remains lack of scientific proof of the beneficial effects of these trends for the performance of the public sector. Most research efforts suffer from a lack of internationally comparative data, longitudinal data, and ill-concerted research methods. This Action resolves these drawbacks by bringing together scholars on a European platform for comparative and longitudinal research, which will lead to empirical, theoretical and methodological advancements in the field. Also, results that are grounded in scientific research will inspire policy-relevant recommendations to guide decision-makers in their policies on the organization of the public sector.

- Public sector organization.
- Trends and reforms.
- Autonomy, steering, performance, accountability and coordination.
- Policy relevance and practitioner-oriented.
- International, dynamic and combined methods

**B. BACKGROUND***Problem definition and wider relevance of the Action*

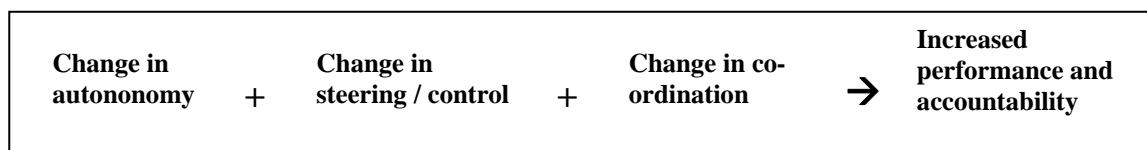
The bottom-line of recent OECD publications and a vital element of the EU’s Lisbon Agenda is that a well performing public sector is considered to be a prerequisite for the economic and democratic performance of countries. Recent public sector reforms have been attempted in individual countries to achieve a better performing public sector. This has led to the observation that the organization of the public sector in OECD countries has been subject to some major trends and shifts during the last 20 years (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2004; Hesse & Toonen 1997; Halligan 2002; Thynne 2003). The large and monolithic government administrations (the archetypical “bureaucracies”) have been subject to horizontal and vertical specialization. This resulted in the large-scale establishment of agencies and other autonomous bodies that have been devolved from, and operate at arm’s length from the core governmental departments. Some prominent examples of this trend are the Next Steps Agencies programme in the UK, and the establishment of the “Agentschappen” in the Netherlands besides an already large number of Non Departmental Public Bodies (UK), and the Zelfstandigde Bestuursorganen (ZBO) (the Netherlands). A very rough estimation of the number of public “agencies” in seven European countries (Germany, The Netherlands, Estonia, Italy, Spain, Ireland, UK) counts about 890 autonomous entities in 1990. This increases to over 1480 in 2005. In this estimation the large and increasing number of foundations and public enterprises, as well as private law bodies, which are predominantly funded by government, are excluded. This EU-wide phenomenon of agencification is also observable at the local government level.

The trend towards agencification is perceived to have caused certain problems. First, the creation of these autonomous agencies (that enjoy managerial and sometimes policy autonomy) required new ways of control by their parent departments. Governments tried to replace the traditional informal and input oriented ex ante control by mainly contractual result oriented control instruments (e.g. by the introduction of performance contracts between governments and agencies). However, the development and use of appropriate and effective results control instruments is problematic in most countries, leaving a reality of agencies getting out of control of central government. Secondly, the proliferation of autonomous agencies, which are only linked through contracts is perceived to have resulted into a general loss of macro control of the governmental apparatus. The separation of policy design and implementation, as well as the disconnection between policy fields, is believed to make the implementation of ‘whole-of-government’ and cross-cutting issues much more difficult. Whereas in earlier days the co-ordination went via the hierarchical chain in the large bureaucracies, we now observe an increasing reliance on quasi-market-like co-ordination mechanisms (such as the introduction of competition) and network-like co-ordination mechanisms (such as public-private and public-public partnerships) in order to co-ordinate actions of autonomized public organizations. However, the effectiveness of these new co-ordination mechanisms is severely questioned. Thirdly, these shifts are considered to cause enormous reform and transaction costs. Fourthly, until now there is no sound and univocal scientific evidence that proves these trends are increasing the performance and accountability of public organizations (such as greater efficiency, client-orientation etc.).

Research results are far from uniform in their conclusions about the positive effects of these public sector reform trends. However, these trends have been promoted by international organizations such as OECD and World Bank – in a normative way they became a “New Public Management” fashion – and are as such assumed to be best practices of organizing the public sector. They are visible in most of the OECD countries, as well as increasingly in developing countries. However, these policies concerning the creation, control and co-ordination of agencies lack sound scientific underpinnings. European governments imitate these normative models without full theoretical and empirical knowledge of positive and negative effects of these trends. In this joint COST action, joint research efforts will focus on bringing together European research teams in the field of public sector organization research. It will jointly analyse existing and generate new descriptive, explanatory and evaluative knowledge on the following central research questions:

- Descriptive: To what extent and in what way is there an increase of autonomy of public sector organizations, as well as a change in the way they are controlled and coordinated by their parent governments?
- Explanatory: does increased autonomy, results oriented control, and new ways of coordination lead to enhanced performance and accountability of public sector organizations on the one hand and of the whole governmental system on the other hand?
- Evaluative: how can we structure, control and co-ordinated public sector organisations in an optimal way in order to enhance performance and accountability?

The general premise of the research is the following equation:



The key ‘problematique’ academically and practically is to know if, why and under what circumstances this ‘logical equation’ is really the happening?

### *State of the art in research*

At an ever increasing pace research is conducted towards these trends by scholars in the field of public administration and management. This COST Action aims at bringing together teams, which are engaged in European front line research in the field of public sector organization research. A major part of public sector organisation research is focused on specialization and agencies. This research could be inventoried under three basic questions: what are the facts and figures about the phenomenon of agencies and other autonomous bodies (descriptive; e.g. Roness 2001; OECD 2002; Jann 2005; Talbot and Caulfield 2001; Christensen and Yesilkagut 2005; Ongaro 2006; Verhoest et al. 2004; Fleisher 2006); why do agencies emerge and why do they differ with respect to autonomy and control (explanatory; e.g. Van Thiel 2004; McGauran, Verhoest and Humphreys 2005; James 2003; Christensen T. and Laegreid 2006); are these types of organisations more effective than others (predictive) (Ingraham & Moynihan 2001, Pollitt, Birchall and Putnam 1998, Flinders & Smith 1999)? These questions are embedded in a broader set of research on governance and coordination (based on hierarchies, markets and networks) in OECD and other countries (Pierre and Painter 2004; Jann et al. 2005; Reichard 2002; Nemeč et al. 2005; Viks et al. 2005; Salminen 2003; Bouckaert et al., forthcoming).

By creating synergies, the COST Action will bring the existing mostly national front line research to a higher level by overcoming the major deficiencies in this research. Existing research is done in a fragmented way. Research efforts are not co-ordinated or cumulative and apply a variety of theories and methodologies. First, there is theoretical fragmentation among researchers, which hinders to exploit fully the theoretical evolutions in the field from traditional public administration and organisation theory, over public management to a combined use of the institutional schools (economic, sociological and historical institutionalism). Second, there is methodological fragmentation in the field of public sector organisation research. Research is most often case-study based, which means that only single or multiple cases are taken under scrutiny. This hinders the generalization of research results over large populations of organizations. Other research groups frequently use survey methods, where interpretation can be problematic. Most research is static to comparative static. It is clear however that also longitudinal and dynamic research would be beneficial by measuring phenomena over time. An exception here is the work by Laegreid and colleagues (2003) who developed a public organization database (Stein Rokkan Centre, University of Bergen, Norway). Thirdly, there is a problem of fragmented databases. Data owned by the different research groups in Europe is not shared, or joined-up, although joint exploitation of existing database would yield enormous progress. Fourthly, the research focus is most often national, rather than international-comparative. Given the international character of the trends described above, this may surprise. A recent exception is found in the work by Pollitt et al. (2004) which is internationally comparative research via the case study of 4 policy domains in 4 countries (Erasmus University Rotterdam). Another example is a seven-country study on co-ordination changes covering 25 years (Bouckaert, Peters, Verhoest, forthcoming) (University of Leuven). The scarce international comparative research has an insufficient trans-European orientation.

In sum, much research efforts have been conducted by individual research teams on the topic of public sector reform, mostly in individual countries, using different theories and methods with insufficient mutual learning and cumulative progress. The COST Action creates synergies of existing front line researchers by developing and pursuing a coherent and co-ordinated longitudinal cross-national research programme with a shared more European focus on concepts, theories, data and methods (both quantitative survey based methods and qualitative case study-based methods).

## *The benefits of the Action*

Because the large majority of the research is more single case based, intra-national, and static, there is lack of evidence to look for patterns and trajectories across governmental levels, countries and in time. This highlights a need for concerted international comparative research that will increase and deepen our knowledge of these trends in public sector organization. This is not only to obtain positive research scale-effects, but also and perhaps most importantly to deliver relevant policy advice to decision makers that is grounded in sound comparative research. This COST Action will bring together front line scholars in the field of public organization research, and is inspired by the lacunae in current research. Therefore the Action will create opportunities to install a network of research institutes which then are able to do research that is internationally comparative and dynamic (empirical advantages) and that combines research methods such as case studies and large scale surveys (methodological advantages).

First, platforms will be created for scholars conducting similar research. A solid contribution is promised from scholars that are already prominent in the field which should lead to a multiplication effect in attracting other scholars-participants to join. Second, current on-going national research projects will contribute to the European perspective. Third, the European perspective of COST will gather various national politico-administrative traditions and cultures on public sector organizations (Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, Continental, Latin), which will contribute to the richness and deepness of the comparative research. Finally, the contribution by selected non-COST member state's research teams will also offer promising opportunities for strengthening research efforts (e.g. by assessing the geographical validity of research results, by looking for European models, etc.). The Action will allow for aggregating and sharing knowledge cross-nationally in the European context: providing opportunities to bring together researchers on the topic, sharing experiences and knowledge, and discovering cross-national trends and problems in the structuring and functioning of the public sector. Moreover, this COST Action will complement (but not duplicate) other research that is being conducted on related issues, funded by EU-resources. Other research projects that are being conducted on the European level and that might be of relevance for this Action are:

- "Next Steps in Developing Information Society Services in the New Member States, The Case of E-government and E-health", 2006, IPTS
- "Next Steps in Developing Information Society Services in the New Member States, The Case of E-learning", 2006, IPTS
- "Civil Society and New Forms of Governance in Europe – The Making of European Citizenship (CINEFOGO)". 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (EU Network of Excellence).
- "The Role of Organized Civil Society for the Governance of Transition in the Czech Republic (CISOCICZ)". EU Marie Curie Chair Programme.
- "The situation of social and health services of general interest in the European Union". The European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities).

As this overview shows, the research currently conducted with EU-funds focuses on specific topics that are related to the topic of this Action (public sector organization), and mainly deal with the challenges of the EU-enlargement, e-government, and specific public services such as health. The Action takes this research a step further, and addresses the topic of public sector organization from the generic angle of autonomy, control and coordination. While the research itself will be funded by other country-specific funds, the COST Action will enable the establishment of the network, creating synergies between the individual national research teams.

## C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

The main objective of the Action is to increase knowledge about current trends in public sector organization in Europe from a European perspective, in an international context, in order to deepen theoretical rigour and optimize methodologies, which will inspire sound and policy-relevant research conclusions.

### *Objective 1: Advancing science in an innovative and interdisciplinary way*

Theoretical rigour – the goal of fundamental research - will be pursued at a descriptive or explanatory level: Descriptive research will focus on (1) levels of autonomy and guidance & steering of individual public organizations and on (2) the co-ordination of these organizations in policy sectors and at governmental levels (from a country specific perspective and from a cross country perspective). Next to that (3) the “performance” question is raised: how is public sector (organization) performance changing and under which conditions concerning autonomy, control and coordination? (“Performance” is an ambiguous and multi-faceted term. Without going into too much detail it can be defined in an economic way (efficiency, economy e.g.), a democratic way (equal access to services e.g.), and a policy way (effectiveness of policy decisions, quality, etc.) amongst other.) The question of performance is particularly important in the light of the (often normative) assumptions made by the advocates of the trends described above. Explanatory research will try to explain the patterns of autonomy, steering and co-ordination that were found, and will try to find explanations for the changing levels of performance of public sector organizations. Explanations will be grounded in theory. Current theorizing on public sector organization can be considered from several angles (e.g. rational choice theories, sociological theories, institutional approaches, historical perspectives and contingency theory). *Given the recent scientific interest in public sector organization, sharing fundamental research experiences on a large scale cross-national forum will be highly innovative and unique in the field of public management.* In order to reach this objective – which is in the first place but not uniquely targeted at the academic world – existing research resources will be expanded using the COST network as leverage for new research applications. Existing means (research capacity as it is today, existing networks and annual conferences, existing databases) will be upgraded by the COST network directly (synergies), and the network will be a point of departure for new joint projects for developing, extending and regenerating academic networks, developing new and comparative databases, providing a web-platform that ideally should be the standard in the field of public management.

Methodological advancement: *improving research techniques in public organization research (by using a better combination of qualitative case study and quantitative survey methods).* Research methods in public administration are still more relying on case studies than on surveys. The near future needs a mutually strengthening of both methods, even case surveys. Bringing together scholars in the field will allow sharing experiences in developing methods and concepts (and their operationalization) that can be applied in different contexts. Shared research protocols will be a consequence of this.

Innovation: This COST Action is innovative, compared to existing research, in its aim to increase synergies with respect to theories, methodologies (quantitative and qualitative), databases, and in its international comparative orientation, and in its ambition to go systematically beyond national, static, case based, and conceptually disconnected research.

Interdisciplinarity: The COST Action brings together individual teams which encompass multiple research disciplines and expertises, such as political and administrative sciences, sociology, economy and law.

*Objective 2: Advancing scientific utility of research results for the community of European practitioners*

Based on the fundamental scientific findings from cross-national research, policy-relevant conclusions will be deduced. This will help policy-makers to develop *evidence-based policies* on the re-organization of the public sector taking into account recent trends and evolutions. More specifically, *guidelines for tools, checklists and criteria will be developed and proposed that will assist policy-makers and civil servants in developing their policies on public sector modernisation.* Also with regard to this second objective, targeted in the first place at practitioners in the public sector of the European countries (such as policy-makers, governmental think-tanks, top civil servants in horizontal departments, internal audit units), new means will be generated by the COST Action to achieve this objective: developing practitioner's reports, organizing open conferences and workshops, bringing practitioners together in an international environment.

*Objective 3: Developing the European perspective in research towards public sector organization*

Until now, public management literature is dominated by Anglo-American perspectives. Models which are sufficiently geared towards the different European politico-administrative systems and cultures need to be developed in order to describe and explain the observed trends. In this field of public sector organization research there is a current lack of trans-European networks. Mobility of researchers is mainly oriented on the Anglo-American scientific world, with little exchange between different parts of Europe (North, West, South and East Europe). This COST Action will create such Trans-European network and mobility and aims at developing European models.

*Objective 4: Engaging young researchers in a gender-balanced network and enhancing their mobility*

As noticeable in the current workforce of the involved partners, junior researchers will be prominent in the network. Network activities will be developed which are specifically geared towards these young researchers, such as Ph. D. training school and short term scientific stays (STSM) in other countries. Moreover, the network aims at strengthening the methodological knowledge by exchange and common workshops, and to foster joint publication opportunities for these young researchers. The network will explicitly involve the two genders equally at junior levels of researchers.

*Target groups*

By defining these objectives, the Action *explicitly addresses two key target groups of end-users on the benefits resulting from the Action* (see H. Dissemination plan). Firstly there is the trans-European (and wider) academic community in public management and other scientific fields that are related (e.g. political science, economics, sociology, administrative sciences, and law) to the field of public management. Fundamental theoretical research results will be communicated to relevant forums (existing study groups and annual conferences in the field), leading to accumulated and shared knowledge. In our network activities, the Action pays particular attention to the professional improvement of European young researchers, taking into account gender aspects. Secondly there is the community of policy-makers and civil servants in the individual member

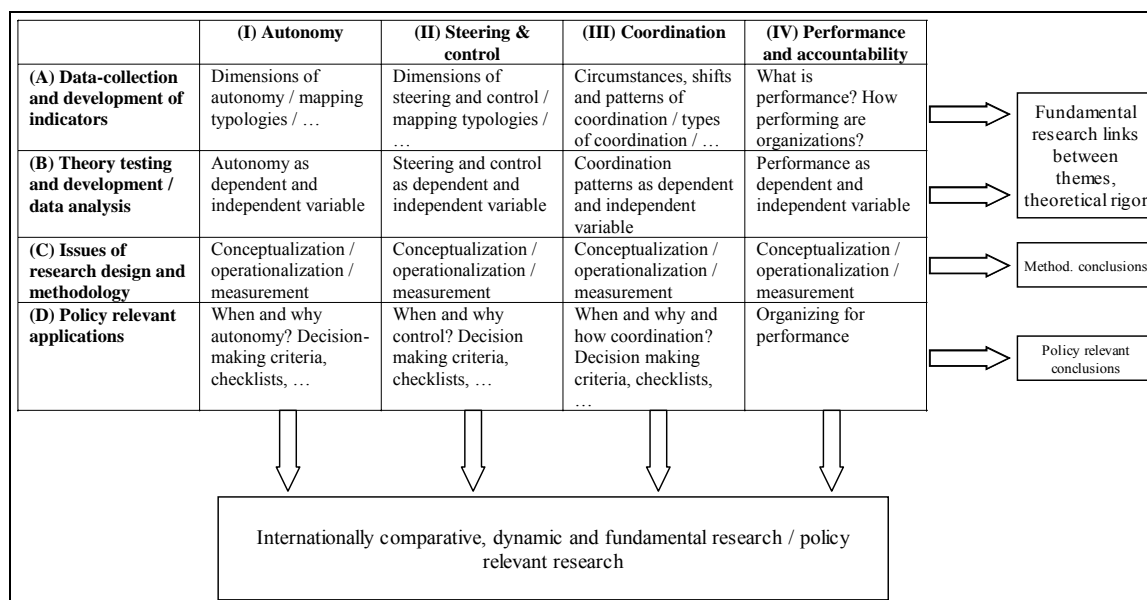
states and at the European level. By translating fundamental research results into policy-relevant conclusions and recommendations support can be given to policy makers concerning public sector reform. There will be dissemination activities for specific groups of practitioners, such as policy-makers, governmental think-tanks, top civil servants in horizontal departments, internal audit units in European countries.

## D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

Based on the problem-definition and on the state of the art in the current and existing research the following scientific programme is envisaged.

### *Scientific focus*

The scientific programme is grounded in the objectives of the Action and evolves along four intellectual fields that are crucial for understanding trends in public sector reform. Four challenges that have been identified for conducting research into public sector reform will be addressed as well. This can be visualized in the matrix with the columns representing the intellectual fields, and the rows representing the research challenges of this Action (see below).



The focus of our research is on autonomy, steering and control, coordination and performance of public organizations. These will be the four intellectual fields of the Action. The **autonomy** of public organizations will be studied from at least three angles. Firstly, there is the conceptual angle: what is “autonomy”, what kinds of autonomy (e.g. policy and managerial autonomy) need to be discerned, and how can we operationalise and measure autonomy? Secondly, what patterns (static) and trajectories (dynamic) of levels of autonomy can we observe in public organizations? Autonomy-levels may shift between organizations and within organizing (depending on the kind of autonomy). Autonomy may also increase or decrease over time. Thirdly, how can we explain – theoretically and empirically – these observed patterns and trajectories? The **control** of public organizations will be studied from a similar intellectual pattern as we do for autonomy: what is steering & control (e.g. ex ante versus ex post; input oriented versus output oriented), how can we conceptualise, operationalise and measure these concepts? Secondly, what patterns and trajectories of levels and ways of steering and control can be observed empirically in public organizations?

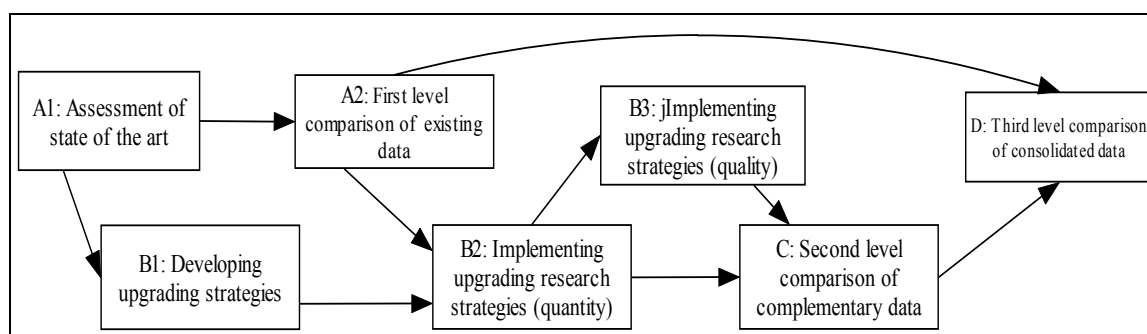
Thirdly, how can we explain – theoretically and empirically – these observed patterns and trajectories? Also the **co-ordination** among organizations on the same governmental levels or in the same policy fields will be addressed: what shifts and tendencies can be observed in horizontal and vertical specialization in governments and policy fields, and how are these coordinated (horizontally and vertically). Also, specialization and coordination interactions will be studied. Secondly, the observed patterns and trajectories will be subject to explanatory research: what theoretical and empirical factors are determining these patterns of change? As a final scientific topic of interest, we will look at the well-debated **performance and accountability** issue: first, how is performance defined by stakeholders, how is it being measured? Second, how is public organization performance changing? Is there a difference in performance between core bureaucratic organizations and autonomous public agencies? Thirdly, what factors are influencing the performance levels of public organisation (level of autonomy, steering, other organizational factors, environmental factors etc.). Finally, we will also address the accountability issue: are autonomous agencies accountable to their stakeholders (politicians, interest groups, citizens etc.)? Or do we observe a lack of (political and managerial) accountability in new organizational forms?

Issues of autonomy, steering and control, co-ordination, and performance and accountability are interrelated and mutually interactive. Autonomy and steering/control are two sides of the same coin (steering and control should follow granting autonomy, but in reality there is often a mismatch), or coordination needs to increase in a fragmented (autonomized) public sector (and is often lacking). Issues of autonomy, steering and coordination also affect performance and accountability (political as well as managerial) of public organizations and the public sector in general. These four intellectual dimensions will be approached from four sides: methods, issues of data collection, issues of theory and policy-relevant applications.

The question of how to study organisations which are in a political public sector context differs from the private sector. Methodologically the typologies of case studies, of surveys, of case surveys, and the strategy to strengthen empirical research by combining these is one of the points that will be emphasised in this network. Sharing methodologies creates potentials for comparing data. Issues of data-collection deal with the assessment and comparison of existing data, and to collect new data in a comparative perspective. In this network, auditing data from the comparability perspective is crucial. Obviously the debates of using administrative bureaucracy theories, managerial theories or economic theories, influences the focus, the data, and the methods used. Comparability requirements will need a converging debate on theories, models and concepts used to trigger comparable empirical research, to understand trends, and to explain inter-national differences. Finally based on the results of this comparable research the communication and dissemination to the public sector itself is required. Trends, learning cycles, culturally defined differences, priorities, factors causing failure or success of change and reform will be derived and shared between the COST network researchers and the civil servants of their respective countries.

## Scientific plan

The figure below provides the sequence and the logic of packages in the project.



The A-packages are about the current research status and therefore about the starting position of the members of the Action. Here the purpose is to analytically map the existing research (databases, methods, theories) from the four components of the consolidated project (autonomy, steering and control, co-ordination, and performance). In a second stage in this package the existing knowledge within the teams will be further explored to look for new findings as a consequence of new comparisons that become possible because of the network between those countries that have not been compared so far. Issues of autonomy, or steering/control, or co-ordination have been investigated in several countries (not in all) but have not yet been compared between Anglo, Scandinavian, Continental and Latin countries. This becomes possible after assessing analytically the state of the art of the existing research.

The B-packages are looking for the research deficit (data, but also methods and theories). Some research teams have investigated only part of the equation, e.g. only autonomy with co-ordination, or only a combination of steering/control and performance. Based on the state of the art (A1) a joint strategy will be developed to 'fill the gaps' to give a bigger potential to have comparative studies. Some countries have only case studies but no surveys. Others have only information on parts of the equation (e.g. autonomy) and didn't focus on other elements (e.g. co-ordination). In package B1 (Developing upgrading strategies) the combined research teams will look for tracks to prioritise in comparative research deficit reduction measures: what do we need (data, survey questionnaires, case protocols, methods) to enhance the potential to compare? Package B2 proceeds on quantitative issues. Packages B3 proceeds on qualitative issues.

Package C uses these new data, information, knowledge to conduct a second level analysis and comparison of these complementary data. Data mining should look at new insights from completing the missing links.

Package D is a synthesis combining the existing and compared data with the complementary data. This consolidated and third level of analysis should also provide the first results useful for the post COST period: based on datasets that are shared and comparable, and joined methods the basis is ready for an upgraded, networked, and fully operational research infrastructure. Package D will guarantee a sustainable platform and intellectual basis for research beyond the COST project.

### A) EXPLOITING EXISTING DATA AND KNOWLEDGE

#### A.1: Assessment of the state of the art

Comparative mapping of existing research and databases in the involved research teams:

- Data-collection: what data do we have in existing databases, and what are the missing data?
- Theory: what theories are used/not used by the research teams and for what purposes?
- Methodology: what methods of data collection are used, for what purpose and with what results?

The aim is to compare existing data and research from these three perspectives and to perform an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses.

#### A.2: First level comparison of existing data

Departing from the existing knowledge and the data available in individual research teams, the Action will exploit the existing data. This will be done in a joint effort between the research teams involved in order to generate comparative findings based on the existing data.

### B) GENERATING NEW AND COMPLEMENTARY DATA

#### B.1: Developing upgrading strategies

Departing from the strengths and weaknesses of the existing knowledge and data, the Action will develop joint strategies to perform effective and new comparative research. Therefore the Action will define joint concepts and models and develop a common research design that can be applied by all research teams involved. Next to that we will develop joint data collection instruments (i.e. survey questionnaires and case study protocols) in order to be able to collect new comparative data in the different countries. The aim is to reduce the data-deficits discovered in the comparative mapping of existing research (see A.1).

#### B.2: Implementing upgrading research strategies (quantity)

Departing from the research strategy developed in B.1 we will conduct joint and comparative data collection which is complementary with the existing data in different countries. The focus is on large-N complementary survey methods that should reduce the data deficit in order to be able to better compare all members of the network.

#### B.3: Implementing upgrading research strategies (quality)

Departing from the research strategy developed in B.1 we will conduct joint and comparative data collection in which is complementary with the existing data in different countries. The focus is on case studies or parts of it. This should reduce the data deficit in order to be able to better compare all members of the network.

### C) SECOND LEVEL COMPARISON OF COMPLEMENTARY DATA: ANALYSIS OF NEW DATA BY QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

In the next step the analysis of the new and complementary data will be analysed in a comparative way and in both qualitative and quantitative ways.

### D) THIRD LEVEL COMPARISON OF CONSOLIDATED DATA: SYNTHESIS AND VALORISATION

The final stage of the research of the Action aims at the overall synthesis of joint research results from an empirical, theoretical and methodological focus based on data mining of the consolidated existing and new (complementary) data. Next to that the valorisation of the research findings towards (a) the scientific community and (b) the practitioner's world will be undertaken. Finally feedback to the state of the art from which we departed will be given ("to what extent and in what ways have we advanced?").

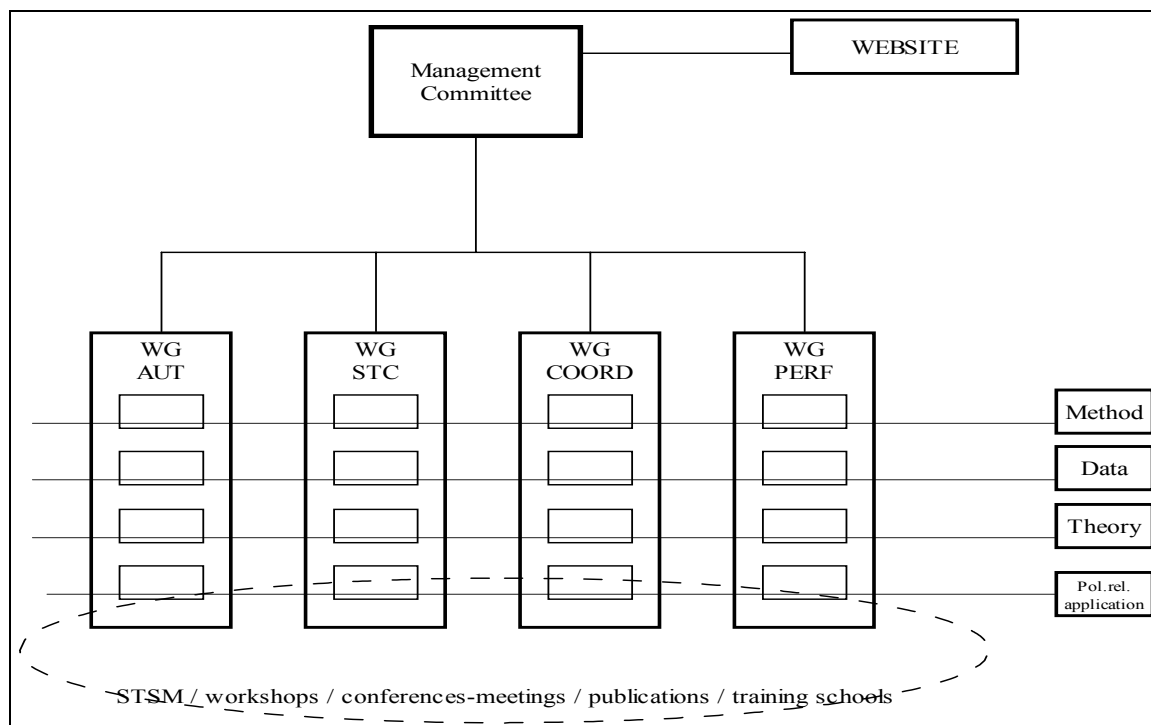
## E. ORGANISATION

### *Concerted Action*

The Action brings together research teams that conduct research in public sector organization. Individual research efforts which are funded by the research teams themselves are coordinated and concerted via this Action. The concertation will happen through the establishment of open scientific Working Groups. The Action will be supervised and coordinated by a Management Committee, in accordance with the usual structure of COST actions. This Management Committee will supervise the management and general scientific direction of the Action and meet twice a year.

### *Coordinated Action*

Four Working Groups will be established along the four intellectual fields we defined above (autonomy, steering and control, coordination and performance and accountability). The Working Groups act autonomously and independently but in accordance with the general strategy of the Action, as defined and supervised by the Management Committee. As mentioned above there is mutual interaction between the Working Groups, theoretically and methodologically. Working groups are headed by Working Group co-ordinators who are responsible for coordination within these Working Groups. Within every Working Group special attention is given to issues of data-collection, theory, methodology and practitioner relevant applications. A website will be developed mainly for disseminating purposes.



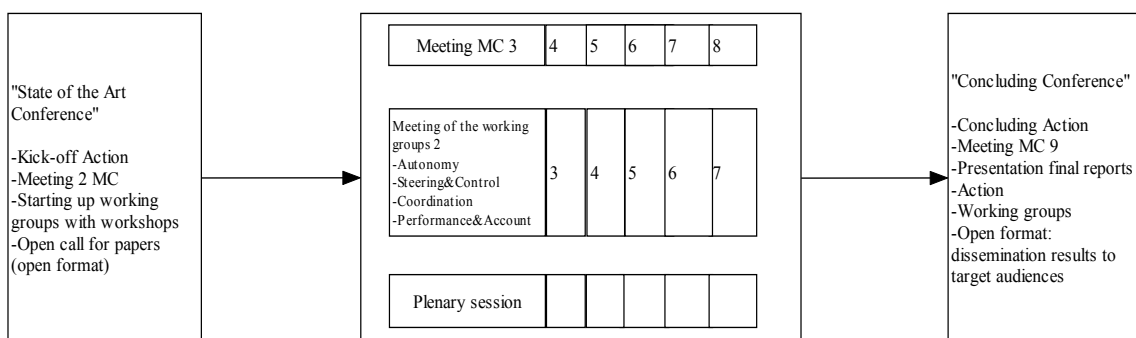
AUT: autonomy; STC: Steering and Control; COORD: Coordination; PERF: Performance

### *Organisation and activities*

Following the first MC meeting, the Action kicks off with a “state-of-the art conference” (first box in the figure below) which has an open format. The academic community will be addressed with a call for papers. The four Working Groups will be formed and started-up. In the margin of this conference also the Management Committee of the Action will meet for the second time.

Every six months a “general plenary meeting of the Action” is organized (second box in the figure below). This plenary meeting serves three purposes. Firstly there is a meeting of the Management Committee. Secondly the proceedings of the four Working Groups are presented in plenary sessions to ensure coherence and coordination between the activities of the four intellectual domains of the Action. Thirdly the Working Groups meet separately for in-depth discussions. This general plenary meeting follows the format of a scientific conference and lasts for 2-3 days. A call for papers to the participating institutions will be organized by every Working Group. In year 1 the call may deal with the state of the art in the field, in the years 2 and 3 the calls deal with the results of B and C packages and in year 4 a concluding plenary meeting is organized for discussion of the overall Action’s results. Every conference starts with a plenary session in which the co-ordinators of the Working Groups present the topic of discussion that will be dealt with in their Working Groups. The conference closes with the feedback by the Working Group co-ordinators about the results of the discussions held in their respective Working Groups.

The Action will be concluded by a final conference (third box in the figure below). The main purpose is to disseminate the results of the Action (presentation reports of the Action, as well as reports of the separate Working Groups). Workshops will be organized that cover the four intellectual domains of the Action and in which academics (wider community) and practitioners simultaneously will be invited to participate.



Short term scientific missions (STSMs) will be organized at an average of four persons per year. These scientific missions may last for around 2-3 months and allow for in-depth cooperation between (young) scholars by conducting research in partner institutions of the Action. The aim is to foster joint research and publications between visiting scholars and receiving institutions.

PhD training schools of up to one week will be organized bringing together PhD students of the partner institutions of the Action. In this one week seminar young researchers will be given the opportunity to discuss their research projects, methods, theories used etc.

A publication-strategy will be developed. The Action shall coordinate a book series on the research results from the scientific Working Groups, preferably from a comparative perspective. Next to that the organisation of Special Issues of Journals in the field will be encouraged. Opportunities to publish may emerge from the proceedings of the general plenary meetings of the Action.

Special attention will be given to involving young researches in the activities of the Working Groups (by organizing platforms for PhD students such as the annual training school, or by organizing STSM’s e.g.).

## F. TIMETABLE

The duration of the Action is 4 years. The time-table reflects the scientific plan developed above under heading C. The table shows what parts of the scientific programme will be addressed in what year, and what activities will be undertaken to coordinate the implementation of the scientific programme.

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Scientific programme	Assessment of the state of the art (A.1)  Developing upgrading strategies to do joint research and developing joint data collection methods (B.1)	First level comparison of existing data: Exploitation and comparison (systematization) of existing data (A.2)  Implementing upgrading strategies (quantitative large-N methods reducing data deficits) (B.2)	Implementing upgrading strategies (qualitative case study methods reducing data deficits) (B.3)  Second level comparison of complementary data (quantitative and qualitative analysis) (C)	Third level comparison of existing and complementary data: Synthesis of research results of the Action. Valorisation and dissemination of research results towards academic world and practitioner's world. Feedback to state of the art (have we advanced?) (D)
Activities	-State of the art conference / opening of the Action -Meetings of Management Committee -Meetings of Working Groups -Starting up PhD platforms - 4 STSM's -Developing a publication strategy	-Meetings of Management Committee -Meetings of Working Groups -Organisation PhD training school - 4 STSM's -Publishing results	-Meetings of Management Committee -Meetings of Working Groups -Organisation PhD training school - 4 STSM's -Publishing results	-Meetings of Management Committee -Meetings of Working Groups -Organisation PhD training school - 4 STSM's -Publishing results -Concluding conference of the Action
Milestones	-State of the Art conference	-Annual conference	-Annual conference	-Concluding conference of the Action

The milestones of the Action are the annual conferences that will be organized. These conferences have an open format which means that they are open for practitioners as well as for academics that do not belong to the network but have an interest in the topic. The focus in these conferences is on presenting research results and disseminating these results (to the wider academic community as well as to practitioners). These conferences are not the same as the meetings of the Management Committee or the workshops of the Working Groups. Research teams of the network will suggest civil servants involved in public sector reform to be invited to these conferences.

Other important activities of the Action are:

- Bringing together young researchers in a PhD platform (e.g. via the training schools)
- Workshops focused at a specific intellectual field (two per year per workgroup, organized within the Working Groups).
- The continuous dissemination of research results via the website, electronic newsletter, and research papers and articles

## G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

On the basis of national estimates the economic dimension of the activities to be carried out under the Action has been estimated at 14 million Euro, including overhead, for the total duration of the Action. This estimate is valid under the assumption of the participation of 17 signatories of the Action. Any departure from this will change the total cost accordingly.

## H. DISSEMINATION PLAN

Considering the content of the scientific programme of the Action, the main target audience of the Action (key recipients of the dissemination) is the academic world, but also top civil servants, advisors in public sector think tanks, or auditors. The table below presents how the outputs per research package of the concerted research activities of the Action will be disseminated, and to what audiences. The table is structured by the different phases of the scientific programme we developed above under heading C.

	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
A.1	Scientific state of the art report	-Conference -Website -Publications	Academics and practitioners
	State of the art conference	-Open meeting with presentations from academics -PhD training school	Academics and practitioners
	Proceedings of the state of the art conference	-Publication	Academics and practitioners
	Visibility of COST Action	Via existing European academic and practitioners communities (EGPA, EGOS, ECPR)(*)	Academics and practitioners
A.2	Critical assessment of existing datasets via new data-mining	-Publications -Website (library, paper series) -PhD training school	Academics
B.1	Listing datasets, methods and theories used in the field	-Website: library on site	Academics
	Joint research protocols and standardized models	-Website -Published report -PhD training school	Academics
B.2	Quantitative complementary data sets (descriptive) (survey-method)	-Adjustment website library -Related publications (descriptive) -PhD training school	Academics
B.3	Qualitative complementary data sets (descriptive) (case-study)	-Adjustment website library -Related publications (descriptive) -PhD training school	Academics
C	Explanatory reports from advanced analysis	-Adjustment website libraries -Related publications (explanatory) -PhD training school	Academics
D	-Scientific progress report -Concluding conference -Proceedings of the conference	-Closing conference -Report -Proceedings conference -Publications	Academics and practitioners

		-Open meeting with presentations from academics -PhD training school	
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(\*)EGPA: European Group of Public Administration; ECPR: European Consortium for Political Research; EGOS: European Group for Organizational Studies

As the table shows, for specific parts of the scientific programme various efforts are undertaken to disseminate the research results to the relevant audiences. Publications may be policy-relevant papers (checklists for practitioners for example), scientific articles and book chapters, as well as a book series of the Action (co-authored and co-edited). Dissemination will also happen via the website of the Action (Working Papers, libraries with state of the art of the research). Next to that annual conferences (for the wider academic and practitioner's world) and seminars with workshops (for discussing the proceedings of the Action in the different scientific Working Groups) will be organized. Some of these dissemination efforts are permanent (website, publications, electronic newsletter), while other are related to the milestones we identified above. Specific attention will be given to disseminate results to the practitioner's world with a focus on organizing workshops and conferences, non-technical publications, and the website of the Action.

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