



Public Sector Reform in France: Views and Experiences from Senior Executives

Country Report as part of the COCOPS Research Project

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About COCOPS

The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It analyses the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens' service needs and social cohesion in Europe. Evaluating the extent and consequences of NPM's alleged fragmenting tendencies and the resulting need for coordination is a key part of assessing these impacts. It is funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014).

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1. Introduction¹

Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS), as one of the largest comparative public management research projects in Europe, intends to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the public sector in European countries and to systematically explore the impact of New Public Management (NPM)-style reforms in Europe. The project brings together public administration scholars from eleven universities in ten countries² and is funded as part of the European Union's 7th Framework Programme between January 2011 and June 2014.³ The research is comparative and evidence-based, drawing on both existing data and innovative new quantitative and qualitative data collection, at both national and policy sector levels. A cornerstone of the project is the COCOPS *Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe*: an original, large-scale survey of public sector top executives in ten European countries, exploring executives' opinions and experiences with regards to public sector reforms in general government, as well as more particularly in the health and employment policy sectors.

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

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

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

As set out by the project's terms of reference the goal of this large-scale survey is to analyse national administrations (both ministries and agencies) in the participating countries and also to take a closer look at the policy fields employment and health. The survey aims to explore public sector executives' perceptions, experiences and opinions with regards to their work context and

¹ This introduction is based on Hammerschmid, Görnitz, Oprisor and Stimac (2013), and appears in the same form in all WP3 COCOPS country reports.

² Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hertie School of Governance Berlin, University of Bergen, Bocconi University, University of Cantabria, Cardiff University, CNRS Paris, Corvinus University Budapest, University of Exeter, KU Leuven, Tallinn University of Technology

³ More information on the project is available at www.cocops.eu

administrative reforms, but also on other factors such as values and identities and the impact of the fiscal crisis. The core survey implemented in all participating countries consists of 31 questions structured in four parts (I) General information; (II) Management and Work Practice of Your Organization; (III) Public Sector Reform and the Fiscal Crisis; (IV) Attitudes, Preferences and Personal Information. The survey is a result of the joint work of all the national research teams within the COCOPS project and under the leadership of a team of researchers at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. In addition, further universities from other European countries were included as strategic partners to replicate the survey in these countries.⁴

Three essential challenges connected to the design of the questionnaire and the survey methodology had to be handled by the research team: a sample design that would allow systematic comparative analyses; an access strategy to produce (statistically sufficient) high response rates; and a questionnaire design and translation that would assure conceptual equivalence between all countries. As a general principle, the survey team opted for a balanced and pragmatic approach with a view on a maximum of quality and comparability, while still allowing for sufficient flexibility within each country's context. A core questionnaire developed by the survey team in English was translated into country-specific versions by the respective national research teams and – if assumed helpful – optional questions were added. With regards to the population definition, the research team targeted a group with relevant experience to assess overall developments and trends both on an organizational and policy field level. In general, top executives are viewed as such informants regarding the state of administration, given their privileged vantage point (Walker and Enticott, 2004), but also, with the blurring of the classical boundaries between politicians and civil servants (Aberbach et al., 1981), due to their own role in policy-making and their influence on the choice and implementation of reforms (Christensen and Lægreid, 1999; Ridder et al., 2006). A major critique raised against elite surveys however (see in particular Enticott et al., 2008) is that they usually focus on a limited selection of individuals at the top of the organization. As these individuals are relatively disconnected from processes at lower levels in the organizations, and also due to issues of desirability, such an approach is bound to provide a biased image of the respective organization(s). These are important points to take into consideration when interpreting the results.

In order to avoid random sampling and issues of representativeness, the COCOPS executive survey is based on a full census of all central government ministries and agencies. It covers all high level public sector executives who in their respective positions can be expected to be involved in public administration reform processes. A core set of binding sample principles, based on a detailed mapping of national administrative structures, was followed by all teams in all central government areas and especially in the case of employment and health. Deviations were only allowed if precise equivalence could not be established due to the specificity of administrative structures. Local government and service delivery levels were excluded for the purpose of this survey. Generally, within all central government ministries and subordinated agencies the two top-administrative levels were addressed; in some cases invitations were also sent to executives on the third level if, due to their policy relevance, this was deemed appropriate. State-owned enterprises and audit courts were not included due to their different task repertoire. In the fields of employment and health, as special

⁴ The Vienna University of Economics and Business for Austria, the Kaunas University of Technology for Lithuania, the Technical University of Lisbon for Portugal, Copenhagen Business School, the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence for Serbia and the University of Bern for Switzerland

focus areas, regional and state government ministries and agencies were also included if relevant – without addressing however direct service delivery levels (e.g. hospitals, job centers).

Moreover, the survey explicitly covers different units of analysis (see Pollitt 2011: 121, on units of analysis in comparative public administration research) to allow for multi-level analyses: policy field, organization and individual experiences of the respondent. These are explored through the (self)perceptions of public sector executives, acknowledged in research as the closest channel into objective processes and developments within public organizations and, at least in the absence of stringent limitations, as reliable predictors of administrative behaviour (see Aberbach et al., 1981; Bauer et al., 2009).

The survey was implemented online, with standardized webpages being built in the national language(s) for each country. Flexibility was allowed, and even recommended, in the data collection strategies used by national teams, due to major differences in administrative cultures between the countries. A major emphasis was put on a thorough data cleaning and harmonization at the end of the survey, to make sure that final results were comparable across countries and that any deviations allowed during the implementation process were explained and controlled.⁵

The survey was launched in May 2012 and implemented in two rounds (May-July 2012, and September-November 2012). In these two rounds combined, the survey was sent out to over 20.000 high ranking civil servants in the ten participating countries via post and email (using either a personalized access link or an anonymous one), depending on each country's predefined access strategy. Invitations were followed by reminders and, in cases where response rates were low, teams took additional measures, such as phone or postal reminders, to increase the number of survey participants. In the beginning of November 2012, all surveys were closed, and all datasets were cleaned, checked and harmonized according to a standardised procedure for all countries.

Table 1. Number of invitations and response rates of the COCOPS survey (by end of December 2012)

Country	Invitations Sent*	Survey completions	Response rate %
Austria	1745	637	36.50
Estonia	913	321	35.16
France	5297	1193	22.52
Germany	2295	566	24.66
Hungary	1200	351	29.25
Italy	1703	343	20.14
Netherlands	977	293	29.99
Norway	1299	436	33.56
Spain	1778	321	18.05
UK	3100	353	11.39
Total	20307	4814	23.71

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

⁵ The details of the survey design and implementation process can be found in the survey Research Report (see Hammerschmid, Oprisor, Stimac, 2013).

By the end of 2012 there were 4814 valid answers available from ten participating countries and an overall response rate of 23.7% (for details see **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). These answers are the basis for the respective country reports. The data in both the national and the integrated datasets are subject to strict anonymity regulations, to protect individual respondents, whereas aggregate data will be published according to a set of rules commonly agreed upon by the research teams involved.

The current country report summarizes the findings for **France** along with some first comparisons with the aggregate results from all of the ten validated surveys in Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and UK. A more systematic comparative report based on these country reports will follow in summer 2013.

2. Context of Public Administration Reform in France

The French bureaucracy has often been considered as one of the most « frozen » public administrations, ranked with other continental European (Germany) or Napoleonic states (Spain or Italy). In some recent studies, France was still portrayed as a laggard in terms of administrative reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) or a main resistant to the influence of New Public Management ideas (Rouban, 2006), echoing the historical success of French sociologist Michel Crozier's theory viewing France as a "stalled society" with a "stalled state" (Crozier, 1964 ; Crozier, 1970). Of course, it is well known that administrative reforms did not play in France, in the eighties and nineties, the dominant role they had in Anglo-American and Antipodean countries; they also did not claim the same disruptive intentions and did not initially plan the same "paradigmatic" turn aimed at changing the very nature of the administrative system. However, lessons drawn from the policy analysis approach (where incremental changes are valued) and from neo-institutionalist theories (insisting in the national and original specificity of reform trajectories due to institutional constraints and structuring historical patterns) invite to more diverse kind of lenses to describe changes. In a nutshell, framing the analysis in terms of inertia would be rather misleading. The first reason is that the policies of administrative reforms have developed intensively in the French context as elsewhere, with specificities (Bezes, 2009; Bezes, Parrado, 2013), that may be related to the kind and modes of changes occurring in a 'Napoleonic' state (Ongaro, 2009) or as a Continental State (see Pollitt, Bouckaert, 2011). Other reasons refer to the need to insist upon the importance of low-profile or gradual modes of changes (Bezes, 2007) or upon long-term perspective (Bezes, 2009) in the context of resilient institutions. Another argument is that New Public Management ideas did develop and diffuse in the French context but with specific institutional constraints (Rouban, 2008; Bezes, 2012). At last, authors have also emphasized the specificities of ministries, some of them (Public Work, Health, Education) developing their own dynamic of administrative changes and their own accommodation of managerial tools (Jeannot, Guillemot, 2010; Guillemot, Jeannot, 2013).

Like in the US, administrative reforms in France first emphasized the techniques of Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) through the Rationalization of Budgetary Choices (RCB). Launched in January 1968, the RCB policy had three different aims: developing micro-economic tools (cost-benefit analysis) to improve the quality of decision-making through optimizing techniques; rationalizing the budget process by using a planning-oriented approach to developing a program budget; developing managerial tools to favour the steering of public policies. During the seventies, this programme slowly declined while alternative approaches focussing on citizens' rights developed and resulted in several laws actually imposing new constraints on public administrations in defence of users. In the early since the early eighties, many reforms have been set on the agenda and implemented with various results in France, under the name of « modernization of administration », « administrative reforms » or « state reform ».

In the early 1980s, France first dealt with decentralisation policies rather than going on focusing on efficiency or managerial tools. In 1981, the territorial decentralisation of the *Lois Defferre* enhanced the status and power of local authorities and created a constitutional and political counterbalance within the French regime (Thoenig, 1985; Le Lidec, 2001). The territorial decentralisation was first a response to concerns about the distribution of political power, not about administrative inefficiencies. Competences were transferred to local authorities in several domains (social action, housing, education, culture, transports, sea affairs) but without clearly distinguishing between state and sub-national governments.

The first version of 'managerial reform' in the French context was 'invented' between 1984-1986 under Prime Minister Fabius, continued in another form by Chirac government (1986-1988) and perfected in 1989 with the policy entitled 'Public Service Renewal' (PSR), initiated by the Prime Minister Michel Rocard (1988-1991). The modernization program was close to the 'Public Service Orientation' model of NPM reforms identified by Ferlie et al. (1996) or the egalitarian one proposed by Christopher Hood (1998). It valued service quality, user concerns, some managerial techniques and a continuing set of distinctive public service orientations with strong participation of public servants and control through mutuality. The reform claimed an explicit link to public service values of public servants (Jeannot, 2006). Experiments and learning processes were favoured as the dominant style of reform. In a context of major social unrest within the public sector in 1988-1989, the 'Renewal' program (*Le renouveau du service public* of February 1989) offered an acceptable trade-off by enhancing civil service unions, human resources management and the social dialogue and by introducing managerial principles and techniques such as a policy evaluation program. It also experimented with forms of contracts between ministries, the Civil Service Ministry and the Budget Ministry, the latter being rather reluctant to commit into managerial instruments in the 1980s (Chaty, 1997; Jeannot, 2003; Bezes, 2009). Incremental budgetary micro-changes were adopted in the 1990s: 'aggregated headings' intended to give ministerial managers latitude in how to (re)allocate appropriations; contracting between central administrations, state local units and the Budget Directorate was experimented; more control over spending at the territorial level was adopted. Ideas, policy instruments, goals and the scope of reform were largely redesigned by the mid-1990s, to such an extent that the New Public Management 'tool-kit' gradually became the dominant inspiration in administrative reform policies (Bezes, 2005; 2009; 2012). At the same time, however, NPM ideas became more influent and growingly adopted by top bureaucrats from the French *Grands corps* through repeated state reform committees and reports (*ibid.*)

As a result of these ongoing processes unleashed in the 1990s, many comprehensive and drastic changes have occurred since the early 2000s. The major change for the French administrative system – specifically in terms of adoption of NPM methods and tools - has come from the 2001 reform of the French budgetary procedure. The reform was voted through the Institutional Act on Budget Legislation (*Loi organique relative aux lois de finances*, called "LOLF"), adopted on August 1st 2001 and implemented since January 2006. The 2001 Budget Act systematised the use of NPM instruments (programme-oriented budgets, a new performance management system, a 'real cost' approach to policy, aggregated headings, constraining capping tools for staff expenditure and a new accountability framework for Parliament). It has also created a lever for further reforms (Bezes, 2010b; Corbett, 2010). The reform helps reasserting executive control over ministries and gradually increased constraints over many autonomous bodies (*établissements publics*). Several scholars have questioned the real effects of this performance steering by policy program and have specifically doubted the relevance of the indicators used (Brunetière, 2006) or, more broadly, have identified new forms of bureaucratization by numbers that destroy the effects of delegation of responsibility and increased autonomy also included with the Budget Act (Boussard, Loriol, 2008).

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the process of *agencification* was not absent in the French context but it was unsystematic and limited compared to other European countries (United Kingdom, the Netherlands) (Bezes, Fimreite, Le Lidec, Laegreid, 2013). The creation of new autonomous public bodies dominantly took the legal form of the *établissements publics*, used since decades for many already existing autonomous public bodies (Rochet, 2002; Lafarge, 2011; Conseil d'Etat, 2012). New

agencies were numerous in Agriculture, Health and Risk, Social Affairs, Culture and Research, within this legal form of *établissements publics*.

After the election of President Sarkozy, a General Public Policy Review was launched in July 2007 with explicit reference to the Canadian Program Review initiated by the Liberal Chretien Government in 1995-1996 or the 'spending reviews' done in UK since 2002 (Bezes, 2010a; Lafarge, 2010). The French *Révision Générale des Politiques Publiques* (RGPP) claims to engage in "rethinking the state" with direct ties to the fiscal imperatives of dealing with the debt and the deficit. Ministries were questioned over whether their current objectives, instruments and ways of implementing and financing specific public policies should be maintained or whether and how goods could be delivered better and less expensively. Audits of organizations and public policies were conducted by several small 'teams' mixing members of ministerial and interministerial inspectorates with consultants, the first time that the resort to private consultancy firms has been publicly endorsed. From 2007 to 2012, this process of reform generated three dynamics of transformation of the state organizational form with sharp and specific impacts on the territorial state, the many ministerial field units and the prefects (Bezes, Le Lidec, 2010; Poupeau, 2011). First, boundaries between ministries were redrawn and the number of full ministers was significantly reduced leading to the creation of meta-ministries. In all ministries, central administrative directorates were merged. Second, the territorial state administration was reorganized at the regional and the *départemental* levels through many mergers affecting nearly all state local units. It was decided to reorganize the regional units of central government ministries in accordance with a top-down ministerial logic, merging the 23 ministerial regional directorates into eight regional directorates which boundaries globally fit the new "big ministries". At the *départemental* level, a tightened organization of state services was also set up by the creation of two or three inter-ministerial Directorates, thus merging the dozen of pre-existing ministerial directorates at the *départemental* level. Third, a new hierarchy between administrative levels was introduced related to a repositioning of the prefects. The regional level is now the main level for the steering and the implementation of public policies; the *départemental* level is said to be the locus 'where the state adapts to the needs of citizens on a geographical basis'. As a consequence, the regional prefect is now considered as the pilot, guarantor of cohesion, coordinator and arbitrator in state interministerial action in the context of a reorganized regional level. Prefects of *départements* have reinforced their interministerial powers and therefore are said to command directly a tightened organization of state services at the *départemental* level.

Within the same General Review of Public policies, several austerity measures also affected the civil service. The first pay measure introduced by Nicolas Sarkozy's government was a freeze on the point value of civil service pay from 2010. Point value grew by 2.8% over the period 2008-2011, at a time when inflation was 4.4%, bringing a real terms salary cut of 1.6%. A second austerity measure was to reduce the number of civil servants and conduct corresponding reorganisations. The measure was embodied in a slogan: "the non replacement of one in two retiring civil servants". In this sense, cutting Government service jobs was effective: 75,000 jobs cut in 2008, 45,000 in 2009, which represents 5% of Government jobs over those two years. This led to a fall in staff costs in the national budget (from 43% in 2008 to 36.5% in 2010).

Considering the overall series of sequences of administrative reforms, there is no doubt that the French trajectory of reforms has been influenced by key politico-administrative components of the French bureaucracy. Of course, these influences are not systematic and should be analyzed in context. However, in order to provide a broad view of these potential institutional constraints, we can emphasize four dimensions.

The two first are related the degree of *pervasiveness*, of the administrative system, e.g. the range of competences that come under the central government's direct leverage and the type of networks of organizations and agents through which government exercises its power. The French state has been recognized as the archetype of a 'unitary and centralized state' – a 'Napoleonic state' – with strong national integration through a single territorial administrative structure (Crozier, Thoenig, 1975; Grémion, 1976). First, national ministerial administrations have subnational units representing subdivisions of the national ministries both at the regional and at the *départemental* levels. However, second, these regional and *départemental* directorates are also 'supervised' by a 'prefect' who is an agent of the whole government. These lines have designed a territorially based and vertically integrated administrative system, both from the ministerial point of view and from the more political one with the political control defended by prefects. These state field units and the role of the prefects were challenged from the decentralisation policies of the early 1980s to the 2000s. The reorganisation of the territorial state and the redefinition of the position of prefects were repeatedly put on the agenda, but the games at work in these reforms—opposing central ministries, state ministerial units, prefects and local authorities—resulted in incremental reforms that were barely implemented (Bezes, Le Lidec, 2010). The second related feature regards the state structure. Although France has been historically considered as a centralized state, local representatives and authorities always played a major role at the central level within Republican regimes in France and obtained benefits (Le Lidec, 2001). In this context, decentralisation has always been 'the' major early 'reactive' reform that induced reinforcing effects and changed the 'Napoleonic' state (Le Lidec, 2007, Bezes, Parrado, 2013), for instance with a new decentralization Act in 2003-2004.

The third component is the degree of *legal entrenchment*, e.g. the extent to which the French administration is circumscribed by standard operating procedures and rules. France established a large and separate body of administrative law, consisting of a coherent legal doctrine that covered bureaucratic activities. This extensive and powerful system of law was supported by university-trained lawyers. As a result, the French administrative system was characterized by complex legal entrenchment, ranging from a strong legal body of provisions ruling bureaucratic life as well as a statute that organizes the professional life of all civil servants (*statut general des fonctionnaires*) (Dreyfus, 2000). The existence of this 'rigid [legal] backbone' (Knill, 1999, p. 115) explains why any 'new' types of ideas – such as the 'new public management' movement' – have been filtered. The existence of specific training schools designed to train upper-level civil servants (at the top of them, the *Ecole nationale d'administration*, Eymeri, 2001) is another institutional related feature that even accentuated this trend (Bezes, Jeannot, 2011).

The fourth and last component concerns the *political-administrative nexus* and points to the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats 'at the top'. On the political side, the French Fifth Republic is often referred to as a semi-presidential regime. The hybrid nature of its politico-administrative system lies in the fact that, although its Constitution of the 4th of October 1958 has established a parliamentary system, both the institutional practice and the constitutional reforms have increasingly strengthened the predominance of the President compared with the Prime Minister. The President was initially elected for seven years – while the members of the National Assembly's term lasts five years – but the constitutional reform in 2000 has made the president and the deputies' term match; both now last five years, (theoretically) reducing the probability of 'cohabitation' between a President originating from a different party than his or her Prime Minister. From this reform, results the alignment of the cycles of presidential and parliamentary elections. The fact that the presidential election is now scheduled just before the parliamentary elections has

strengthened the presidency. The political system is characterized by an election by majority vote with two ballots combined with a relative bipartisanship, which seemed relatively threatened by the emergence of less consensual parties that are the Front de Gauche (a leftist scission of the Socialist Party), or the Front National (extreme right).

Broadly speaking, by reinforcing the presidential and governmental executive against the Parliament, the Fifth Republic has given great strength to top civil servants and has designed fairly politicised minister/mandarin relations. On the one hand, the French administration relies on a vast majority of state civil servants who are recruited through competitive exams, trained in schools and promoted through rationalized mechanisms. The global image that results from these mechanisms is well known: a unified merit and career based civil service system, traditionally associated with the idea of a strong state tradition (*État* is always capitalised) and the concept of *service public* encompassing an extensive number of public activities (from sovereign functions to industrial and commercial public services). Its legitimacy is rooted in the dominant values defining the “service of the state”. They emphasize the idea of a disinterested civil servant serving the *general interest* and guarding the public good while also promoting the principles of impartiality, equality, adaptability and continuity. On the other hand, forms of politicization at the top have always persisted and have even been continuously and growingly used as structuring means for steering, producing loyalty and controlling administration at higher level through ministerial cabinets and discretionary appointments (political loyalty is there in balance with expertise and competences). The first main layer of this “politicization” process at the top is the recruitment to ministerial *cabinets*. A second form of politicization has been the full use of discretionary powers to appoint the top management positions in central administrations and even more political nominations for which recruitment belongs to the President and the government, specifically negotiated with the Prime Minister during the power-sharing periods (for an overview on the all period, Bezes and Le Lidec 2007). There is no surprise then that these various dynamics of politicization have resulted in increasing forms of “strategic politicization” (Rouban 2004) or “functionally politicized” involvements among top civil servants (Eymeri 2003; Bezes and Le Lidec 2007; Rouban 2009) characterised by strategic overview of a specific policy, stronger commitments to the objectives, political choices and results of this policy and personal loyalty to the minister in charge. Intensification of this politicization has been described for the recent Sarkozy period (Rouban, 2009; Bezes, Le Lidec, 2011). In the recent context, French top civil servants have also been challenged by the growing influence of consultants (Bezes, 2012; Gervais, 2012).

3. Data and Method

3.1 Sampling and Access Strategy and Survey Implementation

The French COCOP survey was conducted by Philippe Bezes from CERSA (CNRS, University Paris II) and Gilles Jeannot from Latts (CNRS, École des ponts, Paris-East University).

The sampling base consisted of a core and several additional sources. The core comprises all the upper echelons of the civil service, defined as: the top and second levels of responsibility in the central administration (1st secretary, director, deputy director, 2nd deputy director); the top level of responsibility in the prefectures (prefect and secretary), in the regional ministerial directorates (director and deputy director), in the *départemental* directorates (*départemental* director) now made interministerial, in the regional divisions represented at *départemental* level (territorial unit heads, UT) and in the French equivalents of Government agencies (mostly “public establishments” with the status of legal entities and SCN – Services with National Prerogatives), where the directors and deputy directors were surveyed. In the decentralized French government system⁶, all these civil servants, with the exception of a few agency directors, work directly for central government, whatever their geographical location.

In accordance with the general direction of the survey, the health and employment sectors were the focus of wider investigation. As regards health, as well as the employees of central government ministry of Health and the first level at the regional and *départemental* levels, the sample was extended to the second level of executives located in the Health Regional Units at the regional level (within the ARS – regional health agencies) or at the *départemental* Health Unit (within the *départemental* units of the ARS named “délégation territoriale”). As regards employment, the first two levels of responsibility in the “Pôle Emploi”, the new agency in charge of employment, were targeted, including – apart from the central management posts – the regional directors and territorial directors of the Employment Section (positioned at *départemental* level), and the regional directorates of the AFPA (National Association for Adult Vocational Training). In addition, because certain aspects of employment have been decentralized to the regions, the first level of elected sub-government in France, our sample included the people responsible for “employment and training” policies in regional government. This last category, however, comprises a small number of people (22) and does not significantly alter the state-centred character of the survey sample.

In addition, an additional “light” version of the survey (by e-mail only) has been conducted with the third level of responsibility in central government, the “bureau heads” (chefs de bureau). These administrative managers have significantly less responsibility than regional directors or *départemental* directors of state decentralized services, and as a result affect the homogeneity of the target sample. On the other hand, a “bureau head” in a central government ministry holds a top level of responsibility, often assigned to young potential highflyers.

⁶ This notion of ‘decentralized’ system only emphasizes here the fact that the French state and its ministries historically have a strong network of ministerial units at the regional and *départemental* levels. This is what we called the French territorial state. The ‘decentralized’ or territorial state has nothing to do with the politics of decentralization or devolution, launched in the early 1980s and aimed at transferring competences from the national state and its ministries to elected subnational governments e.g. the regions, the *départements* and the municipalities, the three kind of local governments and local authorities we have in France.

We have chosen to present here the averages for the whole sample. Clearly, this can give rise to some distortion. The health and, in particular, the employment sectors are more marked by the agency model and for this reason more committed to *New Public Management* approaches. Perceptions become more critical further down the hierarchy, and the introduction of bureau heads tends to reinforce pessimism about the reforms.

The sample was compiled from a government database, produced by a private publisher (the *Bottin administratif* published by LexisNexis) seen as the reference for government service at this level. This meant that the survey was entirely independent of government. The questionnaire was sent both by post and e-mail. The respondents had the choice of returning the paper version of the questionnaire or logging on to the online website.

The questionnaire essentially stays close to the core survey questionnaire. Because, for reasons of anonymity, there were no codes that could identify the respondent, it was important to be able to determine the position of each of them in the hierarchy. Thus, additional questions were included to help situate each respondent in the specific context of the French system (e.g. prefect,...) and clearly differentiate the different positions in the regional and *départemental* organizations of ministries.

The questionnaire was sent by post and e-mail on 21 May 2012, and several e-mail reminders were sent up to the end of June 2012. This period, which was set to match the European project timetable, corresponds in the French case to particular circumstances. It fell between the presidential elections of 22 April and 6 May 2012 (which led to a change of regime with the election of François Hollande) and the legislative elections (3 and 17 June 2012). The questionnaire response period therefore corresponded to a time of political transition, a period of relative calm for senior executives, when they attend to day-to-day affairs while awaiting new government guidelines. From the perspective of senior civil servants, it may also have been a good time to take stock of the fairly drastic administrative reforms introduced during the mandate of President Sarkozy, as part of what was then called the General Public Policy Review. In fact, certain survey questions asking for an assessment of the “last five years” may have had particular resonance in the French system, in which presidential elections take place every five years. These two reasons, along with the fact that very few independent questionnaire-based surveys on this scale have been conducted in France, may explain the very high response rate from the core survey sample: around 30% of top-flight executives. However, there is a question mark over the bias introduced by this particular conjuncture. Were there more responses from senior executives with reasons to be particularly satisfied or dissatisfied, than from the others? This kind of bias is very difficult to assess, and the results may reflect a degree of distortion. Nevertheless, the distribution of responses to the most general questions on the five-year assessment (e.g. question 16) or on the success or failure of the reforms, is reassuring. First, a good half of respondents gave an average response, and second the proportion of very negative responses is similar to that of very positive responses. This means that even if the people who took the opportunity to give very extreme responses are overrepresented, the impact on the averages is likely to be partly offset.

In all, 5886 people were contacted by both post and e-mail, and 2618 only by e-mail, making an initial sample of 5886 people. We count 5297 if we consider a 10% people not reached (false addresses etc.) corresponding at post and mail non delivery notification. This figure can be compared with the socio-professional breakdown of civil servants in 2009, which identified 11,141 “civilian and military executive personnel”, a very much smaller figure than the 179,421 classified as “category A

excluding teachers” in the General Government Database, quoted in the annual report on the state of the public services, facts and figures 2010-2011, p. 146 and 355. The homogeneous category that forms the central core of the sample thus corresponds to a narrow definition, which represents the upper quartile of “civilian and military executive personnel” in terms of socio-professional status and category.

The overall response rate is easy to assess from the number of questionnaires sent, without double counting, and the number of returns. By contrast, a sector-based assessment is trickier. A prefect with general powers may have answered “employment” without being included in the invitations sent for that sector, which means that the response rates are undoubtedly overstated. This is particularly true for the employment sector, where we also find a low response rate from people working for the employment agency (Pôle Emploi), in other words who ticked both the “employment” sector and “agency” options.

Table 2. Numbers of sent questionnaires, received responses and responses rates

	Sent	% of Sent	Responses	%of responses	Response rate
State central directors	303	6%	60	5%	20%
State central deputy directors	462	9%	143	12%	31%
Third level state central "chefs de bureau"	2267	43%	301	25%	13%
Prefects	199	4%	44	4%	22%
State regional directors	253	5%	102	9%	40%
State departmental directors	547	10%	237	20%	43%
Other local state administration	508	10%	146	12%	29%
Agency directors	440	8%	74	6%	17%
Other agency	319	6%	72	6%	23%
Total	5297	100%	1193	100%	22%
First and second level state administration	2087	39%	660	55%	32%
State administration (non agency)	4539	86%	1033	87%	23%
Health	424	8%	190	16%	45%
Employment	411	8%	155	13%	38%

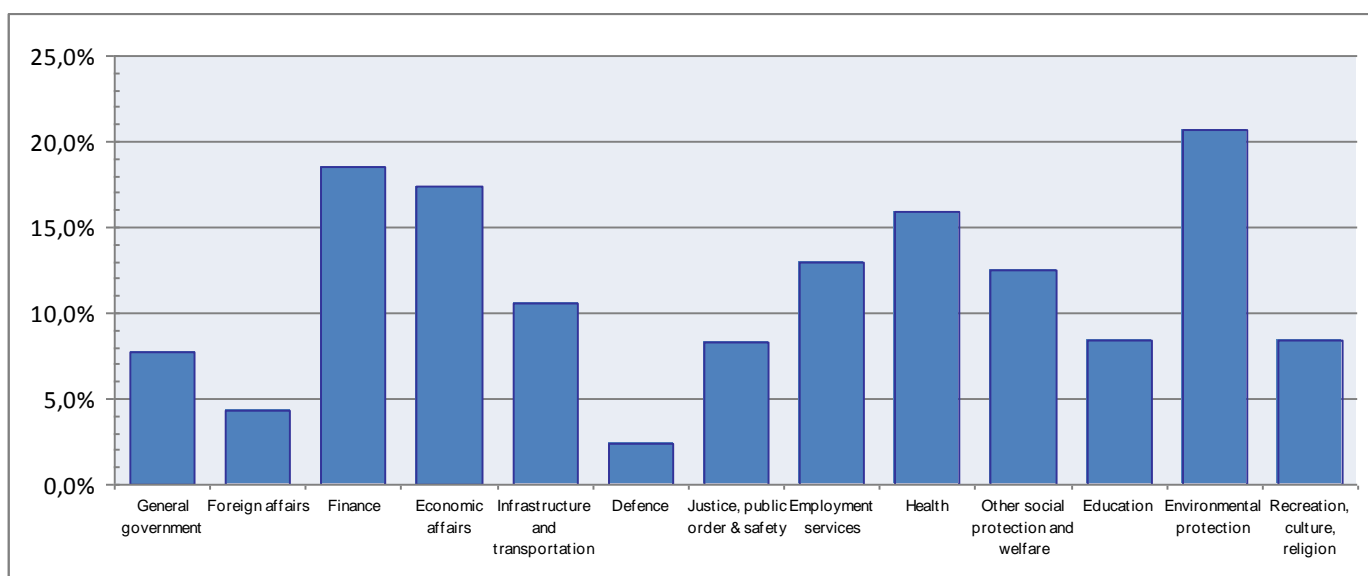
Another significant result is the high response rate for the core survey from directors of central government units in prefectures and in regional ministerial units as well as for central government deputy directors (32%). Certain subsequent analyses of the data will be based on this smaller sample, which gives a more uniform picture of the population of “senior executives” in government service in France.

Remark: Most of the questions took the form of responses on a scale running from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Unless otherwise stated, the percentages provided correspond to the sum of responses 1 and 2 for negative views, and of 6 and 7 for positive views. This corresponds to strong responses in either direction.

3.2 Organizational Context of Respondents

Sector Type – A sector-based analysis of the responses reveals that some sectors are more represented than others. It is tricky to relate this to the characteristics of the initial questionnaire, firstly because French ministries do not always correspond to the proposed classification, and secondly because people belonging to just one ministry may have ticked several sectors. Prefects often indicated that they were part of several sectors, not simply one general government category.

Figure 1. Policy field sample shares



The sectors most represented in the responses reflect the initial database. For example, there is the Ministry of Ecology, whose responsibilities go beyond the environment alone, and at the regional and *départemental* level cover infrastructures, housing and agriculture. This ministry's share in the initial database is some 14 %, which is a bit less than the final responses. Some of these respondents may also have ticked "other social" if they work in the housing or "transport" sector. In France, the economics and finance functions are part of a single ministry which, like the ministry of ecology, is strongly represented at regional level. This group represents 21% of our initial database, which is more than each of the separate components in the final population, but less than the sum of the two, which may mean there were duplicate responses.

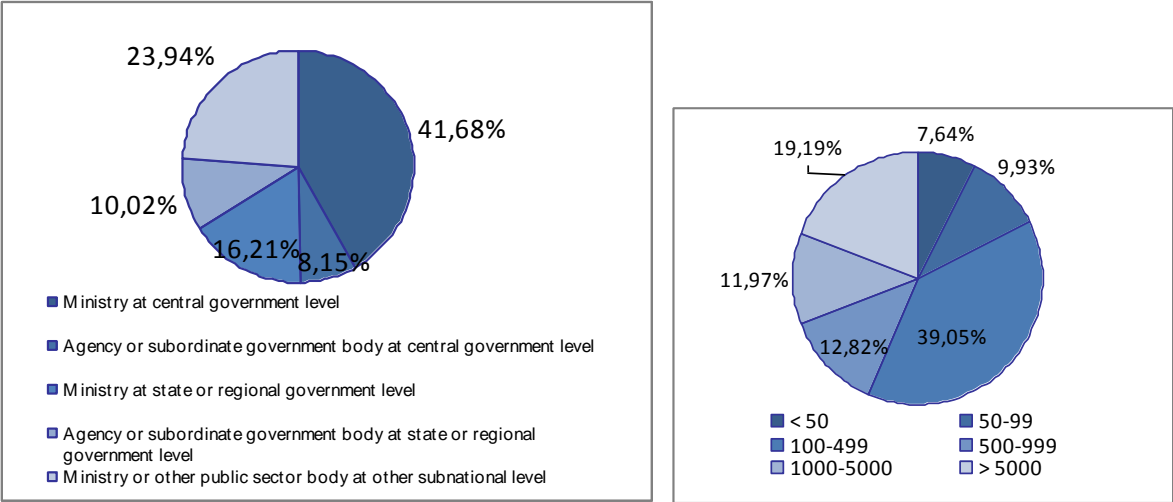
Table 3. Relative shares of ministries in initial database

Foreign Affairs	Finance	Economy	Ecology	Defence	Justice	Home Office
6%	12%	9%	14%	7%	2%	10%
Employment	Health	Social	Education	Culture Leisure	Agriculture	Total
8%	8%	7%	7%	4%	7%	100%

As already noted, the health sector is overrepresented and the defence and foreign affairs sectors underrepresented. The security sector is difficult to isolate, since it is part of the Ministry of the Interior.

Sectors of economy and finance and infrastructure, transport and environment, are sectors that globally employ large numbers of people in government service, respectively 9 % for the economics and finance ministry and 4% for the Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea in 2010 (annual government service report, 2012 edition).The National Education and Higher Education sectors, which accounted for 49 % of total public sector employees in 2010 and Defence (15 %), 7 are clearly underrepresented in the responses, but they were not targets of the COCOPS survey.

Figure 2. Organization type and size shares



Organization Type – As regards organizational level, we find that a significant proportion of respondents come from central government ministries (42%) but also that the other almost equally large contingent consists of senior central government executives working at regional and *départemental* level for ministries (40%).The response rates are instructive because they reveal a significant distortion with a medium response rate from central government directors (20 %) and, conversely, a very high response rate from directors of ministerial services at the regional level (40 %) and ministerial services at the *départemental* level (43 %). The global low response rate from central government is notably explained by a fairly low rate of response at the third level of responsibility in central government service, i.e. the bureau heads. This lower response may perhaps be explained by the fact that this group was contacted solely by e-mail. By contrast, the response rate from the directors of regional ministerial services and even more from services at the *départemental* level is extremely high. One factor that may explain these high response rates is that these echelons were very strongly affected by the structural reforms carried out between 2007 and 2012. It may be that they were more inclined to respond than other groups.

This leads to a doubling in the representation of the regional and *départemental* levels, with a similar apparent distortion. There is less distortion with regard to the representation of agencies.

Organization Size: The first observation is that a majority of respondents (57 %) work in organizations with less than 500 employees, 39% with between 100 and 499 employees. This figure is slightly higher than the average for the total COCOPS sample (51 %). On the other hand, 19 % of

7 The total was 2,307,492 employees in 2010.

respondents come from organizations with more than 5000 employees, a figure higher than the COCOPS average (17 %).

3.2 Socio-demographic Background of Respondents

Gender – The percentage of women who answered the questionnaire (approximately 30%) is comparable with the proportion of women amongst “civilian and military executive personnel”, where the level is 25%. In so far as female representation decreases the further up the hierarchy one goes because of the so-called “glass ceiling” effect (the proportion of female “administrative managers” is 46%), and because the sample group is smaller than that of “civilian and military executive personnel”, it may be considered that women respondents are slightly overrepresented.

Age: The great majority of respondents (60 %) are aged between 36 and 55, with a group of 34 % between 56 and 65. These results are close to the average for the COCOPS sample. We have no general data that can be used to calibrate the responses on age.

“All other things being equal” the first analyses of the effects of age and gender variables bring up some surprises. As regards gender, women seem to display stronger approval for determined action. As regards age, the younger respondents seemed less committed to their organization and more negative in their assessment of the reform process.

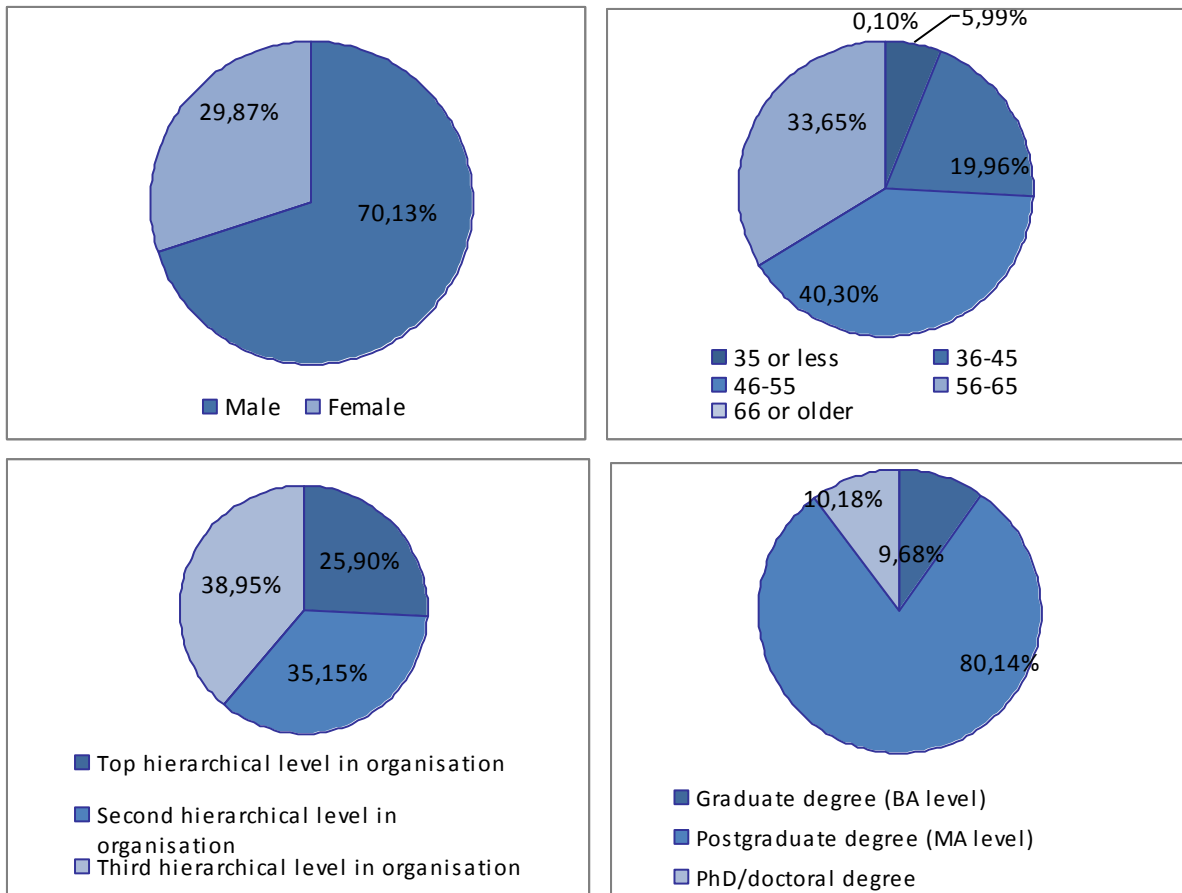
Hierarchical Level

The first two levels of responsibility, which represent the core of the survey, formed half of the initial database and ultimately account for 61% of the final responses. This paradoxical result reflects the lower level of response from bureau heads (the third level). However, the proportion of third level executives is still high (39 %), which is explained by our decision to extend the sample to bureau heads in central government ministries and by the presence of division heads in regional ministerial bodies.

Education

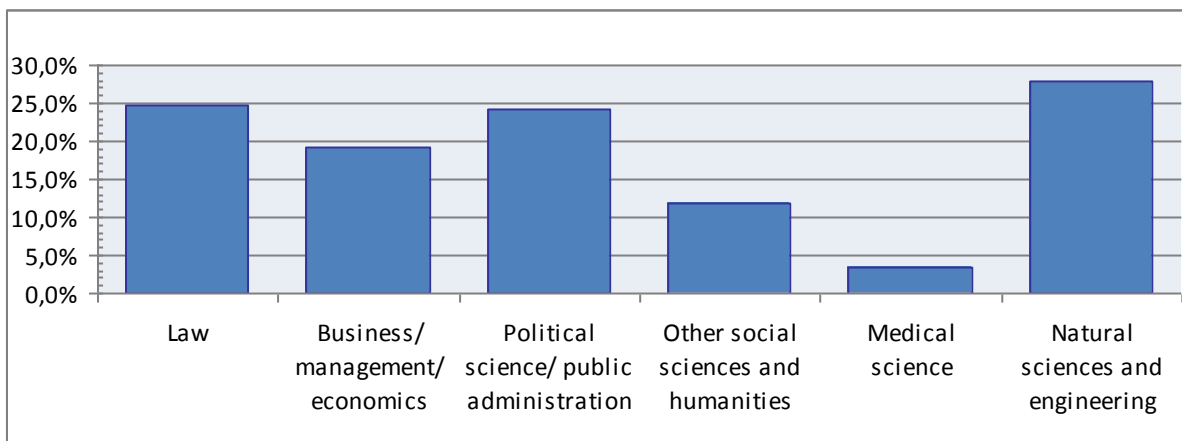
A very large majority of respondents had at least the equivalent of a Masters degree (80 %) which, in the French context, encompasses a very wide range of backgrounds, from non-ENA educated civil servants in ministerial units at the regional and *départemental* levels with a Masters level qualification, to graduates of the *grandes écoles* and ENA (national school of administration), the equivalent of a Masters degree, more present at central level of ministries. More specifically, 26 % of our respondents were graduates of *grandes écoles*. We do not have the data to give a finer breakdown of the responses on educational level. At best, we can say that this level of 80% is above average for the COCOPS sample (69 %), reflecting a high level of qualification, probably attributable to the influence of the *grandes écoles* in France. The low percentage of respondents with a PhD (10%), on the other hand, is in marked contrast, below the COCOPS average of 15.5% and much lower, for example, than the German sample, where 31.5% of respondents had a doctorate. Only 3% of the respondents in our sample had only the baccalaureate or no qualifications at all, which is much lower than the level for the COCOPS sample as a whole (16%).

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



If we look at background educational disciplines, it emerges that law (25 %) and political science and public administration (24 %) – the influence of the institutes of political studies and ENA (national school of administration) is apparent here – account for 48 % of respondents. France’s big engineering schools are another significant player, with the result that scientific and technical qualifications are high up in the educational rankings (28 %). Also worth emphasizing is the significant influence of business studies, which account for one fifth of the sample (19 %), a fact growingly observed.

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

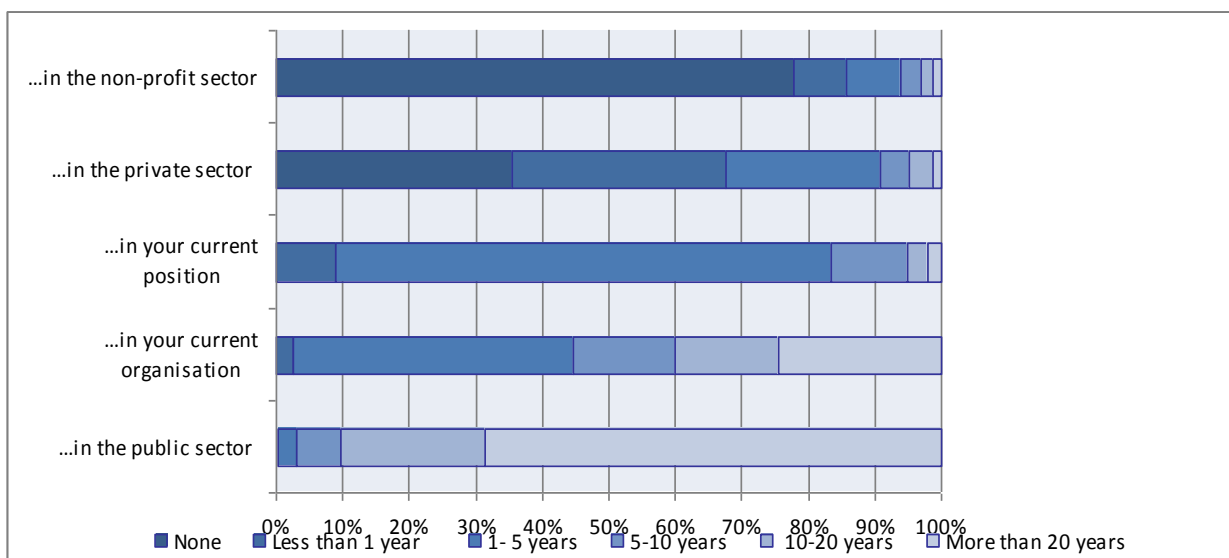


Tenure

69 % of respondents had been in the public sector for more than 20 years, and 22 % for between 10 and 20 years, whereas only 3% had less than 5 years of service. These figures show the significance of a career commitment to public service and promotion based on length of service. Indeed, 40% of the respondents had been in their organization for more than 10 years, which suggests that this is the place where they have made their careers and achieved promotion. Nonetheless, this figure is slightly below the average for the total COCOPS sample (48 %). The figures on internal mobility are less clear-cut, since 75% of the respondents have been in their posts for 1 to 5 years and only 5% for more than 10 years, the latter result being below the COCOPS average of 16%. This implies that access to senior positions is subject to significant uncertainties and movements, notably associated with political change. Another explanatory factor is the systematic policies of executive mobility applied in certain ministries. A count of the regional directors at the Ministry of Ecology shows that to access this position, the average period of time in a post is between 3 and 4 years, and that virtually none of these executives remained more than seven years in a position before achieving this responsibility (Jeannot, 2010).

As regards external mobility, it is a fact that periods of more than 10 years in the private sector remain an exception, despite a long-standing “revolving door” mechanism in the French civil service. Nonetheless, recent work (Rouban, 2002) has shown that the revolving door operated at an earlier age, and was permanent, with no return to the public sector. We can therefore assume that our population of respondents does not allow us to “see” moves into the private sector. For example, 35.5% say that they have never worked in the private sector, whereas 32 % have spent less than a year there, which can be the duration of an internship. These figures are significantly higher than the average results for the COCOPS survey (respectively 27 % and 23 %). Only 27 % say that they have spent between 1 and 10 years in the private sector. These figures show that the revolving door is confined to an administrative elite drawn from the top branches, which has access to ministerial offices, who are probably not part of our survey sample, or else that people who move into the private sector do not come back.

Figure 5. Tenure of respondents



4. Values and Attitudes of Public Sector Executives

The role representations with which the respondents identify is interesting. The proposal with which the respondents identify the most is “ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules” (81%), which emphasises a traditionally bureaucratic version, in Max Weber’s sense, of the role expected of civil servants. However, the results record similar responses for “ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules” and for “ensuring efficient use of resources” (77%). Likewise, identification with the idea that the senior civil servants’ role is to provide expertise and technical knowledge (74%) or to find joint solutions (70%) is strong but, here again, counterbalanced by the commitment to “achieving results” (72%). These findings show that the New Public Management values of efficiency can perfectly well coincide with more traditional civil service values, evidence of the presence of socialization mechanisms in the NPM or of the influence of financial imperatives. However, when individuals are forced to decide between two purportedly contradictory values (Figure 7, question 23), we find that the principles associated with the traditional bureaucratic state clearly win out over market principles, and regulations or the citizen over results or the client. The findings show that the prevalence of certain principles associated with the traditional Weberian bureaucratic model – equity (42%) vs efficiency (16%); citizen orientation (56%) vs customer focus (10%); state provision (54%) vs market provision (7%); funding from taxation (36%) vs funding by users (8%). However, unusually and by contrast with the average for the COCOPS survey, the item “achieving results” gets quite a high score (27% and even 46% if positions 5, 6 and 7 are totalled), more than “Following rules” (20% and 29% if positions 1, 2 and 3 are combined). Similarly, efficiency (27%) is valued more highly than quality (22%), seeming to indicate the perceived weight of budgetary constraints and an internalization of neo-managerial values.

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

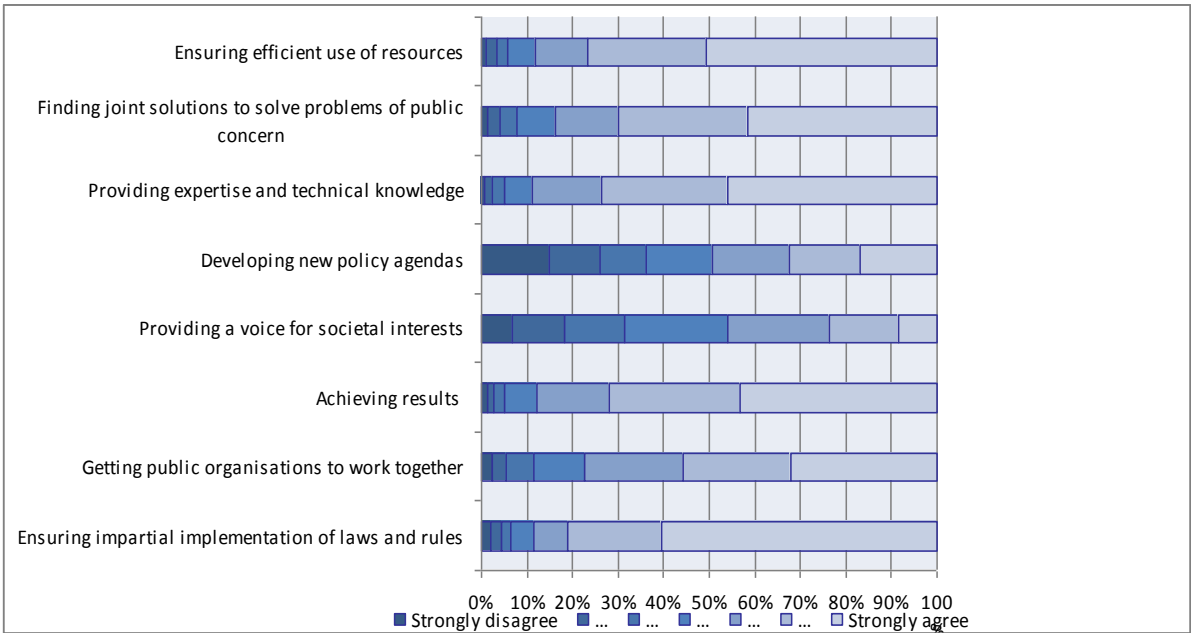
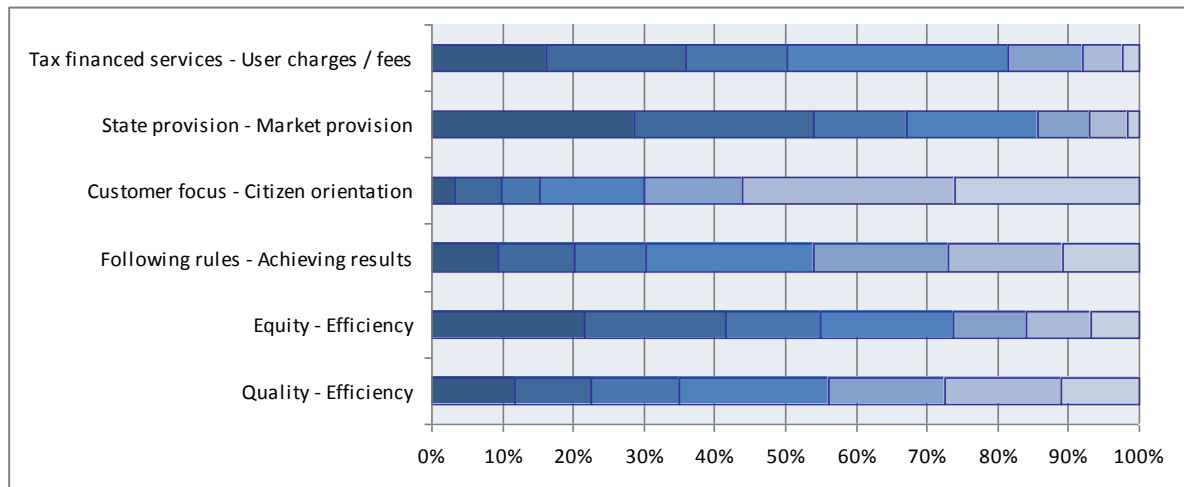


Figure 7. Priorities as public servants (Q: Public services often need to balance different priorities. Where would you place your own position?)



The levels of response on the impact of coordination are lower. In particular, people seem to identify the least with “developing new policy agendas” (only 32% identify strongly with this) and “providing a voice for societal interests” (24%). The first item corresponds in fact to the division of roles, which directors of central government administrations accept more than do the directors of decentralized ministerial units, who perform more operational functions of implementation of public policy at the regional and *départemental* level. Remarkably, there is also a fairly high level of response from agency directors (29% 6 or 7, 49% 5, 6 or 7), which reveals the perception of a certain autonomy in the deciding policy direction. The second item is more likely to reflect a French specificity and a distrust of lobbies. The differences between sectors here are significant. The identification with “providing a voice for societal interests” is greater in the health or transport sectors, ministries that are accustomed to working with the private sector.

As regards the questions on **motivation and social preference** (figure 8 and 9), we find a traditional attachment to intrinsic motives: attachment to the content of the work (“interesting work”, 92%) or to autonomy (“room to make decisions”, 70%) and lower scores for extrinsic motives “job security” (41%), “status” (32%) and “high income” (32%). However, the extrinsic motive “doing something that is useful for society” is valued (83%), perhaps as an approximation to the ideal of public service, similarly, though here to a lesser degree, with “opportunities to help other people” (50% but 78% including response level 5). The existence of altruistic motives for public service would seem to be partially confirmed here, figures that will be interesting to compare with the remaining results for COCOPS. It is also noteworthy that commitment to the public sector is partial with regard to opportunities for promotion.

The results relating to preferences in terms of social values (question 25) are difficult to interpret. At first sight, the answers seem fairly conventional. What is needed is a comparison with French responses in European surveys on values and, above all, a comparison between countries.

However, it is interesting to note that, amongst senior executives, women respond significantly more favourably to the items “interesting work”, “good opportunities for promotion”, “I like taking responsibility for making decisions” and “I make a decision and move on”. This hard-nosed posture is very different from the traditional image of “feminine qualities” and is worth emphasizing. One

interpretation might be that a woman does not reach this level of responsibility without greater determination than men at the same level.

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

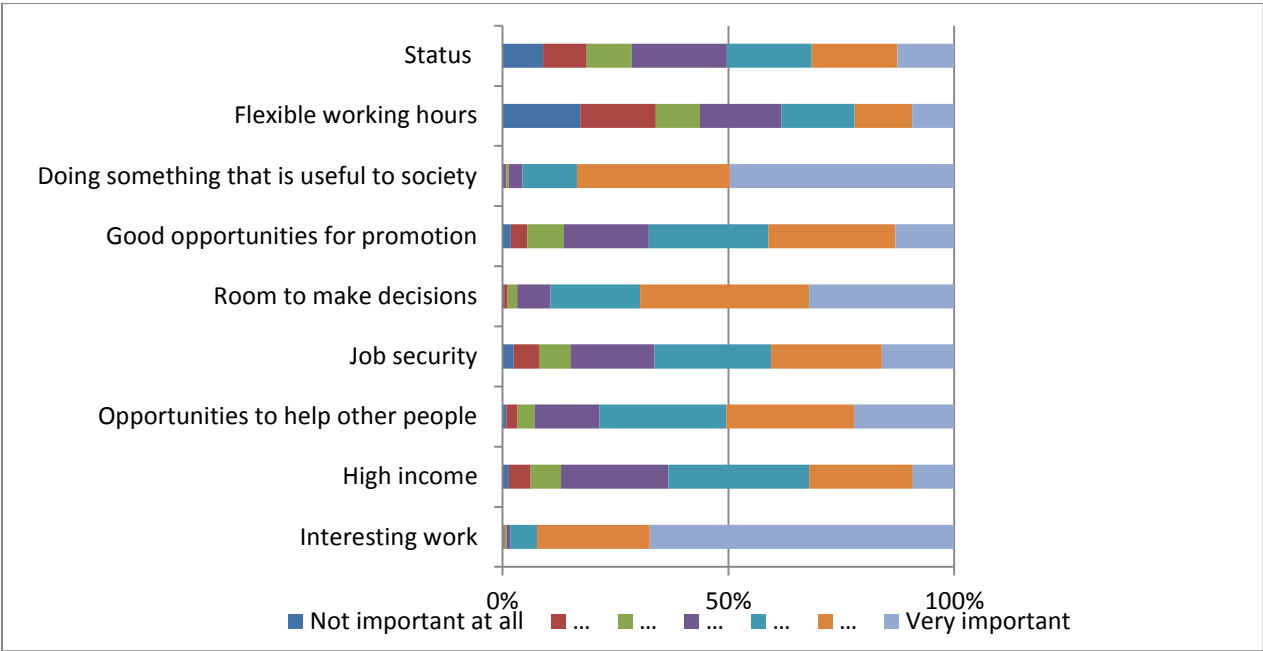
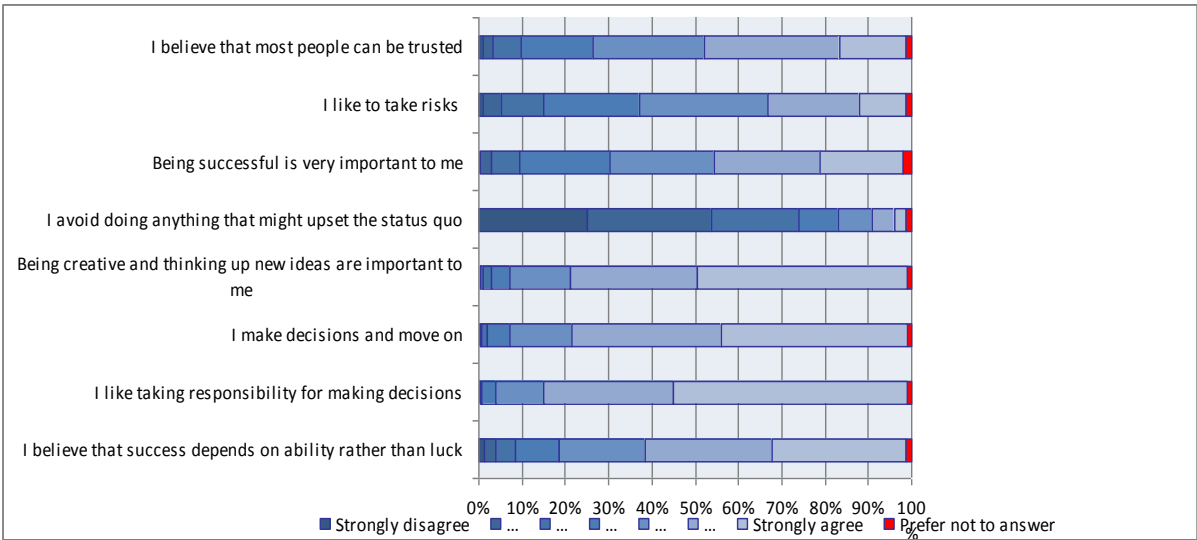


Figure 9. Social value preferences (Q: Please indicate how far you agree or disagree with the following statements)

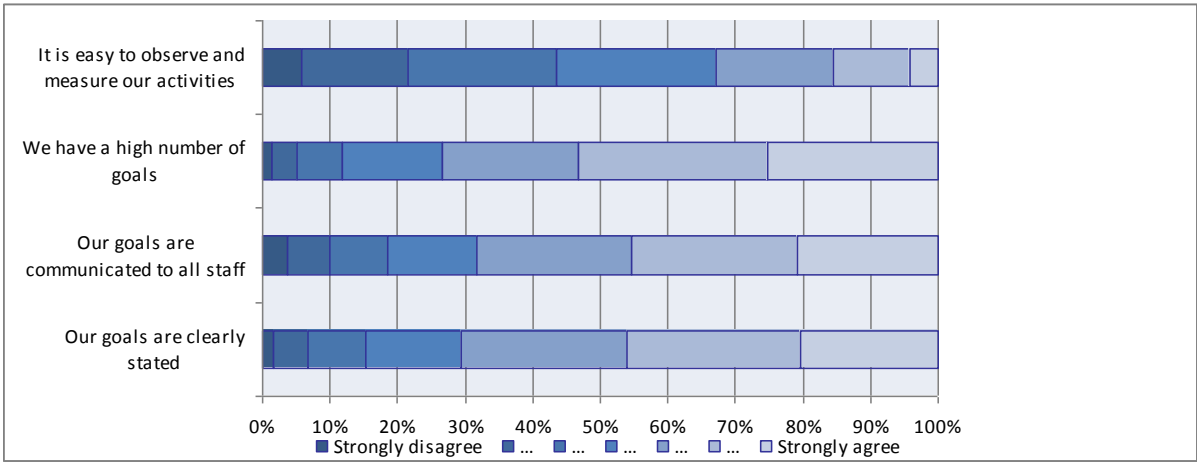


5. Characteristics of the Work Context in Public Administration

Indicators and targets

The question on indicators and targets (Q8) has particular implications in France due to the fact that one of the major recent components of government reform, the organic bill on finance laws, the so-called LOLF, is based on the introduction of target-related programmes and budgets underpinned by the production of daily numerical targets and measurement indicators. Its implementation began in 2006. Surveys confirm that the LOLF is being applied and that the neo-managerial instruments have been widely rolled out: 46% of the respondents agree with the fact that the goals are clearly stated; 45% that they are communicated to all staff (only 10% say that this is not the case). The LOLF instruments are clearly perceived as day-to-day tools of management. However, the perception of indicators is less clear-cut, clearly showing that there is still debate over whether this performance-based model of government is appropriate to the public sector: 53% consider that the number of goals is large – which is one of the typical problems of these managerial systems – whereas 22% do not think that their activities are easily measurable (44% if we include response position 3) compared with 15% who think they are (32% if we add response 5 to responses 6 and 7). These findings give a glimpse of the problems that can be associated with the implementation of these performance measurement instruments.

Figure 10. Goal ambiguity (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?)



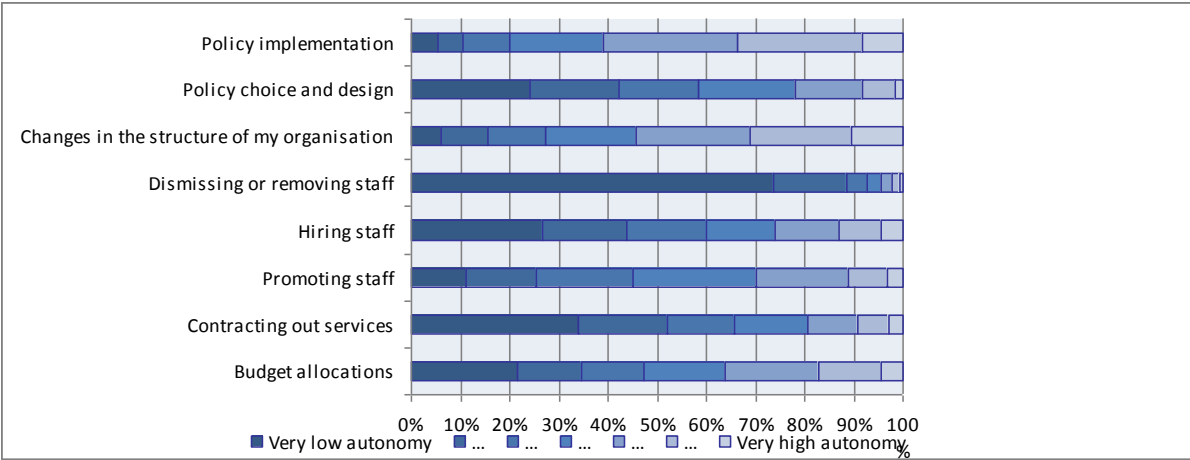
Management Autonomy

The question on autonomy is particularly appropriate for understanding the work of senior executives. It both reveals the continuing weight of traditional administrative rules in the French public sector, which generally allows little individual autonomy, and the penetration of neo-managerial instruments that are supposed to emphasise this autonomy as a principle of good management. At the same time, numerous studies have shown that autonomy for administrators and managers was often an unfulfilled promise, whereas NPM led to a regain of control (Guillemot, Jeannot, 2010, 2013). Taken overall, the results confirm known components of the traditional nature of personnel management rules in the French civil service and the highly controlled rules of recruitment and promotion. 44% of the respondents do not see themselves as autonomous in the recruitment of staff. 88.5% say that they do not have autonomy when it comes to laying off or sacking

staff, but there is more room for manoeuvre with regard to promotion, since only 25% say that they are not autonomous (45% if 1, 2 and 3 are included), although training is heavily controlled by the joint administrative committees with their union representation and by a branch-based system of control. It is noteworthy that 42% of the respondents say that they are not autonomous in the choice of public policies (58% including 3), and that only 8.3% say that they are autonomous in this domain. With regard to implementation, more respondents (34%) say that they are autonomous (61% if response position 5 is added). These results reveal a global perception of lack of autonomy (below the COCOPS average), and are in sharp contrast, for example, with the German situation. This arises perhaps from the fact that part of the respondents are from ministerial government organizations at the regional and *départemental* levels and are therefore more in a position to implement than initiate decisions. We can also see here the influence of politics in the French context, which is perhaps perceived by respondents as largely in charge of this decision-making role.

It is interesting to note that only 17% see themselves as autonomous in budget allocations, which confirms that the organic bill on finance laws (LOLF) has not really contributed to significant decentralization of budget management. By contrast, 31% see themselves as autonomous with regard to reorganization. This result is explained by the fact that the implementation of the general public policy review (RGPP) made senior executives – in particular those in the government’s services at the regional and *départemental* levels – responsible for implementing this policy, which largely relied on the merging of services.

Figure 11. Degree of management autonomy (Q: In my position, I have the following degree of autonomy with regard to)



Broadly speaking, senior executives in the French civil service do not see themselves as very autonomous. This perhaps reflects the maintenance of strong centralizing and hierarchical mechanisms in the French context and confirms worries of scholars about the failure of the managerial side of the LOLF e.g. more autonomy for managers.

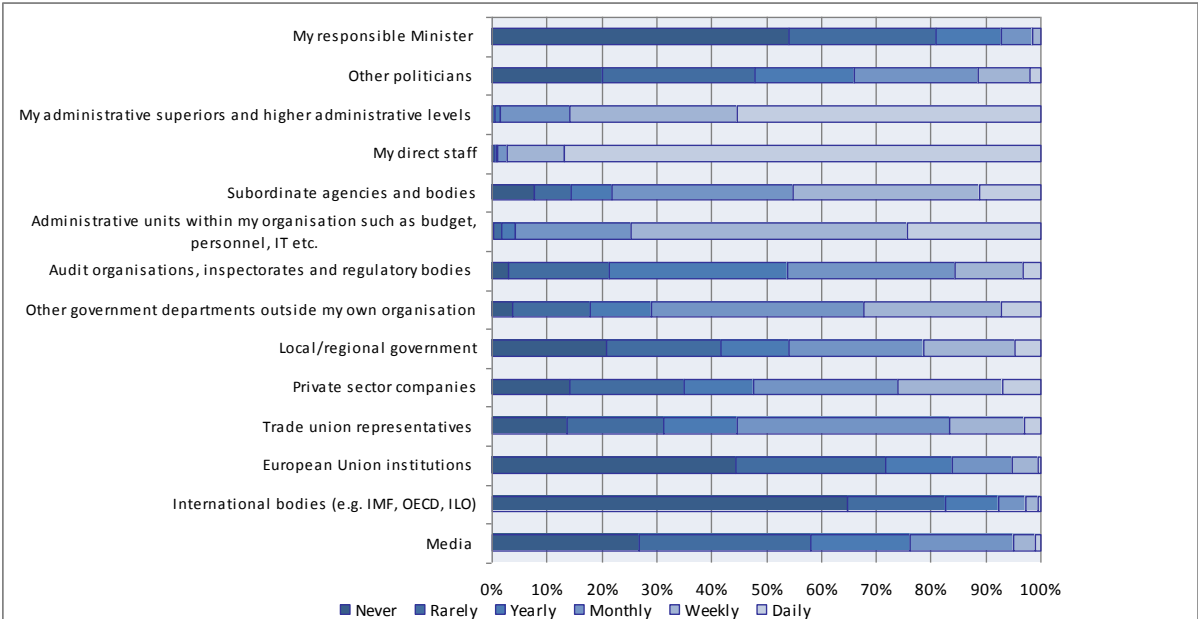
The perception of autonomy becomes particularly significant when the variations are analysed on the basis of position. A major difference then emerges between the responses by agency directors, who see themselves as highly autonomous in all areas, and those by directors of interministerial units at the *départemental* level, who see themselves as having little autonomy except in reorganizations, the responsibility for which has in fact been transferred to them. These results suggest a major change in French government administration. In the past, numerous studies had highlighted the autonomy of directors of ministerial units at the *départemental* level because of their extensive room for

manoeuvre, similar to that of street-level bureaucrats and arising from the influence of local systems of regulation between ministerial units at the *départemental* level, prefects and local politicians. The results of the survey clearly show that from one reform to the next, this autonomy has been significantly undermined. First, ministerial units at the *départemental* level have been transformed, by the 2007-2010 reforms, into interministerial units, now supervised by the *départemental* prefects and not anymore in a hierarchical line with ministries and their central and regional units. Second one might have imagined that this change would benefit the regional directors, whose role was greatly reinforced in the regional government reform of 2007-2012, and who are responsible for a good proportion of programme budgets in the form of operational programme budgets (BOP). This proves to be only partially true: while they are more autonomous than their counterpart at *départemental* level (the directors of interministerial units), they are much less so than agency directors.

Interaction Frequency

The analysis of interactions is another way of assessing the work of these senior civil servants. The levels of at least weekly interaction with hierarchical superiors (98%), staff (99%), functional units within the organization such as RH or budget services (95%) or subordinate agencies or bodies within the organization (78%), reflect an activity that is highly focused on internal organization. Interactions with international bodies outside Europe remain limited (7%) and are confined to the central administration and senior civil servants from the *grandes écoles*. Interactions with European bodies are more frequent, with 16% at least monthly, but are present at all territorial levels because of structural European funding, which is distributed, in particular, by prefects. Interactions with local authorities, private companies and trade unions are slightly less intense, but nevertheless reflect the scope of interdependent action: respectively 46%; 52% and 55% say that they have at least monthly contact with the three groups.

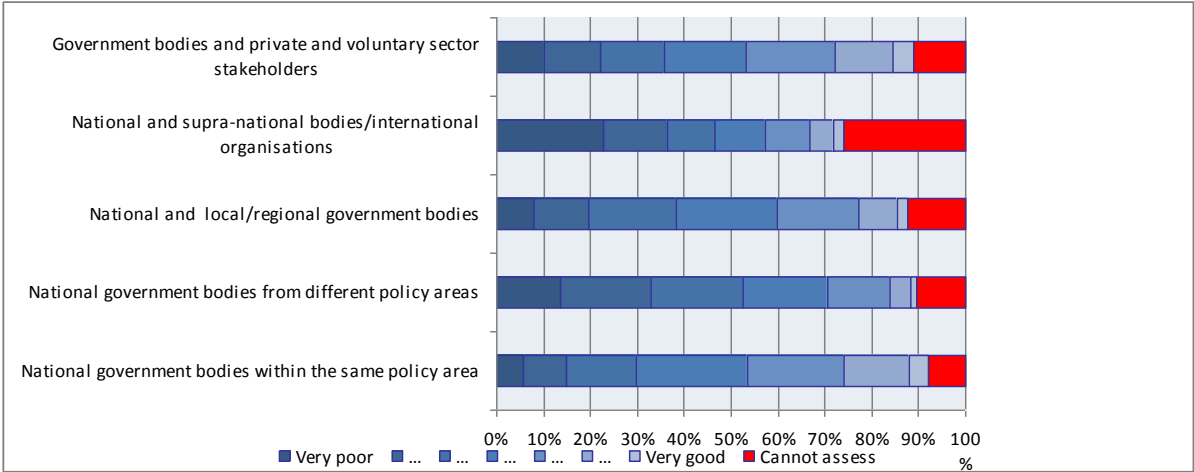
Figure 12. Interaction frequency (Q: Please indicate how frequently you typically interact with the following actors or bodies)



Coordination quality

In France, the question of coordination between ministries encompasses several factors. First, it corresponds to the institutional forms of decision-making between ministries, conducted at national level by the government/at interministerial meetings but also, at regional and *départemental* level, conducted on a day-to-day basis by the prefects (within the regional administrative committee) with regard to the implementation of public policy (for an overview, Grémion, 1976; Hayward, Wright. 2002). Secondly, coordination also relates to the partnership between ministries at central level and to interministerial coordination, which has been heavily developed in France since the late 1970s, through specific public policies, in particular in areas such as rural development, urban policy, security or public health policies (Jeannot, Goodchild, 2011). Thirdly, the general public policy review culminated in a series of organizational mergers at regional and *départemental* level (creation of big ministerial organizations at regional level, creation of big interministerial entities at *départemental* level) which reinforced the management and coordination role played by the regional echelon within ministries and led to more interaction between this level and the central government administrations to which it reports. In certain cases, the budgets of the newly created regional divisions depend on several ministries, which require coordination. In addition, this reform led to a reinforcement of the regional prefects’ coordinating powers. How far do the data from the COCOPS survey enable us to identify the factors?

Figure 13. Coordination quality (Q: How would you characterize collaboration in your own policy field between)



Let us begin by saying that it is a little tricky to relate these diverse factors to the findings that emerge from the survey. Nonetheless, the first observation that emerges is a fairly positive picture of coordination in a single public policy sector (39% corresponding to type 5, 6 and 7 responses) and, by contrast, significantly poorer between different ministerial and policy sectors (only 23% see it as largely good, 63% as largely poor). These negative assessments of interministerial coordination seem to indicate that it works badly, and that French government operate largely in compartments. Supporting this latter interpretation, it is noteworthy that the question, specific to the French survey, on the coordination between levels within the ministry, reveals a mostly positive evaluation, since almost 53% of the respondents (of those who did not refuse to state an opinion on this question) find this intra-ministerial coordination to be broadly good. This may be a sign that the vertical integration of ministries is effective, whereas coordination between ministries is less so. It is also possible to

conclude that the levels of positive appraisal remain essentially modest, implying that coordination overall is not perceived as entirely satisfactory.

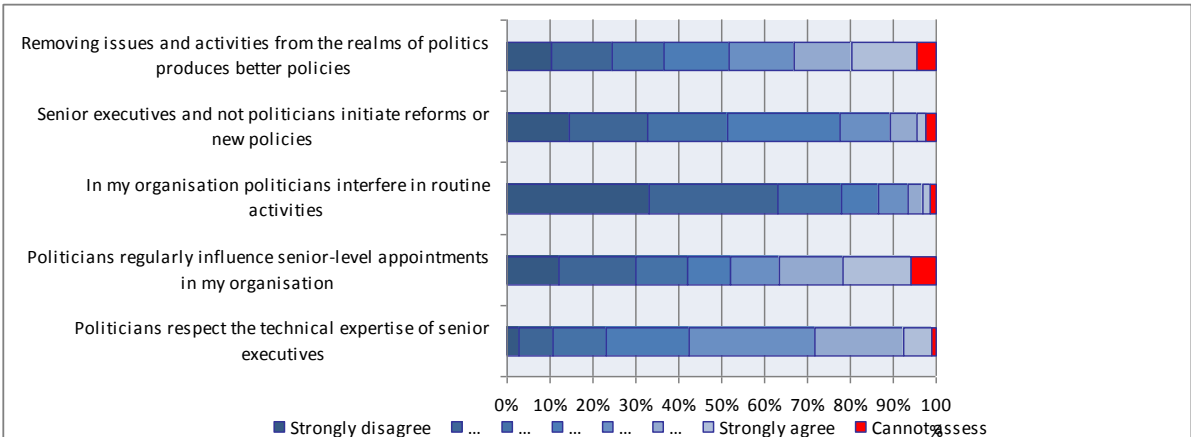
If we analyse the assessments of external coordination, it is striking to note that the coordination with national and supranational levels is perceived as essentially poor by a majority of respondents (58%), while the view of relations with local authorities is a little less negative (largely poor for 44%). The least clear-cut result corresponds to relations with private companies and the voluntary sector, perceived by 42% as largely good.

These findings indicate that it is the relationship between levels within a single ministry that is seen as most important. Overall, we find a generally unfavourable picture of the existing forms of coordination. This is supported by the fact that, as in Germany, a significantly smaller number of people answered this question, with a number of respondents saying that they were unable to evaluate the issues. This rate of non-response may support the idea that public service executives are unfamiliar with the activities of other organizations, which implies a lack of coordination.

Degree of politicization

The responses relating to relations with politicians are difficult to interpret and somewhat contradictory. To start with, it can be said that the French administration is characterised by the presence of mechanisms of politicization for the upper echelons (political appointments within the council of ministers for directors of central government administrations plus the existence of ministerial cabinets) but by less politicization in the lower echelons. However, political intervention can occur at regional government level, in particular because the prefects intervene politically in the ordinary operations of decentralized ministerial units at regional and *départemental* levels by channelling political demands, whether from local politicians (to negotiate local deals) or from the executive (e.g. strong pressures on employment policies or strong pressures in the event of crises, particularly health-related). The likelihood of perceiving political interference therefore varies markedly from one level and one position to another.

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



Supporting the idea of distance from politics, 64% of the respondents believe that politicians do not interfere in day-to-day activities. Similarly, 52% broadly disagree with the idea that senior civil servants are at the heart of public policy development (thereby acknowledging, even implicitly, the predominance of political roles), whereas 57% broadly agree with the idea that politicians respect

the technical expertise of the civil service. These results should be interpreted as a stable recognition of the division of roles (politicians decide, civil servants execute), which correspond both to the Weberian ideal of the bureaucracy and to the French situation of the 2nd and 3rd level echelons of the organization, which are effectively sheltered from political interference. From these perspectives, France's senior administrative levels seem to perceive the spheres as relatively autonomous, both in terms of experience and aspiration. However, two items produce different responses, which blur the reading and reveal a certain tension in the relations between politics and the administration. Thus, 46% broadly agree with the politically incorrect proposal that "Removing issues and activities from the realms of politics allows for more farsighted policies" (vs 38% who broadly disagree). This figure seems quite high, and would seem to show that almost half of senior civil servants would like to see politicians keep their distance, in order to give the administrative players more freedom in the conduct of public policy. These respondents therefore feel implicitly that politics have too much influence. However, the way the questions are formulated does not tell us whether they relate to the minister, members of the national parliament or local politicians, an important question in the French context. Likewise, the answers to the question "Politicians regularly influence senior-level appointments in my organization" are very sharply divided: 45% broadly disagree with this statement, and the same percentage broadly agrees. It seems reasonable to assume that this perception varies between levels and positions. In fact, central administration executives (including deputy directors) and prefects more clearly feel the weight of political interference in appointments than do regional and *départemental* directors. These variable responses on the influence of politicians correspond to the legal distinction between senior civil servants appointed by the council of ministers and the others.

In international comparison, however, it would seem that slightly fewer than average French respondents (46% vs 55%) agree with the proposition that "Removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better policies".

Generally speaking, senior French civil servants would seem to be highly exposed to performance-related government instruments and the problems they generate (large number of targets, difficulties of measurement). They also see deficiencies in coordination but suffer, in particular, from an overall lack of autonomy. In the French context, therefore, neo-managerial instruments would seem more to have revived centralization practices than to have created autonomy. Conversely, given the historical autonomy enjoyed by regional government in France, the responses to the questionnaire seem to indicate that central government has "re-established control" over regional government services.

6. Relevance of NPM and post NPM Reforms

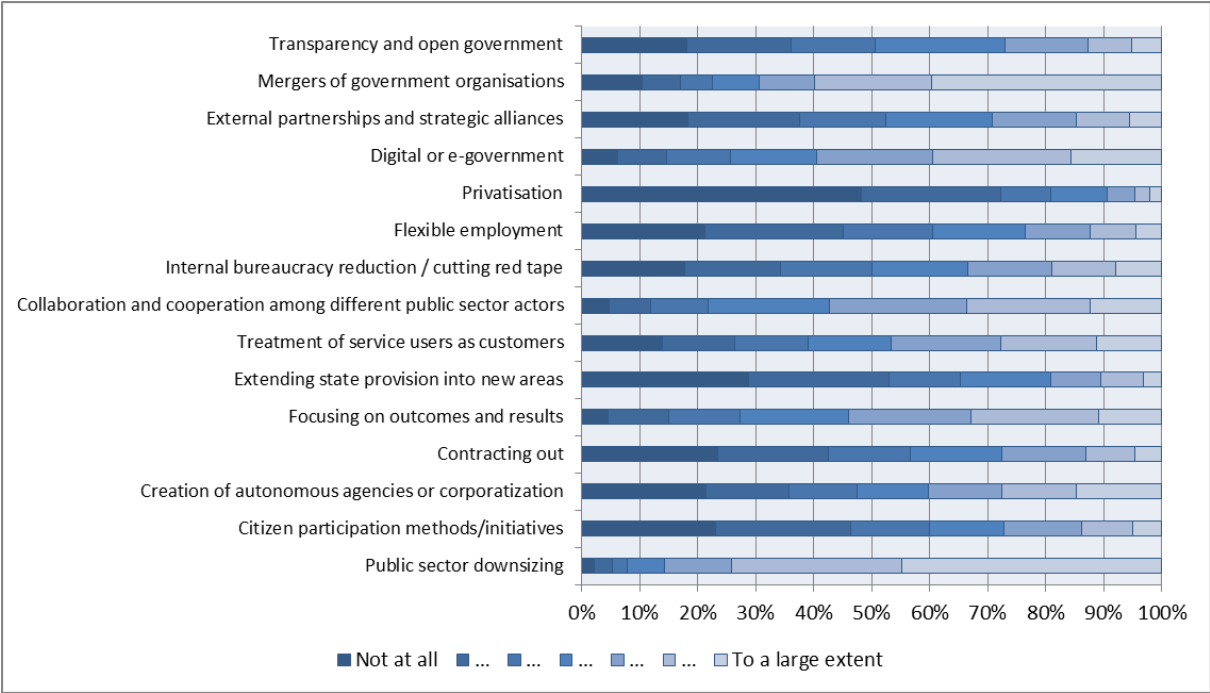
6.1. Policy field level

The contents of administrative reform policies can vary considerably from one country to another (and also from one period to another), with certain governments preferring certain measures to others. As regards the big reform trends identified by the respondents in France (question 17, fig. 15), it is no surprise to find that the main reforms were conducted under the general public policy review (RGPP) during President Sarkozy's mandate. The responses therefore describe the reforms of the last five years, and reflect the sedimentary layers of previous reforms, which are perceived as less dominant and at work because a bit older.

86% of respondents identify the impact of the "Public Sector Downsizing" measures: they correspond to the sustained policy of cutting public sector employment over this period by the non-replacement of one in two retiring civil servants. The second item particularly identified was the policy of organizational merger (69%), which actually corresponds to the multiple reorganizations associated with the RGPP: mergers of central government administrations, of ministerial divisions at the regional level and of interministerial divisions at the *départemental level*. Associated with this, though to a less significant degree, is the presence of reforms focusing on collaboration and cooperation between different players. In fact, reform of ministerial units at regional level was marked by the desire to merge organizations in order to increase cooperation between them, and by the strengthening of the prefects' coordinating powers. So these priorities are clearly identified.

These measures, clearly dominated by the downsizing theme, which has the biggest psychological impact and affects organizations in their operation, are nevertheless not equated with privatization: this is evidenced by the mere 9% of responses on the question of "privatization" and, to a lesser degree, for "flexible employment" and "contracting out", respectively 24% and 27%. The reforms relating to performance targets and linked with the LOLF, first implemented in 2006 before the Sarkozy era, take a back seat. The respondents underline the importance of focusing on outcomes and results as broadly high at 54%, giving it the same degree of resonance as another managerial orientation, treating service users as customers (47%). To a significant extent, 59% of the senior executives also identify the progress of digital government (or e-government) as broadly important, but also the creation of autonomous agencies (in France, taking the form of a growth in public establishments), which 40% of them see as broadly important. Identified as a markedly less important background issue, are two components of administrative reform: transparency, open government and citizen participation, which 27% seen as largely present and, as we have said, market type reforms (flexible employment, contracting out and external partnerships).

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



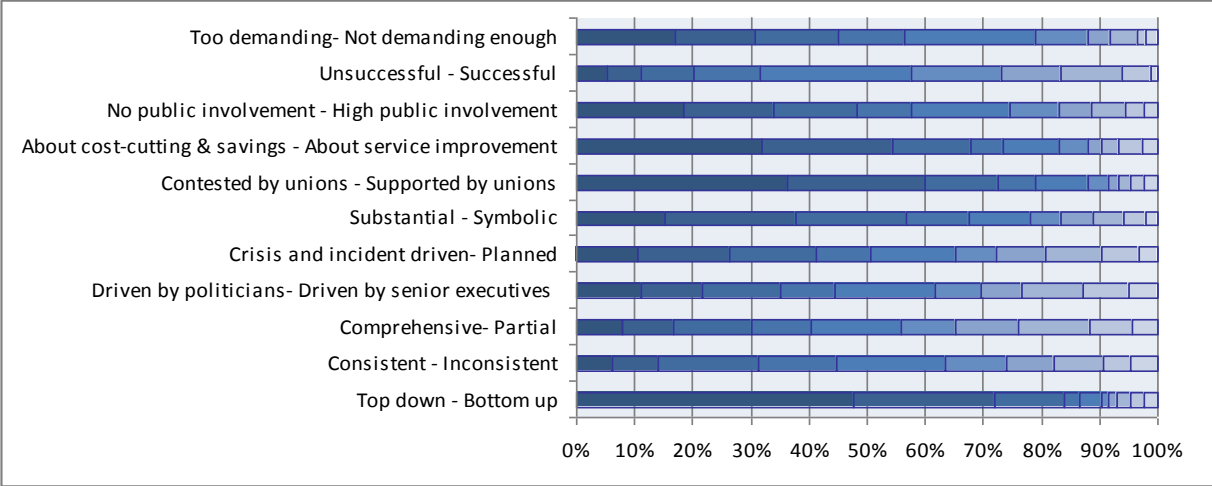
Generally speaking, the respondents’ perceptions and responses provide a fairly accurate map of actual reforms in France. Differences in attitudes to certain trends may reflect the fact that the reforms are (relatively) older, or that they develop gradually and discreetly, in other words without major political emphasis. Variations in the way the reforms affect government in France at different levels are also instructive, but no surprise. Decentralized ministerial units at the regional level and decentralized, now interministerial, units at the *départemental* level place greater emphasis than the other groups on mergers and downsizing, which have affected them very markedly, whereas agency directors identify the impact of corporatization but also, because these practices are probably more widespread in public establishments, contracting out and public-private partnerships.

In conclusion, and to situate France internationally, we can see a link between the NPM priorities (downsizing; previously, the focus on results; discreet forms of agency creation), drastic reorganizations through merger bringing cooperation issues to the heart of the reform process, and measures based on the development of digital government. Reforms of a different kind (transparency, citizen participation) attract little attention, because they were not much represented in the Sarkozy era reforms. The limitation of this map is that it provides a picture of the most recent reforms, not an overview of what has become historically embedded.

Figure 16 looks at senior executives’ overall perceptions of administrative reforms. These assessments clearly relate to the recent reforms introduced under the general public policy review. All in all, the assessments are uniform and broadly consider (scale 1-3) that the reforms are top-down (84%), substantial (i.e. drastic and very visible, 57%), little concerned with negotiation (contested by the unions 73%) and very much about cost-cutting and savings (68% versus 9.5% who consider them – scale 8-10 – to be driven by quality improvement). The pushiness of the recent reforms is emphasised in several responses. 35% of respondents see them as largely driven by politics (compared with 24% as driven by the administration, though this ultimately unclear figure might be explained either by the role played by top-flight civil servants in drawing up the reforms, or by the fact that the senior

executives were broadly involved in implementing and developing them locally). They are seen as “driven by the crisis” by 41% of respondents (compared with planned for only 19.3%). Finally, they are seen as “independent of public opinion” by 48% of respondents, compared with 11.5% who see them as driven by public opinion.

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

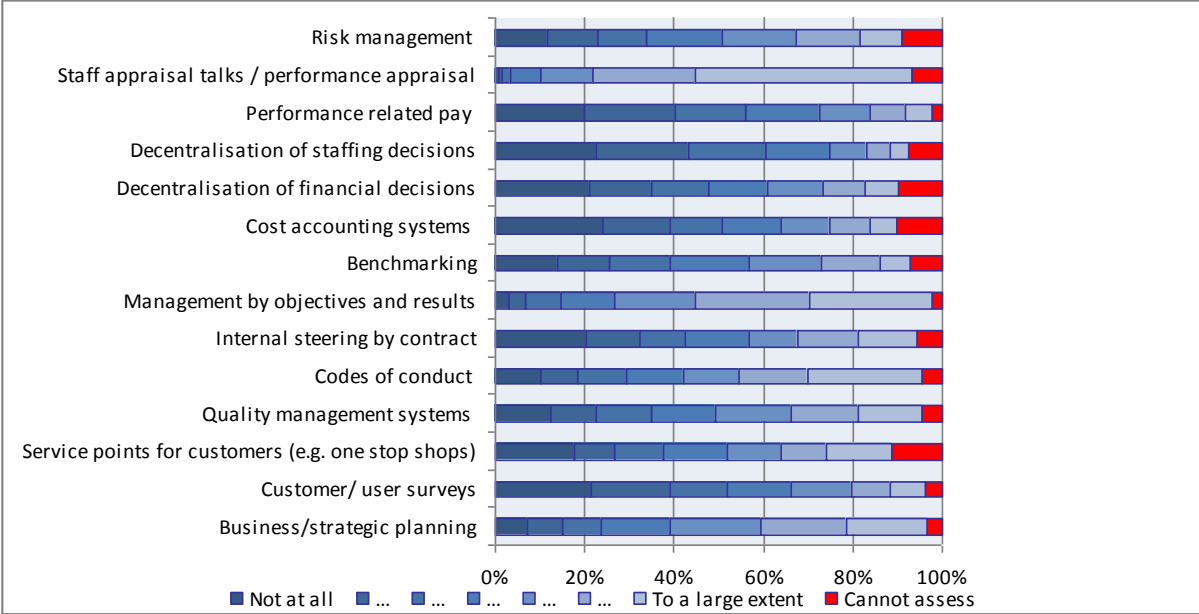


The assessments of their effects are cagey, with 20.18% seeing them as a failure, whereas 16.7% consider them an overall success. The perception of the reforms as excessively intensive can be appreciated by the fact that 45.03% of respondents thought that there were too many, whereas only 8% thought there were not enough.

6.2. Organizational level

The perception of management instruments (Figure 17) is particularly important. Beyond the perception of the major reform trends (see above), the assessment by senior civil servants of the instruments actually used in their parent organization is a good indicator of the changes underway in public administration. In France, because the term *New Public Management* is used sparingly in speeches on reform so as not to upset public opinion or civil servants, reform often involves the introduction of management instruments, which are assumed to be more neutral, and above all more discreet. Three instruments are seen by most respondents as being very significant in the French context: staff performance interviews (89.2% on scale 5, 6 and 7), management by objectives and results (72.9%) and business planning (59.7%). We see clearly here the stamp of management methods based on the previous reforms (LOLF) and the measures taken during the Sarkozy presidency, which extended the individual performance interview to the detriment of scoring mechanisms. Another important component (55.8%) is the codes of conduct, which are often associated with the framework of public contracts.

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



Some relatively precise instruments generate very disparate views, with a balance between the percentage who perceive them as widespread and those who do not think they are present: these include quality management systems, one-stop shops, internal steering, benchmarking and risk management. These very different perceptions are probably explained by the fact that the application of these instruments varies widely between ministries. We therefore find, as in the previous survey (Jeannot, Guillemot, 2010), that management tools (indicators, target-based management) but also service-oriented instruments (one-stop shops, quality, user surveys) have developed particularly in the Ministry of Finance and less in the social ministries or National Education. The Ecology and Health Ministries are somewhere in between.

However, a large number of instruments that come out of the New Public Management doctrinal toolbox are nevertheless largely seen as not being widespread: examples are cost accounting systems (56.5% see them as broadly absent), the decentralization of financial decisions

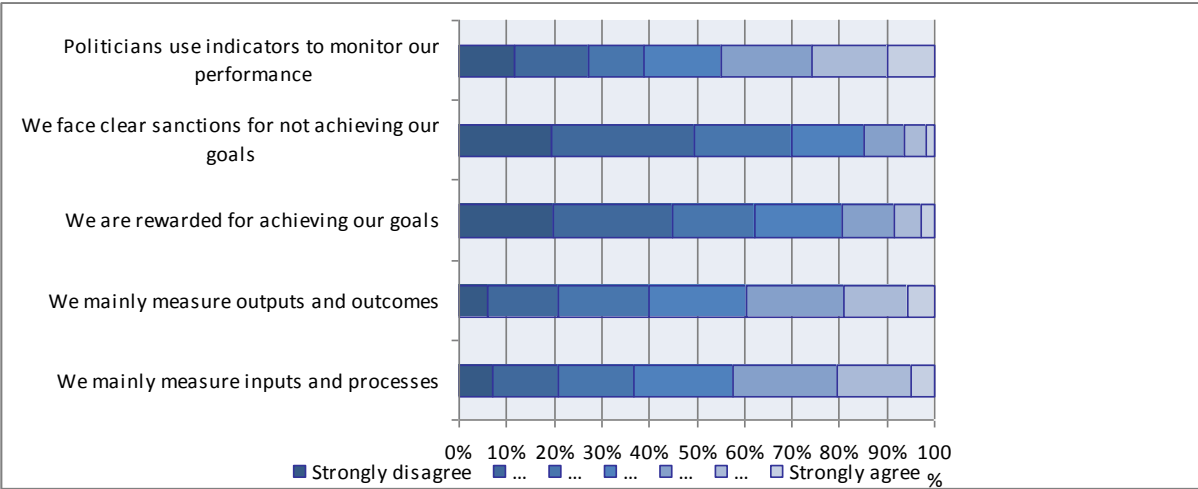
and staffing decisions (respectively 53% and 65% not present), performance-related pay (57.4%) and user satisfaction surveys (54%).

If we look only at personnel management issues, we find that staff appraisal interviews are in place virtually everywhere, but conversely that the highly controversial mechanism of performance-related pay is very little used (only 26% see it as widespread) – this result is all the more interesting in that the COCOPS survey targets senior executives, who have been the leading beneficiaries of this system in France since 2006 and, even more, beneficiaries of the decentralization of personnel management.

If we look more closely at the uses of performance-related management instruments in the organization (Figure 18, question 8), the first thing we see is that a majority of respondents do not see them as linked with mechanisms of punishment/discipline. The small number of respondents (scale 1-2 and 6-7) who perceive a clear reward (8%) or penalty (6%) for achieving objectives shows that, while systems of management by results are indeed in place, their impact is limited and they are not much used as disciplinary instruments. The use of indicators by politicians for monitoring purposes is seen as widespread by a slight majority of respondents, 45% compared with 38.9% on a scale of 3, which would seem to suggest that practices differ from one level to another. The questions on the measurement of input/process and outputs/outcomes were supposed to distinguish two ways of designing performance measurement: focused on means or focused on results and achievements. From this perspective, the results are very even, since the proportion of those who say that these types of measures are widespread is balanced by those who say that they are not.

The responses seem rather to distinguish between those who say that they do measure (input and output) and those who say that they don't. We find partly the same results for the question on the use of indicators: the dominant factor is less the variation in use of the indicator, than whether or not the indicator is used at all.

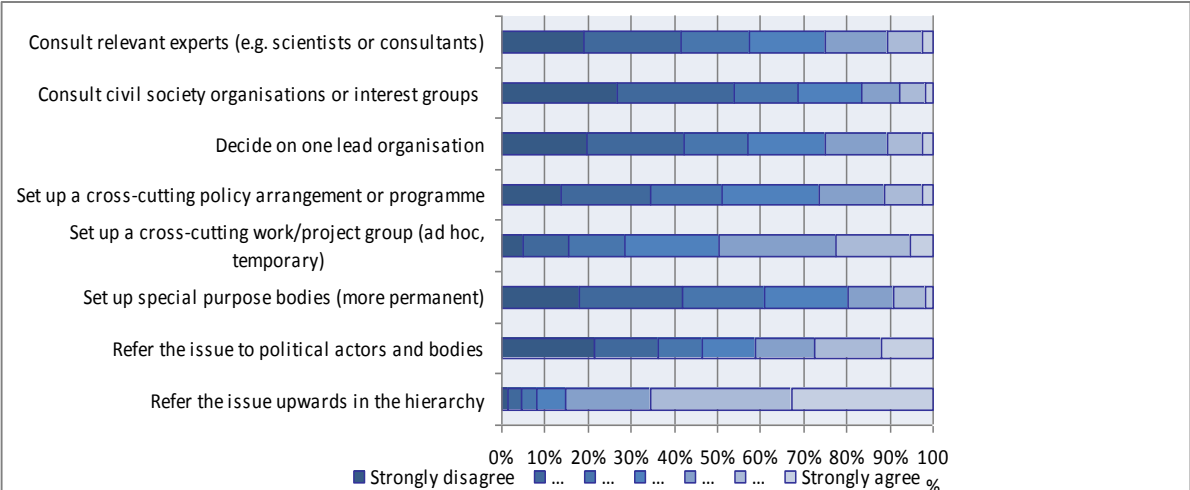
Figure 18. Relevance of performance management (Q: To what extent do the following statements apply to your organization?)



A final question relates to issues of coordination and the types of instruments or practices developed by senior executives to resolve problems of this kind when they arise. The question is particularly acute in the case of France in so far as the analyses in Part 5 on the quality of coordination clearly

show the force of vertical, compartmentalized operation and fragmentation between ministries. The responses to question 13 show the power of hierarchical mechanisms. Indeed, 85% of respondents (scale 3) state that in the event of conflict between organizations, the usual solution chosen is to refer the problem upwards. This approach is by far the most dominant. Next comes the establishment of an ad hoc project group (50% of respondents) and then the decision to shift the problem to the political level (41%) All the other approaches are seen as infrequent and the results show the difficulty of making interministeriality work as a process or, at the other extreme, of prioritizing one ministry over another. Hence, the solution of “deciding on one lead organization” is seen a little used option by 57.5% of respondents. In addition, participation or project-based approaches are judged by the majority as rare: 61% of the respondents feel that special-purpose bodies are rarely set up; 69% say the same about consultation with civil society bodies or interest groups; 58% about consultation of experts. 51% also consider that partnership-based or interministerial public policies are infrequent, compared with 26% who believe the practice to be widespread.

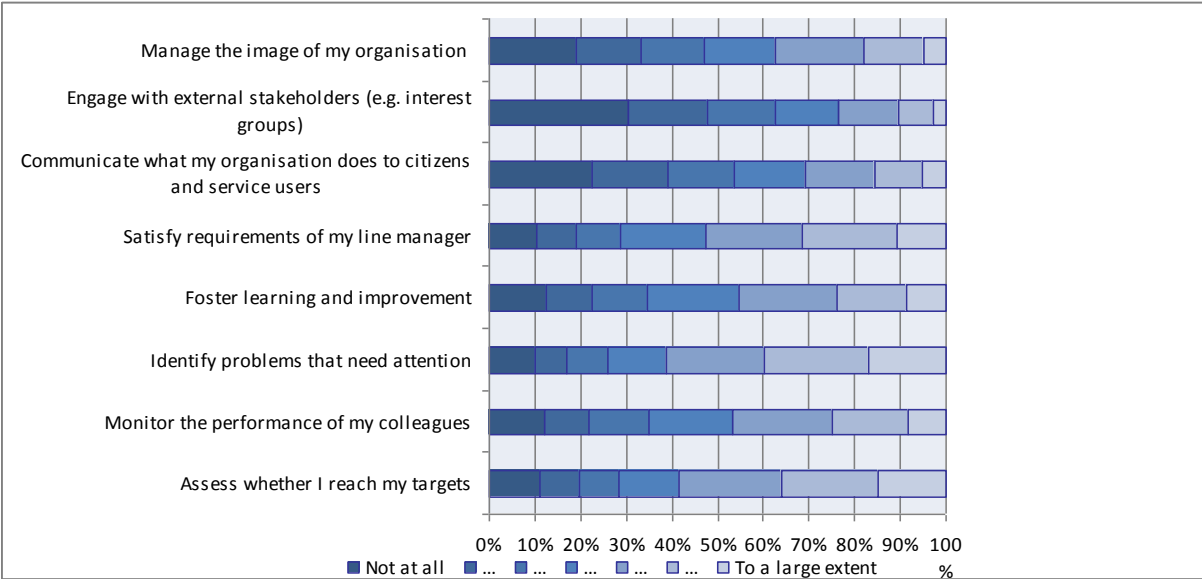
Figure 19. Coordination solutions (Q: To resolve coordination problems when working with other organizations, we typically)



6.3. Individual level

If we now consider the question on the individual use of indicators in day-to-day work (Figure 20, question 9), we observe two majority uses focusing on the internal day-to-day operations of the organization and on the individual activities of the staff concerned: 58.5% say they use them largely to know whether they have reached their targets and 61% to identify problems that require attention. However, only 45% of respondents (vs 35%) say that they use them to foster learning and improvement. These results would seem to show that indicators are used more as “warning signals” than as operational methods of improving performance.

Figure 20. Use of performance indicators (Q: In my work I use performance indicators to)



By contrast, external uses seem to be markedly less valued: only 37% say that they use indicators to manage their organization’s image; 30.9% to communicate with citizens; 23.6% to engage with external stakeholders.

Indicators are also used to regulate collective performance within the organization – new forms of social control – though the responses are less unanimous: hence 53% (vs 29%) say that they use them to satisfy the requirements of their line managers, which highlights the disciplinary aspect of indicators, whereas conversely, 47% of respondents (vs 35%) say that they use indicators to monitor the performance of their colleagues.

7. Impact of the Fiscal Crisis on Public Administration

In France, the economic crisis appeared in the context of significantly deteriorated public finances since forty years⁸. The “great petrification” (Siné, 2006) corresponds to the progressive diminution of the room for maneuver of the State over its finances due to the continuous accumulation of debt initiated in 1974. The debt outstanding was multiplied by 18 between 1978 and 2007, while its share in GDP went from 21% in 1978 to 40% in 1992, to reach 64% in December 2007.⁹ One of the consequences was the increasing share of debt service in the national budget. In 2012, the costliest program the State must finance is the debt service (49 billion Euros), right after primary and secondary education (62.3 billion Euros) and the transfers to local governments (100 billion Euros). From 2008, the deficit rapidly deepened to go beyond the threshold that is authorized by the Maastricht treaty and reached 7.5% of GDP in 2009. It decreased painfully to 5.2% in 2011. The crisis put an end to the country’s ability to contain the augmentation of public debt after stabilization over the 2004-2007 period (64% of GDP) that could at least partly be explained by creative accounting¹⁰. Indeed, the public debt rose each year from 3 to 11 points from 2008 to 2011. It was 86% of GDP in 2011 and peaked at 89.3% in March 2012, that is to say 1 789.4 billion Euros. The most remarkable year is definitely 2009, since the stimulus plan of 26 billion Euros, combined with a reduction of fiscal resources, was accompanied by a negative peak for the public deficit (67 billion Euros, 7.5% of GDP) increased by four percentage points compared with the previous year and an eleven points increase concerning the public debt. In a word, the public debt increased by 22 GDP points over the period considered (2007-2011), that is to say an increase five times higher than the one during the last fifteen years¹¹. Less involved in real estate and bank crises, France has, similar to Germany and Italy, less suffered from the *financial* and *banking* crisis than other countries in the European Union.

In 2007, the new government and President Sarkozy were particularly aware of the budgetary difficulties to the extent that N. Sarkozy had been Minister of Economics and Finances when the change in budgetary referential was launched. He had also been part of the team who set the sustainability of public finances on the agenda. N. Sarkozy had notably signed the mission letter for Camdessus’ committee and report in 2004, in which he asked for an analysis in order to answer the limits of the French growth model. Then, as the head of the State, he strongly relied on many top officials from the financial spheres, all rather sensitive to public deficit and debt issues. Within this perspective, the General Review of Public Policies and its reviews, launched in 2007 before the crisis, were supposed to constitute an unprecedented cutback management exercise, in line with the recent managerial evolutions brought by the LOLF.

Paradoxically, the reaction to crisis took two consecutive steps: (i) a recovery plan between 2009 and 2010 (26 billion Euros additional spending over 2 years), associated to several cutback measures that were *not directly* linked to the crisis, and (ii) from 2010, the launching of most cutback measures which had not been planned by the government before.

⁸ This sum-up is extracted from Albert, Bezes and Le Lidec 2013, COCOPS WP7, short report.

⁹ Chamsaur-Cotis, Rapport sur la situation des finances publiques, May 2010

¹⁰ Order n°2004-559 of June, 6th 2004 on Public private partnership contracts

¹¹ Chamsaur-Cotis, Rapport sur la situation des finances publiques, May 2010

The pension reform belongs to these cutback measures that were planned before the crisis' arrival and taken to address a signal to financial markets. The pension reform targeted civil servants since the new laws lead to a progressive convergence of their contribution share with the private sector. In concrete terms, this corresponds to an augmentation from 7.85 % to 10.55 %, spread over the next ten years, without any wage compensations. It brought civil servants into line with the less favourable conditions in the private sector. More recently, the terms for sickness pay were brought more into line with those done in the private sector.

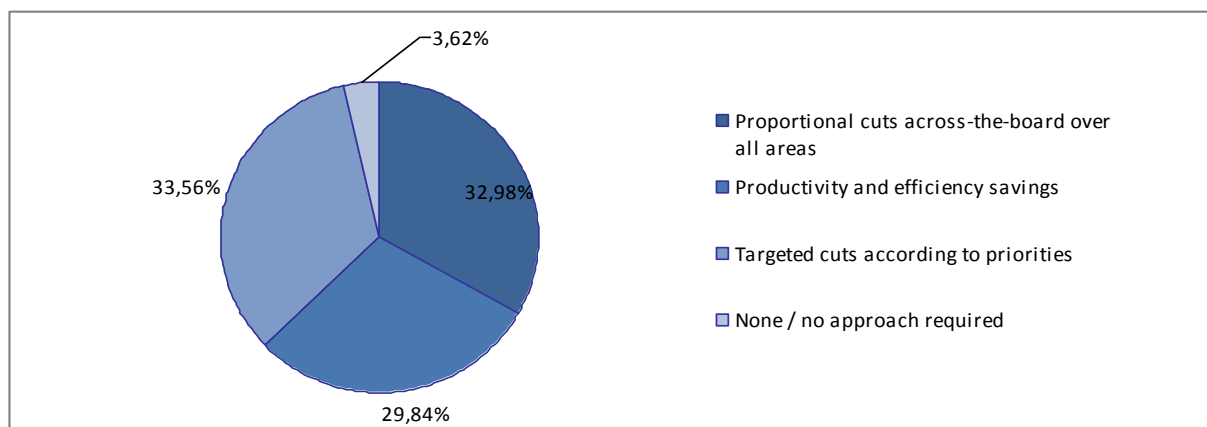
Rather than laying off personnel or slowing down promotions, hiring freeze has been applied to public administration from 2007 through the replacement of only one out of two retiring state employees as part of the *RGPP*. 150 000 jobs were thus suppressed within State services between 2008 and 2012¹² and 84 000 between 2008 and 2010. According to the government in place, this would represent 800 million Euros of savings each year for the State. Within the State civil service¹³, posts in ministries were downsized by 3.7% between 2005 and 2010, going from 2 154 000 jobs (2007) to 1 888 000 (2010), while national *établissements publics* went up by 12.9% over the same period. The last austerity measure was a pay measure introduced by Nicolas Sarkozy's government: the aim was to stop the indexing of the point value on the retail price index. Point value grew by 2.8% over the period 2008-2011, at a time when inflation was 4.4%, bringing a real terms salary cut of 1.6%. This measure was partially offset by other initiatives.

The way that senior executives perceive the measures taken to respond to the crisis reflects the relative moderation and hybrid character of these measures. Indeed, perceptions are all the more difficult to assess in that the respondents equate the recovery measures taken in response to the crisis with the austerity policies introduced in 2007 under the general public policy review process. These ambiguities re-emerge in the questionnaire.

12 IGA, IGF, IGAS, Rapport « Bilan de la RGPP et conditions de réussite d'une nouvelle politique de réforme de l'Etat », Septembre 2012.

13 Ministère de la Fonction publique, Rapport annuel sur l'état de la fonction publique (édition 2012)

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

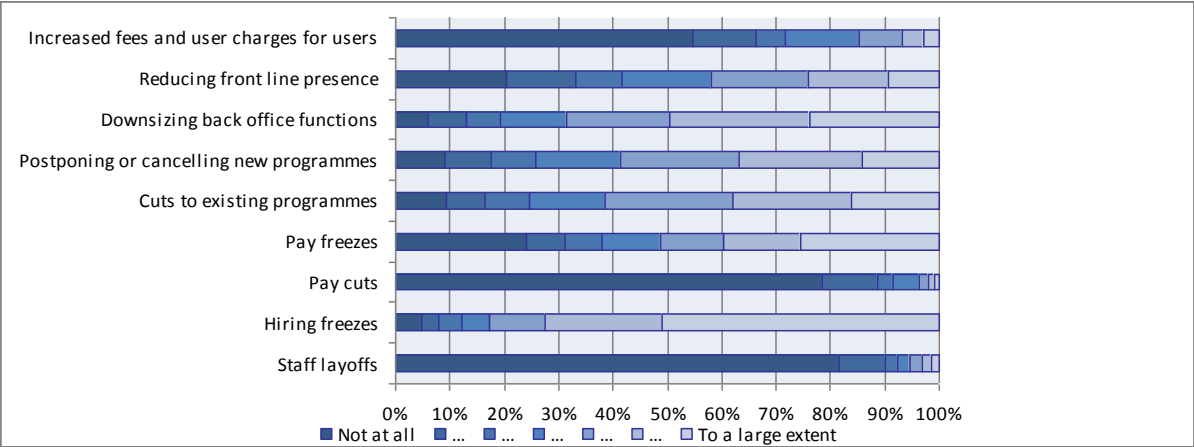


Question 20 (Figure 21) gives somewhat unreliable results or rather results that seem to suggest that all the spending reduction measures were implemented simultaneously. 33% see the cuts as having been proportional across the board; 33.5% as targeted according to priorities; 30% as focusing on productivity gains. The respondents do not place the three approaches in any order of precedence.

Figure 22 and Question 21 give more detailed results on the measures observed by the respondents. They see the first measure taken to reduce public spending as hiring freezes (83% on the scale 5, 6 and 7), reflecting the policy – introduced in 2007 – of not replacing one in every two retiring civil servants. This measure has been at the heart of the cutbacks policy conducted over the last five years and began in 2002. Significantly, the second measure seen as most frequently used is the downsizing of back offices (69% on a three point scale), an approach also specified in the RGPP, which explicitly employed amalgamations to pool back-office functions. It is interesting here to note that there is more of an emphasis on the cutback in back offices than on a reduction in front office functions (42%), which reflects the fact that, in the reorganization of the regional administration, the various existing front-office functions were retained within larger entities, while back-office administrative functions were reduced. Next, two measures relating to public policy itself, are largely seen to be present, though to a lesser degree: cuts to existing programmes (61%, scale of three) and postponement or abandonment of new programmes (59%). The perception that public action itself is affected is therefore fairly widespread. After this, come pay freezes (51%), which are not placed at the top of the agenda but, here, reflect the decision not to increase the value of the civil service index point, regardless of the rate of inflation.

On the other hand, a number of measures are seen as absent from the governmental agenda: one is staff layoffs (a measure impossible in the French career public service) or significant pay cuts, which have taken place in other southern European countries, but are here perceived by 92% of respondents as little used (scale 3). The same is true for increases in user fees and charges.

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



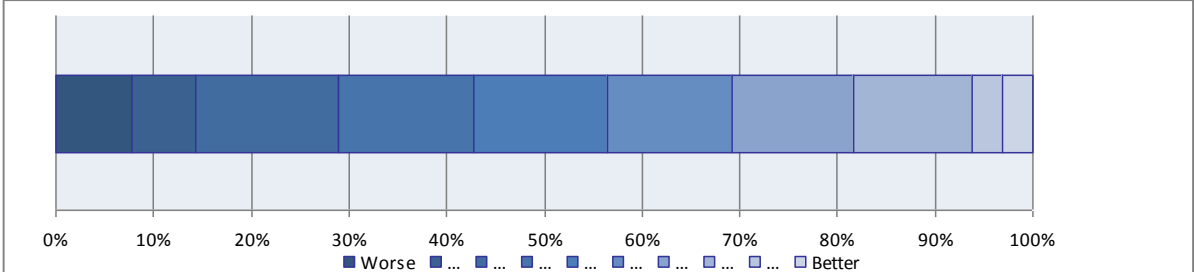
Question 22 on the effects of the budget crisis on the division of powers in government also provides instructive results. The respondents describe forms of recentralization: thus 74% of respondents consider that the powers of the Ministry of Finance have increased and 66% that decision-making is more centralized in their parent organization (scale 3); similarly, 68.5% perceive the relevance of performance indicators to have increased, whereas 55% judge that the budget planning units in their own organization have gained more power. Unsurprisingly, budget constraints seem to be embodied in a process of recentralization and in an increase in oversight linked with the emphasis on financial issues. However, two results cast a more complex light on the dynamics at work. First, it is noteworthy that only 35% of the respondents consider that the power of politicians in the decision-making processes has increased (vs. 39% who think the contrary, scale 3). This result is not easy to interpret. One possibility is that the respondents wish to emphasize the still powerful position of senior civil servants in a French administrative system that gives them an important role in the decision-making process, or that they are implicitly criticizing the fact that politicians are not more involved in taking decisions on austerity that they know to be unpopular. The second interesting fact is that the development of austerity measures is seen as being only moderately reflected – with 42% of respondents saying yes and 34% saying no – in increased conflict between directorates within their parent organizations. This ambiguous result might seem to suggest that the prioritization of public policies has actually been modest.

8. Impact of Public Administration Reform

8.1 Overall

The general view of the performance of public administration (question 16 and figure 23) is broadly balanced, with a slight negative bias. If we take a scale of 2 (1 and 2 vs. 9 and 10), the negative opinions on civil service performance markedly outweigh the positive: 14% (1+2) vs. 6% (9+10). If we take a scale of 3, the negative views are still predominant: 28.9% broadly worse vs. 18.4% broadly better. Almost 30% of the respondents thus perceive a decline in the efficiency of the administration in 2022 compared with 2007. However, a large proportion – 53% of respondents – report median views (4 to 7), which can be taken to mean that the situation is pretty much the same. Generally speaking, all the judgments vary according to the respondent’s level of responsibility, becoming more critical the further down the hierarchy we go. If we confine ourselves to the first and second levels of responsibility, the appraisal curve is virtually symmetrical.

Figure 23. Overall PA assessment (Q: Compared with five years ago, how would you say things have developed when it comes to the way public administration runs in your country?)

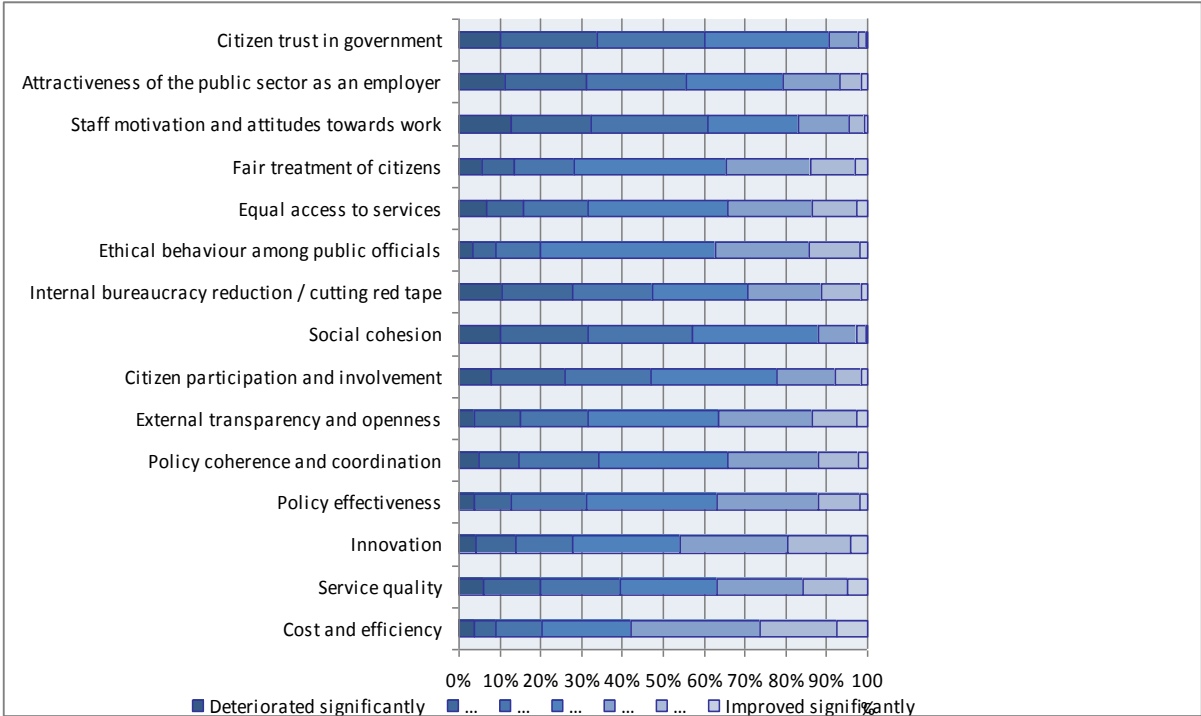


8.2 Policy Field

This essentially balanced view obviously applies a very broad brush. It does not preclude sharp variations according to where the changes strike and the performance associated with the reforms, which are assessed in Question 19 (Figure 24).

The two most favorable assessments, indicating an improvement, are few and relate to costs (58% on scale 3) and innovation (46% as against 28%). This suggests a fairly restricted view of the improvements, since the first item reflects the numerous initiatives in the RGPP designed to cut spending, and the second refers to technological changes (e-government, Internet). The perception of efficiency improvements is consistent with the overall view on the direction of reforms cited above. After this, only ethical behavior among public officials is judged to have improved (37% against 20%), a result that is not necessarily easy to interpret.

Figure 24. Different performance dimensions (Q: Thinking about your policy area over the last five years how would you rate the way public administration has performed on the following dimensions?)



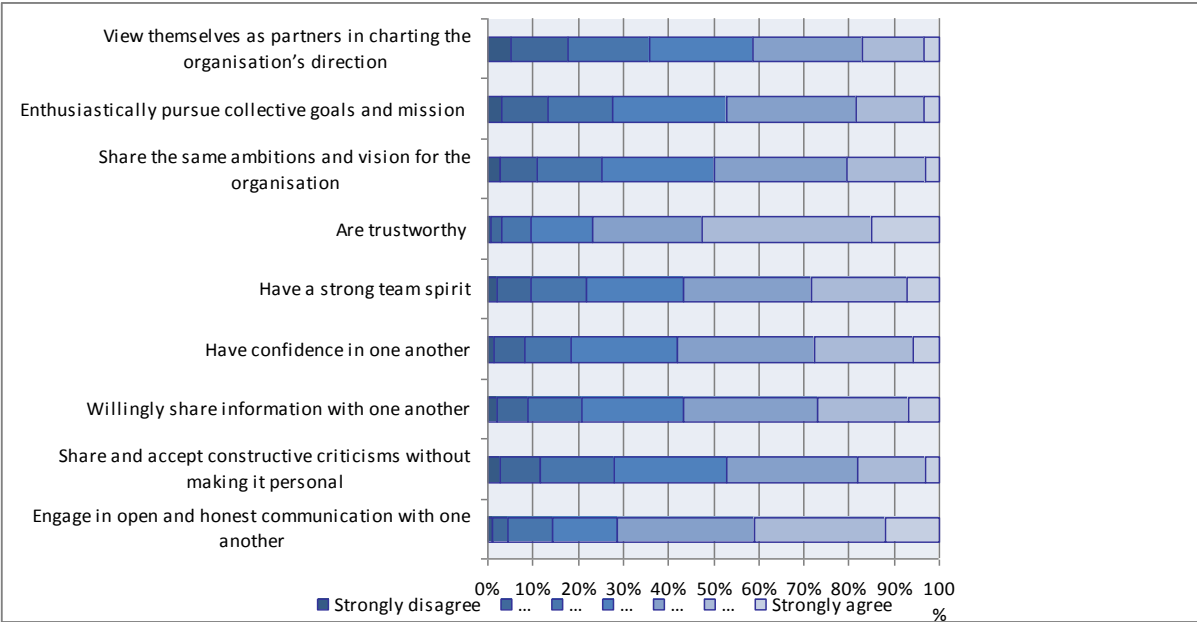
By contrast, a large number of areas are perceived as having clearly declined. Certain perceptions of decline relate to the “external” effects arising from administrative action: the most remarkable (and the most worrying?) results in this sphere are that the senior executives surveyed consider that social cohesion has deteriorated (57% vs. 12%) along with citizen trust in government (60% vs. 9.5% on a scale of 3). To a lesser degree, 47% of the respondents (vs. 22%) consider that citizen participation is also falling. The other clear perceptions of deterioration relate to the “internal” negative perception of the public sector and of the morale of its staff: 61% of respondents (vs. 17%) thus believe that staff motivation has deteriorated and 56% (vs. 21%) that the attractiveness of the public sector (i.e. of the government) as an employer has diminished. Similarly, 47% (vs. 29%) feel that the situation has deteriorated with respect to paperwork and red tape, which could reflect certain rigidities associated with the LOLF and the bureaucratization generated by government by performance. These results indicate a certain malaise amongst senior executives and

the sense of a government that is enfeebled and out of touch. It seems a long time since administrative reform measures place the emphasis on participation by civil servants and users (Rocard reform of 1989, cf. Bezes, 2009). The critique of the external effects is matched here by a critique of internal operations.

On the other issues – quality of service, effectiveness of public policy, consistency and coordination of policies, transparency and openness, equality of access to public services, equitable treatment of citizens – there is a balance of views.

Some of these results vary significantly from one sector to another. Views are broadly more optimistic for executives in the economic and financial sectors. This is particularly true of quality of service. The importance attributed to participation as a commitment or an effect is slightly greater in the environment and health sectors. Again in the health sector, the view that staff motivation has declined is even more marked than elsewhere.

Figure 25. Social capital and trust (Q: People in my organization)



The questions on social capital and trust (Q14, figure 25) are more difficult to interpret, because they do not support the fairly negative assessments of staff motivation and the attractiveness of government service analyzed above. The responses are largely positive, with few sharp differences, possibly a little conformist and uniform in their conclusions. However, there is a difference between the items that generate more unanimity, relating to interpersonal relations and trust in staff, and the items that arouse more balanced responses which, for their part, relate to the collective aspect of the organization. Thus, 71% of the respondents feel that staff engages in open and honest communication with one another, and 77% that they are trustworthy. These responses, coming from senior executives, would seem to be consistent with their role (one would not expect a senior executive to question the quality of his or her staff). By contrast, a series of questions on the collective aspect of the organization gives positive but less unanimous results: thus, the idea that staff view themselves as partners in charting the direction of the organization; the idea that they enthusiastically pursue collective goals and missions; or the feeling that they share the same

ambitions and vision for the organization (respectively, 41% agree vs. 36%; 47% vs. 28%; 50% vs. 25%) on a scale of 3.

8.3 Individual Level

The questions on workplace satisfaction (Q15, figure 26) also draw broadly positive responses, which need to be carefully interpreted in the light of the social and administrative group concerned: senior executives whose important jobs and high status understandably generate positive views. Thus, 80.5% find their work satisfying, 75% feel valued for their work, and 67% would recommend their organization as a good place to work (scale 3). More than the other countries in the COCOPS survey, however, 54% of the respondents in the French survey find that they are regularly overloaded or unable to cope.

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

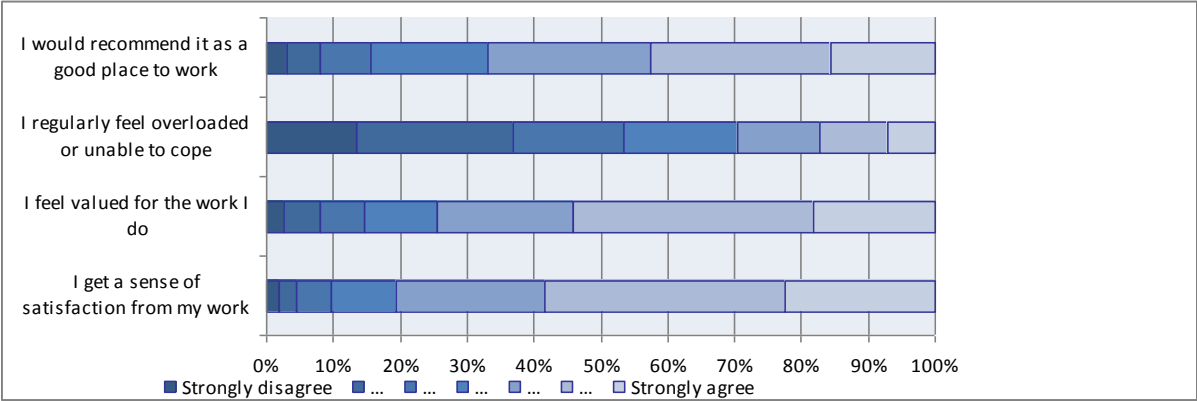
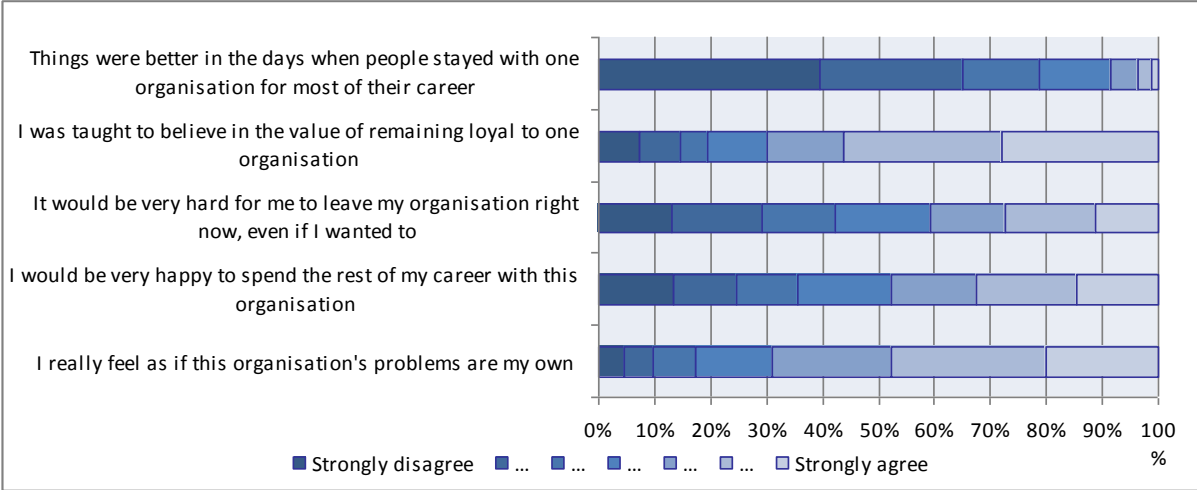


Figure 27. Organizational commitment (Q: When thinking about my work and the organization I work for)



The questions on organizational commitment (figure 27) give less clear-cut results (scale 3). On the one hand, the responses seem to indicate a strong commitment to the organization, based on learned values – 70% say that they were taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization – or associated with the work – 69% state that they feel that the organization’s problems are their own. On the other hand, only 48% (vs. 35%) say that they would be happy to spend the rest of their careers in their organization and 41% (vs. 42%) that it

would be hard for them to leave their organization, even if they wanted. Senior executives do not seem to develop a very strong emotional commitment to their parent organization. Moreover, 79% of the respondents do not agree with the idea that “Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their career”, suggesting that they value the idea of a certain degree of mobility. These figures need to be seen in the light of differences between ministries, with very variable salary and compensation conditions.

9. Findings from the Health and Employment sector

9.1 Characteristics of the health sector

The health sector as represented in the sample is – unlike the employment sector – relatively homogeneous from an institutional perspective: it is still a ministerial administration headed by the minister responsible for health. However, it is particularly interesting in so far as it is the sector where New Public Management instruments – profit centres, performance indicators, the agency model – have been most markedly adopted and implemented.

Three components of this sector can be distinguished within the sample.

The first is the central administration of the Ministry of Health. Reflecting ministerial reshuffles and changing ministerial portfolios, this administration can be linked with other themes. At the time of the survey, in 2012, health was part of a big Ministry of Labor, Employment and Health. The purpose of these ministerial groupings is more political than administrative. While ministerial portfolios may change, the big directorates that constitute health policy are, for their part, stable and relatively immune to such reshuffles. For example, there is the central directorate of health, the central directorate of healthcare or, indeed, the directorate of social security.

The second component consists of a set of national “agencies” which, in France, have the status of public establishments: the French Blood Establishment, the National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products (ANSM), created by the Act of 29 December 2011, which replaced the French Agency for the Safety of Health Products (Afssaps), the Biomedicine Agency, the Health Monitoring Institute, etc. These public establishments, legal entities that are the equivalent of agencies, were set up with the aim of establishing independent oversight through autonomous bodies. Some – like the agency responsible for blood, following the 1980s contaminated blood scandal, or the French agency for the safety of health products, with the very recent Médiateur scandal – have been heavily criticized and found themselves the focus of considerable controversy.

The third, and numerically the most significant component, are the regional health agencies (ARS), present in France’s 22 regions and with local delegations in the country’s *departments* (Bezes, Pierru, 2012; Pierru, Rolland, 2013). From an international perspective, the term “agency” needs to be treated with care. These Regional Health Agencies (*agence régionale de santé*, ARS) were created by the 2009 Hospital, Patients, Health and Territories Act. They are the Health ministerial units at the regional level but a bit more than that (see below). The ARS are responsible for ensuring that healthcare provision meets the needs of the population by improving coordination between the services provided by outpatient and hospital sectors, and by the health and social care sector, while meeting national health spending targets. The agency is an “Etablissement public” (public establishment) which encompasses a range of regional stakeholder organizations. Nevertheless, ARS reports directly to the Directorate of Health and Social Affairs and to the Prefects. The reason for setting up the ARS is therefore different from the reason for creating national agencies. To understand it, we will briefly describe the process that led to it. In 1997, the Regional Hospitalization Agencies were created to regulate the hospital sector. The model at the time was the agencies responsible for regulating public services such as electricity or telecommunications. The theory behind it was that a body independent of the administration was better placed to organize the

operating rules of the hospital sector with an economic dimension. In practical terms, the big public hospitals are the responsibility of the mayors of the cities where they are located. In medium-sized cities, these hospitals are often the principal local employer and therefore of crucial importance to the municipality. Prefects, who previously represented central government on hospital boards, were not specialists on health issues (even if they were supported by the decentralized services of the Ministry of Health) and could be tempted to use the local hospital as a bargaining chip in their relations with city mayors. The regional hospitalization agencies were therefore created to make the regulation of these hospitals more technical and more independent. These agencies were therefore “public interest groups” whose role it was to coordinate government and health insurance services to improve regulation in the hospital sector.

The thinking behind the creation of the ARS (regional health agencies) in 2009 was significantly different. As we have said, they have the status of French government public administrative establishments responsible for implementing health policy at regional level. Created on 1 April 2010 (ref. Act N009-879 of 21 July 2009 on “Hôpital, patients, santé et territoire” (HPST – hospital, patients, health and regions), their purpose was to “provide unified management of health in the regions, to respond more effectively to the needs of the population and to increase the efficiency of the system”. In concrete terms, one of the roles of the ARS is to rationalize health provision, in other words city, hospital and medical and social healthcare spending, as well as being responsible for public health and health monitoring policy. In so doing, the ARS have replaced other institutions and taken over all or some of their powers: the decentralized units of the Ministry of Health which were the units of health and social affairs at the regional level (DRASS) and the units of health and social affairs at the *départementale* level (DDASS). They have taken over the activities of the regional public health groups and the regional health delegations. And finally, they have replaced certain social security bodies, namely the regional health insurance fund unions, the staff of the OSS (Healthcare System Organization) centres, the preventative function of the Medical Monitoring Service and the health branch of the regional health insurance funds (CRAM). The creation of the ARS therefore shifted all the decentralized health divisions (by separating them from social security functions) into this “agency” structure and merged them with divisions from Social Security, financed from the independent sources of the Social Security bodies, which have long had a status and mode of operation close to that of the private sector. The ARS are therefore a kind of “hybrid”, halfway between the model of a regulatory agency and a traditional decentralized administration, even though in practice they tend to operate more like the latter. Two aspects of this are revealing. Firstly, they are subject to little prefectural oversight (in the tradition of regulatory agencies), much less than the other decentralized services; and secondly, their operating methods are marked by private sector approaches (based on the model of the social security structures). However, it should not be forgotten that almost 80% of the staff of these ARS were civil servants in decentralized administrative units: they now work alongside staff from social security, who are covered by the collective Health-Insurance agreement. These “agencies” must therefore be interpreted with caution. The agency form in France has been used by the government to merge the Health-Insurance organizations with government ministerial directorates... but the government imposes a mode of operation close to that of a big decentralized administration. In other words, the agency is a format that sounds “modern”, while being used as a way to amalgamate organizations with different statuses.

For this reason and in different ways, this sector represents an excellent illustration of how the agency model has been used to reform State administration.

9.2 The employment sector

The employment sector, as represented in the sample, is not a homogeneous entity. In addition, the response rates vary widely from one component to another. Once again, therefore, the data on this sector should be treated with caution.

Until 2008, the public employment service was divided between numerous bodies with a wide range of statuses: these include the ANPE (National employment agency) responsible for placing jobseekers; Unédic (national interprofessional union for employment in industry and commerce) and the associations for employment in industry and commerce (usually called Assédic) responsible for registering jobseekers, collecting employers' contributions and paying unemployment benefit; the *Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes* (AFPA – association for adult vocational education), the *directions régionales du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle* (DRTEFP – regional ministerial units of labor, employment and vocational training) present at the regional level, and the *directions départementales du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle* (DDTEFP –*départemental* ministerial units of labor, employment and vocational training at the *départemental* level), the decentralized services responsible for implementing employment policy on behalf of their tutelary employment ministry. This diversity reflects the fact that the Employment service was, until recently, conducted by a system that combined professional bodies, public establishments and government ministerial organizations.

There are therefore three organizational components in the Employment sector.

First, there are the administrative directorates of the Ministry of Employment. At national level, they have, since 2012, been part of the same ministry as the health services, under the Ministry of Employment, Labor and Health. In this connection, three central administrations need to be mentioned: the directorate of Research, Analysis and Statistics (DARES), the Central Directorate of Labor (DGT), the Central Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP), the Directorate of Central Administration and Service Modernisation (DAGEMO). At the decentralized level, the regional ministerial units of Labor, Employment and Vocational Training (DRTEFP) at the regional level, and the *départemental* ministerial units of Labor, Employment and Vocational Training (DDTEFP) at the *départemental* level, merged in 2009 into new directorates called Regional Directorates for Business, Competition, Consumption, Labor and Employment (DIRECCTE). These new decentralized units (Bezes, Pierru, 2012) therefore combine staff from the Ministry of Employment and Labor (workplace inspectors and controllers), responsible for labor monitoring policies and work reintegration policies, along with staff from the Ministry of the Economy and Industry, responsible for economic development or fraud prevention. Because of these amalgamated structures and in so far as employment is a very significant crosscutting issue, it is not impossible that staff from other ministries (in particular at the decentralized level) may have answered that they were, amongst other things, responsible for employment matters.

The second organizational component of the employment sector relates to entities which, in the French context, are equivalent to agencies. Alongside government ministerial administrative

directorates, there is also now the “Pôle Emploi”, the public establishment responsible for employment affairs, which is the fruit of the amalgamation of the services of the National Employment Agency (ANPE), which support jobseekers, and those of the Assedics, which pay unemployment benefits. Act No. 2008-126 of 13 February 2008 on reforms to the public employment service was adopted on 31 January 2008. It provides for the merger of the ANPE and the Assedic network, and the possible integration of the career advice function of the Association for Adult Vocational Training (AFPA). The name of the new body, Pôle Emploi, was chosen in October 2008. Pôle Emploi was created 19 December 2008 at its first board meeting. In the initial COCOPS database for France, this body was represented at national level by its central level, and regionally by the regional directors. The operational dimension of the local Pôle Emploi agencies was not included. In addition to Pôle Emploi, the initial sample included the vocational training agencies (AFPA), represented by the national and regional directors, and the National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (ANACT).

To be consistent with the definition used for the other countries, the third component includes a few stakeholders in local government, in this case the region. In fact, the “employment” role is partly shared by the independent regional authorities. These have functions relating to vocational training and support for economic innovation. In the initial database, we included one or two people responsible for these matters in each region.

Sample

More responses were received from the employment sector than from the other sectors, which reflect the fact that it is widely represented at local level where we find a high response rate associated with the reaction to the reorganizations. On the one hand, given that the sector is relatively homogeneous and the overall response rate was very high, it can be deduced that the data relating to this sector are very reliable. On the other hand, analyzing the employment sectors reveals much trickier for three reasons.

The first is linked with the multiple choices for Question 2. While for the health sector, it is unlikely that a person who does not work directly within the ambit of the ministry of health would have ticked this option, very many executives in all ministries may legitimately see themselves to be involved in employment policy, since this issue lies at the heart of public action.

The second reason is linked with the heterogeneous nature of the sector, which includes a central government administration, a small subnational component (Region) and a long-standing, largely independent, agency. This means that equating levels of responsibility between these components, and therefore attributing a weighting between the components in the initial database, is open to discussion.

A third reason is linked with the highly variable response rates between these components, and in particular the fact that it would seem that very few Pôle Emploi executives responded, which further shifts the weighting between sectors. As regards Pôle Emploi, the response rate was very low. At most, we had 21 responses from agency executives who said they were involved in employment policy, out of 180 questionnaires sent to Pôle Emploi and 30 for the other agencies involved in this issue, i.e. a return rate of less than 10%. As regards the units of the *Régions* (a subnational authority), there were one or two employment and/or training executives per region, so we sent out 35 questionnaires. The response rate was not greatly different from that of Pôle Emploi and the overall

figure for responses is negligible in comparison with total responses (4). On the other hand, the response rate from the decentralized Government ministerial units, at the regional level (plus its *départemental* representative), was higher than for the survey as a whole. In the end, the final weighting between the sector's different components (Government, Pôle Emploi, Région) differs significantly from that of the initial database, and more than three quarters of the "employment sector" consists of the Government administration responsible for employment.

For all these reasons, the notion of the "employment sector" needs to be treated with the greatest caution in the French case.

9.3 Perceptions of the orientations of the reforms and the instruments used in both sectors

Here, we will only look at the central issues of the features of the reforms and their impact. The tables provided report the percentages of respondents who ticked boxes 6 and 7 in a scale of 1 to 7 and therefore express their clear approval of the statement in question.

Figure 28. Importance of reform trends,% of responses 6 and 7 “important trend”

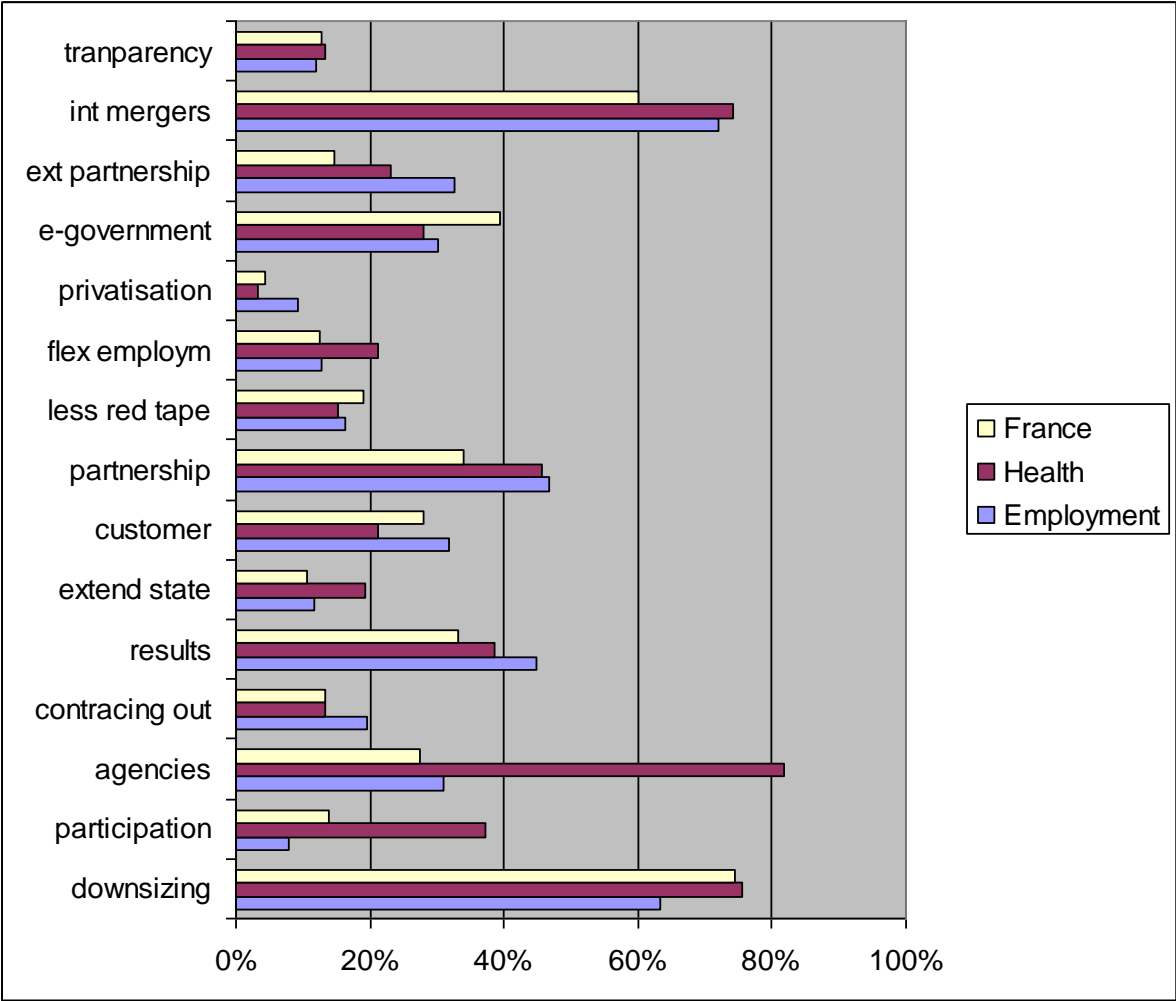
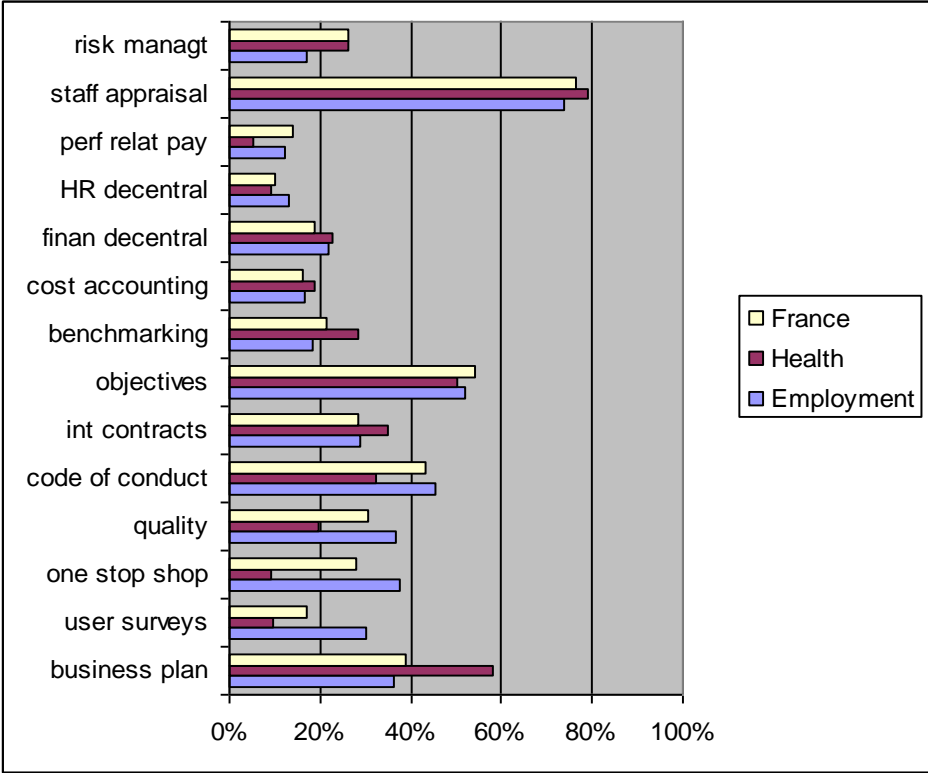


Figure 29. Use of different management-instruments.% of responses 6 and 7 'used to a large extent'.



The responses reflect the specificities of the two sectors, i.e. the reforms that have been particularly significant in that sector.

Health – In the Health sector, agency creation is identified very clearly by senior executives as a strong trend (more than 80%). This response is not surprising in that the health sector is doubly affected by the creation of agencies. Firstly, there is regular creation and reform of healthcare safety agencies (e.g. the National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products, created in 2012 to replace the French Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products (Afssaps), following the Médiator drug scandal. Secondly, the sector was reorganized in 2009 with the creation of the regional health agencies (ARS), combining the former decentralized ministerial services and regional social security bodies within the same organization. It is equally no surprise that the merger initiatives are even more identified than for government as a whole, because of the scale of the merger momentum arising from the creation of the regional health agencies. The ARS are therefore simultaneously associated with the issue of agencies and with the issue of mergers. The responses of the senior executives from the health sector also suggest other specificities. The creation of the ARS resulted in staff with different employment conditions working together, i.e. civil servants working alongside staff governed by the collective Health-Insurance sector collective agreement, which is similar to private sector status. This “mix” may explain the slightly more significant responses on the perception of flexible working practices. Much more markedly than for the State in general and for the employment sector (almost 3 times more), citizen participation is also considered as a significant trend by almost 40% of the respondents in this sector. This impact is probably explained by the fact that the Hospital, Patients, Health and Regions (HPST) Act of 2009 contains a section on patient rights. It includes a series of measures focusing specifically on increasing transparency in relation to patients, as well as increased representation for users on hospital oversight boards, the publication

of quality indicators and an enhanced role for the Committees for User Relations and Healthcare Quality (CRUQPC). Another explanation is the increased influence of patients' associations. It should also be noted that, as with Employment, respondents from the Health sector place above-average emphasis on the power of systems of collaboration, cooperation and partnerships between public actors. This response is not surprising insofar as the health sector relies on multiple state bodies (ministries, hospitals, etc.) and on other types of public bodies such as the health insurance funds.

Employment – The employment sector too has, in the past, been affected by agencies with the creation, in 1967, of the former national employment agency (ANPE), initially a small structure dedicated to employment development initiatives, but which became a large unemployment organization. This shift happened a long time ago, and was understandably not perceived by the respondents to be a new trend in the sector. On the other hand, here again there have been mergers specific to the Employment sector, since the major reform was the previously mentioned creation of Pôle Emploi, through the amalgamation of the ANPE and the Assédics in December 2008. Pôle Emploi is also known for having considerably developed management by results, a fact that is apparent in the increased perception by respondents that this is a strong trend (43% of Employment respondents). As in the health sector, involves multiple public actors: the Ministry and its decentralized units at regional level, a public establishment like Pôle Emploi, AFPA (association for adult vocational training), employment centres that pool several dedicated employment bodies and our under the responsibility of local authorities, etc. It is therefore unsurprising to find this item (collaboration/partnership) identified as significant by respondents in the sector. On the other hand, it is also significant that the development of external partnerships and contracting out are more present in this sector. However, it is worth noting that e-government practices, more associated with administrative activity, seem to be less developed in both the Employment and Health sectors.

The differences between the health/employment sectors, on the one hand, and the State on the other, is less marked with regard to management tools.

Nonetheless, the use of business plans is a practice particularly highlighted at the Ministry of Health, which reflects the method of contracting between the central administration and the regional health agencies (ARS). Similarly, benchmarking approaches are more present here than elsewhere, in a sector where there is more debate about methods than elsewhere at international level (Pierru, 2012). Paradoxically, the health sector seems to have been less exposed to the development of user orientated initiatives such as one-stop shops, satisfaction surveys or even quality-based management.

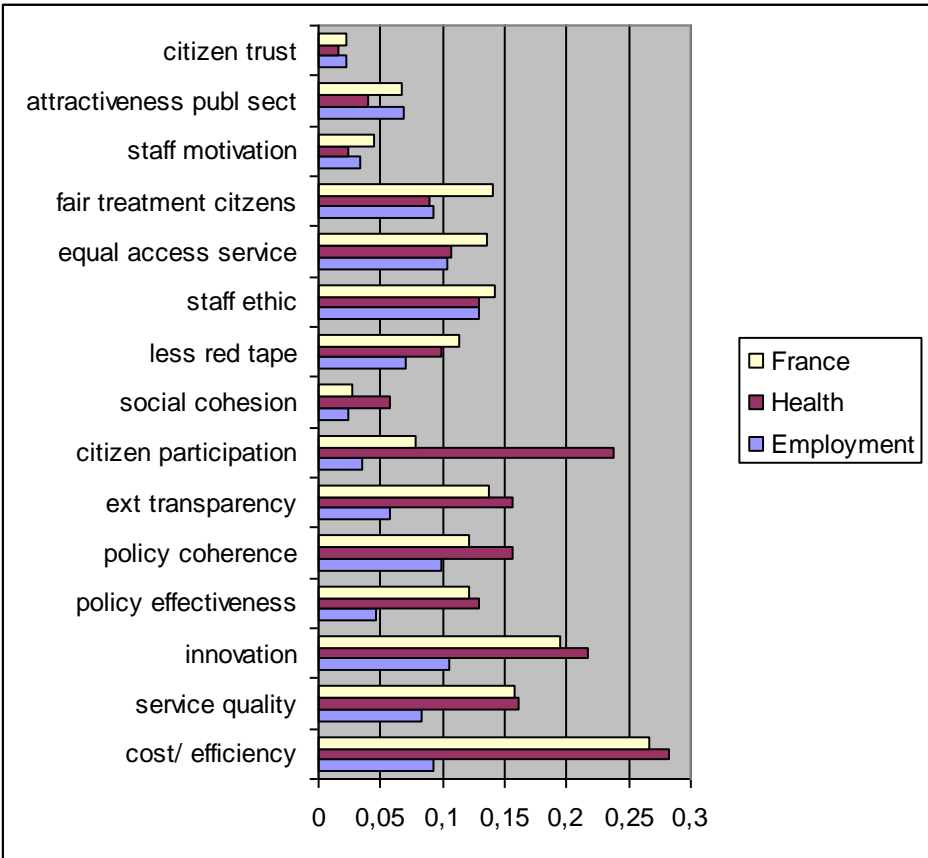
By contrast, the employment sector stands out principally through user-orientated instruments, such as user satisfaction surveys, one-stop shops and quality approaches, which is consistent with the sector's very strong service ethos. Here again, these responses reflect the reform processes that have been introduced in the sector. In 1990, the first service contract between the Government and the ANPE, called the progress contract, included funding for a satisfaction survey of users, employers and jobseekers, with the aim of increasing the level of customer satisfaction. The survey was conducted by an "independent" polling institute. This survey is still retained as an indicator of the effectiveness of employment policy at Pôle Emploi. As regards the quality approach, this was officially introduced at the ANPE in the late 1990s, but approaches of this kind had been established implicitly for some time previously.

9.4. Perceptions of the impacts of the reforms

To finish, let us look at how the effects of the reforms are perceived.

Employment – Generally speaking, we find a high degree of pessimism amongst executives in the Employment sector – greater than in the State sector in general and than in the health sector – since the percentages of respondents who consider that there has been an improvement in any given item are low (figure below). This pessimism emerges for a large number of items: a decline in efficiency, quality of service, innovation, the consistency and effectiveness of policies, transparency, citizen participation and red tape. On all these subjects, the perceptions of the respondents in the Employment sector are more negative than across-the-board (e.g. favorable responses by executives in the Employment sector are few and the scores lower than those of civil servants in general on virtually all items). The assessments on costs and efficiency and quality of service are particularly negative, and significantly more negative than those of executives from other sectors: they would seem to constitute a powerful critique of the major reform in the sector, the creation of Pôle Emploi in 2008. From the results of the survey, it is legitimate to talk of a certain “malaise” amongst senior executives in the Employment sector. It is also possible that this malaise is generated by the poor results of France’s policies to combat unemployment.

Figure 30. Different performance dimensions – % of responses 6 and 7 ‘It has improved significantly’.



Health – A sort of pessimism is also apparent in the Health sector: it applies to the perception of staff motivation, equality of access to services, impartial treatment for citizens or the attractiveness of the public health sector. However, it should be underlined that several items attract slightly more

positive (less critical) assessments than those made by the other public service executives (and particularly those in the Employment sector). The perception of the trend in citizen participation is very significantly more optimistic than the average for the public sector as a whole. Similarly, efficiency, quality of service, innovation, the consistency or effectiveness of health policies, are judged as slightly above-average, i.e. slightly more positively, than for the administration of the whole. One possible explanation for this more positive perception could be the fact that the creation of the ARS marks a strengthening of the role of the State in health insurance. It is possible that the senior executives surveyed in the health sector take a positive view of this reform, because it restores management power to the State, hence the favorable view of the issues of consistency, effectiveness and even cost reduction.

10. Conclusion

The French trajectory of administrative reforms can be characterized by some specific features. First, administrative reform policies were not initially designed with such a radical, political and paradigmatic turn than was observed in some other European countries (specifically UK), apart for the Sarkozy period. Second, the diffusion of NPM ideas did occur but through a more gradual and low-profile way with a real intensification in the 2000s due to two major reasons: the 2001 Budget Act introducing performance management on a systematic basis and the deterioration of public finances leading to more structural measures of reorganization by mergers under the Sarkozy presidency. Third, the French trajectory of administrative reforms has then to be considered on the long term in order to emphasize its specificities. Doing so, three major reforms can be emphasized. The initial, dominant and resilient trend of administrative reforms has been decentralization policies, respectively in 1981-1983 and 2003-2004, representing a considerable departure from two Napoleonic features: centralisation and uniformity. Performance management techniques are now part of the French bureaucracy: they were first introduced gradually by the 1980s but a systematic performance management system was established after the 2001 Budget Act putting a greater emphasis on hierarchy and control through managerial tools in the steering of public organisations, including semi-autonomous entities like the *établissements publics*. In the French context, the newly introduced managerial tools have been used to reinforce the centralising mechanisms already at work within the state and have simultaneously complemented the previous 'Napoleonic' hierarchical means of steering and control. At last, in the political context of the Sarkozy presidency, along with a financial crisis, strong leadership and a new government coalition, French state local units were also drastically reformed through mergers and the reinforcement of prefects (Bezes, Le Lidec, 2010). This reform generated a hybrid model. On the one hand, it gave new inter-ministerial roles to existing institutions like state local units and prefects. On the other hand, it also rediscovered and reactivated the 'Napoleonic' logic of prefects and a political hierarchy. So, important administrative changes did occur in the French public administration. Although many historical features of the French state have been maintained, they were also sometimes weakened, redirected or challenged by the reforms. This being said, the salient research issues are to understand the variations of their effects – in intensity and contents - according to the different levels and positions within the French bureaucracy: executives in central administrations, in agencies (*établissements publics*) and in ministerial local units at the regional and départemental levels.

The results of the COCOPS executive survey illustrate this complex picture and provide interesting elements to observe changes as well as resilience.

Some **traditional features of the French top civil service** are emphasized. The weight of higher education diplomas and of *grands écoles* (among them the ENA) is revealed by the score of postgraduate degrees, much higher than the overall COCOPS sample. Background educational disciplines reveal the importance of law political science and public administration but also show that France's big engineering schools are another significant player. French respondents show the strength of the career-based dimension, 68% of respondents being in the public sector for more the 20 years but reveal some signals of medium/high mobility: 40% (less than the COCOPS sample) have been in their organization for more than 10 years and the high job mobility in top positions is

revealed by a higher score than the COCOPS average being in their position for 1 to 5 years. The data cannot allow to observe the famous French ‘revolving door’ mechanism (*pantouflage*).

With regards to **the self perception of their roles**, the results record similar responses for “ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules” and for “ensuring efficient use of resources”. These findings show that the New Public Management values of efficiency can perfectly well coincide with more traditional civil service values, evidence of the presence of socialization mechanisms in the NPM or of the influence of financial imperatives. However, when individuals are forced to decide between two purportedly contradictory values, we find that the principles associated with the traditional bureaucratic state clearly win out over market principles, and regulations or the citizen over results or the client. However, by contrast with the average for the COCOPS survey, the item “achieving results” gets quite a high score (more than “Following rules”) and, similarly, efficiency is valued more highly than quality, seeming to indicate the perceived weight of budgetary constraints and an internalization of neo-managerial values.

A major focus of the report is the **executives’ perception of their work context**. Performance management tools are clearly perceived as day-to-day instruments with debates over whether this performance-based model of government is appropriate to the public sector. An interesting result seems to be that autonomy for top bureaucrats and managers has been an unfulfilled promise in a centralized state, since results reveal a global perception of lack of autonomy (below the COCOPS average), and are in sharp contrast, for example, with the German situation. Negative assessments of interministerial coordination seem to indicate that coordination works badly in the French context, and that French government ministries operate largely in compartments. Responses about politicization are quite complex to interpret and reflect the two sides of the French administration: a general interest orientation with strong mechanisms of politicization at the top.

The **responses about reform trends** describe the reforms of the last five years, and reflect the sedimentary layers of previous reforms. Downsizing and mergers are the dominant trends but are nevertheless not equated with privatization. The respondents also underline the importance of focusing on outcomes and results, echoing the strength of the LOLF/Budget Act. This mapping reveals French specificities compare to the global COCOPS survey: more intensively perceived downsizing; more mergers; some comparable contents favouring cooperation and collaboration (but related to mergers) and e-government ; by contrast, significantly less policies in favour of transparency, open government, citizens participation, etc. **Assessments about reform styles** clearly relate to the recent reforms introduced under the general public policy review. All in all, the assessments are uniform and broadly consider that the reforms are top-down, substantial, little concerned with negotiation and very much about cost-cutting and savings.

On the organizational level, the **management instruments** seen by most respondents as being very significant in the French context are interestingly the same as Germany: staff performance interviews, management by objectives and results and business planning. A majority of respondents – like in the COCOPS global sample - do not see them as linked with mechanisms of punishment/discipline/rewards. However, a large number of instruments that come out of the New Public Management doctrinal toolbox are nevertheless largely seen as not being widespread: cost accounting systems, the decentralization of financial decisions and staffing decisions, performance-related pay and user satisfaction surveys. At the individual level, results show that indicators are used more as “warning signals” than as operational methods of improving performance.

An important aspect of the present study is to obtain systematic information on how top bureaucrats assess the impact of the various public sector reforms on an organizational and policy level.

The **general view of the performance of public administration** is broadly balanced, with a slight negative bias, clearly less positive than the global mean of the COCOPS Sample. This essentially balanced view does not preclude sharp variations according to where the changes strike and the performance associated with specific reforms. In details, strong favorable assessments, indicating an improvement, are few and relate to costs and innovation. This suggests a fairly restricted view of the improvements, since the first item reflects the numerous initiatives in the RGPP designed to cut spending, and the second refers to technological changes (e-government, Internet). By contrast, a large number of areas are perceived as having clearly declined. Certain perceptions of decline relate to the “external” effects arising from administrative action: deterioration of social cohesion along with citizen trust in government and citizen participation. The other clear perceptions of deterioration relate to the “internal” negative perception of the public sector and of the morale of its staff: staff motivation, attractiveness of the public sector and red tape. These results indicate a certain malaise amongst senior executives and the sense of a government that is enfeebled and out of touch. These negative perceptions make the French case quite distinct from the global means of the COCOPS sample.

The questions on social capital and trust are more difficult to interpret, because they do not support the fairly negative assessments of staff motivation and the attractiveness of government service analyzed above. The responses are largely positive, with few sharp differences, possibly a little conformist and uniform in their conclusions. However, there is a difference between the items that generate more unanimity, relating to interpersonal relations and trust in staff, and the items that arouse more balanced responses which, for their part, relate to the collective aspect of the organization. The questions on workplace satisfaction also draw broadly positive responses, which need to be carefully interpreted in the light of the social and administrative group concerned: senior executives whose important jobs and high status understandably generate positive views.

Apart from central government, the survey also targeted more specifically the health and employment sectors. With regards to **health**, some specific trends and instruments of reforms have been emphasized by respondents: agency creation is a strong trend in the health sector as well as mergers. Much more markedly than for the central government in general and for the employment sector (almost 3 times more), citizen participation is also considered as a significant trend in this sector. A sort of pessimism is apparent in the Health sector: it applies to the perception of staff motivation, equality of access to services, impartial treatment for citizens or the attractiveness of the public health sector. However, several items attract slightly more positive (less critical) assessments than those made by the other public service executives (and particularly those in the Employment sector): citizen participation but also efficiency, quality of service, innovation and the consistency or effectiveness of health policies. **In the Employment sector**, specific identified trends are mergers, management by results and collaboration/partnership. It is also significant that the development of external partnerships and contracting out are more present in this sector. Equally significant is the fact that the employment sector stands out principally through user-orientated instruments, such as user satisfaction surveys, one-stop shops and quality approaches, which is consistent with the sector’s very strong service ethos. Generally speaking, we find a high degree of pessimism amongst

executives in the Employment sector – greater than in the State sector in general and than in the health sector. This pessimism emerges for a large number of items: a decline in efficiency, quality of service, innovation, the consistency and effectiveness of policies, transparency, citizen participation and red tape. From the results of the survey, it is legitimate to talk of a certain “malaise” amongst senior executives in the Employment sector.

Overall, the results do show that administrative reforms have strongly affected the French public administration, thus generating a great number of related problems and side effects in terms of steering, control and coordination. However, the survey does not identify a clear perception of improved outcomes while emphasizing elements of ‘malaise’ for the top bureaucrats.

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