

# *Effective Implementation of a Quality Management Policy in Public Administration: Experiences from Spain and Lessons for Croatia*

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The aim of the paper is to determine institutional and other mechanisms which affect the effective implementation of a quality management policy in public administration, and to draw some lessons for Croatia on the basis of Spanish experience. The mechanisms of the Centre of Government which may foster a particular policy are discussed, and research is carried out on the policy of quality management in Spanish public administration. The study is based on desk research and an interview conducted at the Spanish Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services – AEVAL. Croatia is a beginner in the field and lacks some basic institutions required for the horizontal implementation of this policy at the central level. The

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paper proposes that the following be ensured: institutional support, voluntary implementation of QM systems and tools, network cooperation, regular citizen satisfaction surveys and a citizen-oriented culture, and effective monitoring of performance targets.

*Keywords:* quality management, public administration, Croatia, Spain, implementation

## 1. Introduction

The introduction of private sector initiatives in order to increase customer satisfaction and organisational performance of public sector organisations was a part of the New Public Management concept launched in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1980s, and subsequently in continental Europe and developing countries (Hood, 1991; Van Thiel & Homburg, 2007; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). At the macro-level, some specific and very well-known quality improvement projects (e.g. the Citizen's Charter in the UK) were implemented, and served as a template for the further development of practices. Specific quality management (QM) models were created for public sector organisations, either at the European level (such as the CAF model) or by individual countries.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the fact that some projects in the field had failed or had been replaced by other initiatives (Van de Walle et al., 2005), QM became a part of the habitual working patterns and public management of many organisations. However, analyses show varying results and effects of QM initiatives and implemented models. Once again, it has been proven that context matters, and that various organisational and external variables have affected the implementation and success of quality reforms (Drewry, 2005, p. 334; Ohemeng, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 22; Ra & Joo, 2005; Thomassen et al., 2014). Furthermore, in this field, research

<sup>1</sup> The CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is a total quality management tool developed as a result of the cooperation of EU ministers responsible for public administration, with the aim of helping public sector organisations to improve their performance (see more at <http://www.eipa.eu/en/topic/show/&tid=191>). Specific QM models have been created; for example, in Italy (*Valutazione Integrata del Cambiamento* - VIC), the Netherlands (INK), Sweden (SIQ Model for Performance Excellence), Spain (*Modelo de Evaluación para el Aprendizaje y Mejora* - EVAM) and the UK (Investors in People, Public Service Excellence Model).

conducted in the private sector prevails, which sometimes leads to the conclusion that preconditions for the successful implementation of QM models in the public sector are similar or identical to those required for the private sector (Pimentel & Major, 2016, p. 998). However, there are significant differences between public and private sector management (Boyne, 2002; Pollitt, 2003; Stevenson, 2013), which may, as a consequence, differently affect the implementation of any management instrument, including those intended for quality improvement. Therefore, it is of great importance to carry out further studies in the public sector and to interpret any research results obtained in the private sector with caution.

Croatia is lagging behind most European countries in this field. Because it has accepted a strategic approach to QM in public administration quite recently, other countries' experiences may be helpful insofar as they may facilitate learning and the implementation of QM systems and practices. Spain is a European country with one of the longest traditions in the field (Žurga, 2008, p. 15). In spite of the differences between the two countries, there are many similarities between their administrative systems, so Spanish experience and commitment to quality in public administration may serve as a source for the development of QM policy in Croatia.

The aim of this paper is to determine institutional and other mechanisms that may affect the effective implementation of QM policy and to draw some lessons for Croatia from Spanish experience. First, an explanation is provided as to why Spain would be of use as a role model for Croatia, as well as a description of the Croatian policy on QM. This is followed by a general discussion on the role of the Centre of Government in the coordination of government policies in order to pave the way to a more specific QM policy, in particular with regard to institutional and other mechanisms required for its effective implementation. Research is presented on QM policy and the implementation of specific QM models in Spanish public administration. Finally, some lessons for the horizontal implementation of QM policy are drawn, which Croatia could learn from.

## 2. Learning from Other Countries' Experiences – Similarities and Differences of Administrative Systems as an Incentive or a Barrier to Learning?

At first sight, Spain and Croatia are rather different countries, with different systems of public administration. Spain belongs to the 'Napoleonic'

group of countries, traditionally characterised by centralisation, uniformity, and legalistic orientation (Bezes & Parrado, 2013; Kuhlmann & Wollman, 2014, p. 14). However, after the collapse of the Francoist regime Spain underwent a radical decentralisation process. Political decentralisation was followed by administrative decentralisation, both of which resulted in regional decentralisation: a quasi-federal system with powerful autonomous regions (Bezes & Parrado, 2013, p. 30; Clifton & Alonso, 2013, p. 4). In addition, the strong decentralisation process diminished the power of the state field administration, leading to significant difficulties in coordination (Bezes & Parrado, 2013, p. 36; Clifton & Alonso, 2013). Due to negative decentralisation and fragmentation consequences, many countries consider re-strengthening the role of state and public administration in order to ensure central coordination (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 44). Although Spain has formally accepted the legalistic tradition typical of continental European administrative system models, Spanish administrative practice is characterised by rather strong politicisation and clientelism (Kuhlmann & Wollman, 2014, p. 16).

As in other Central Eastern European countries formed after the breakup of ex-communist regimes, the specificities of the former communist system and the transition process in Croatia have affected the role of the state and public administration insofar that they have paved the way for a special European administrative system model (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 44; Kuhlmann & Wollman, 2014). The main characteristics of this model are often contradictory: a strong state role with non-regulated privatisation of state ownership, a combination of legal monopoly and strong politicisation, strong veto points such as trade unions and low human resource capacity, and the like. This results in an ambivalent role of the state: on the one hand, it is expected to be the main reform driver, while on the other it is expected to stand back (Koprić et al., 2014, pp. 44-45). Croatian administration is moving towards the continental European tradition, though it never has abandoned some key characteristics of continental European models, especially the legalistic tradition and professionalism based on legal education. However, it still faces many problems. Centralisation, high territorial fragmentation, weak and uneven capacities of local and regional self-government units, structural problems of state administration, low quality of public policy preparation and legal regulation, and politicisation of public services are just some of these (Koprić, 2016).

Notwithstanding certain differences between Spanish and Croatian public administrations (especially with regard to the degree of political and administrative decentralisation), some similarities may also be noted.

Both are part of the continental European rule-of-law culture as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon public interest culture (Kuhlmann & Wollman, 2014, p. 11), but their administrative practices still face problems of politicisation in public administration. Although this is caused by different reasons, in both countries there is a lack of coordination from the state centre, which may impact on the effectiveness of policy implementation. In addition, a strong internal resistance to change slows down reform processes, especially those of managerial character that require a more flexible approach (Bezes & Parrado, 2013, p. 24; Koprić, 2016, p. 9). It seems that remnants of former authoritarian regimes still shape both systems of public administration.

In general, even countries grouped in the same categories of public administration systems have been changing their traditional characteristics as a result of various internal and external pressures and influences. For instance, 'Napoleonic' countries have undergone the processes of decentralisation with different consequences for their administrative systems (see Bezes & Parrado, 2013 for France and Spain) and it is hard to claim that centralisation and uniformity still characterise those countries. In Central and Eastern European countries, administrative reforms differ according to reform types, reasons, and driving forces which affect the results achieved (Nemec, 2008). On the other hand, the potential convergence of European national administrative systems and policies has attempted to be explained by the concept of the European Administrative Space (EAS) as a joint set of fundamental good administration principles and standards, based on a common set of values, and social and citizen expectations defined by law, whose application is supported by appropriate procedures and accountability mechanisms (Koprić, 2017, p. 31; Kovač, 2017, p. 9; Trondal & Peters, 2013, p. 297). However, the EAS has not been conceived as a complete harmonisation of national administrative systems, but rather as a melting pot in which traditional administrative models melt and mix in a new European combination (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 322). In that sense, it is impossible to find two identical administrative systems that could easily exchange practices and knowledge. Even if that were to happen, the context of the implementation of particular policies or reforms would need to be taken into consideration. However, institutions also matter and their impact should be borne in mind, notwithstanding the particularities of specific systems.

Accordingly, even Spanish experiences in the implementation of a particular policy may be of interest and useful to Croatian public administration. In the case of QM in public administration, Spain has had a rather

long tradition in the development and implementation of QM policy in central and local government organisations. Because Croatia is at the very beginning of preparing this policy, Croatians could take into consideration the experience and knowledge gained by their Spanish counterparts. In doing so, special attention should be devoted to the characteristics of the administrative system and the context in which the reforms will be taking place.

### 3. The Croatian Approach to Quality Management in Public Administration

In Croatian public administration QM is significantly underdeveloped, especially in central state organisations and local and regional self-government. Some practices have been developing in public services (services of general interest), such as education and the health sector, mostly due to obligations prescribed by law. However, voluntary quality improvement instruments acquired from the private sector or developed specifically for public sector organisations, such as the EFQM model, ISO standards, customer satisfaction surveys, citizen charters, CAF, and quality awards are employed rarely or not at all (Džinić, 2014; Manojlović, 2014).<sup>2</sup>

In the State Administration Reform Strategy passed for the period 2008–2011, the quality of services was briefly mentioned and mostly quality control mechanisms (such as inspection control and reporting) were intended to confirm whether quality was achieved. Citizen satisfaction surveys and results analyses were also intended as an instrument of government transparency, but these were not implemented as planned.

Some activities in this field were initiated at the state level only in 2014 by the Ministry of Public Administration and the State School for Public

<sup>2</sup> For instance, very few organisations are registered users of the CAF, and none of these have implemented the model in practice. At the local level, 16% to 24% of towns participated in the national award scheme provided exclusively for towns and organised in 2013, 2015, and 2016. Approximately the same percentage of towns apply ISO standards for QM system improvement. Very few towns conduct user satisfaction surveys, and these are of questionable quality and not conducted on a regular basis (Džinić, 2014). There are no comprehensive data on the implementation of QM models at the central state level. In spite of the role of regulatory bodies in ensuring the quality of services provided on the regulated market, it seems that only the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries has been using QM models; namely, the SWOT analysis, BSC and ISO 9001: 2008 (Popović & Kobasić, 2016, pp. 118–119).

Administration, when an informal translation of the CAF into Croatian was prepared and a two-day seminar was held by SIGMA<sup>3</sup> experts on QM in public services.

The Croatian Strategy for the Development of Public Administration for the period 2015–2020 (Official Gazette no. 70/15; Strategy) indicates the following main problems in the Croatian approach to QM in public administration:

- no data on the number of organisations implementing QM standards
- no systemic monitoring and analysis of the implementation and performance of applied QM mechanisms (complaints and proposals)
- no translation of QM standards into Croatian
- no systemic training of senior civil servants on QM in public administration.

In order to make improvements in this field, the strategy envisages the implementation of QM models by indicating some examples (*Public Service Charters, Total Quality Management - TQM, CAF, ISO 9000, ISO 9001, EFQM, Balanced Scorecards*, and the like).

In addition, several implementation activities are listed, namely:

- analysis of existing QM practices in public administration
- comparative analysis of relevant international QM models in public administration
- formulation of guidelines for QM in public administration, taking into consideration the activities and types of services, existing institutes, costs and benefits, and necessary IT support
- training on QM in the provision of public services
- promotional activities of QM in public administration
- continuous measurement of user satisfaction with the quality of services provided by organisations implementing a quality system
- continuous tracking of time spent in addressing user requests.

The action plan for the implementation of the strategy passed by the government in December 2016 envisages the introduction of QM standards

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<sup>3</sup> SIGMA (*Support for Improvement in Governance and Management*) is a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union. Its key objective is to strengthen the foundations for improved public governance, and hence support socio-economic development through building the capacities of the public sector, enhancing horizontal governance, and improving the design and implementation of public administration reforms. See [www.sigmaxweb.org](http://www.sigmaxweb.org).



into public administration as the main measure aimed at improving the quality of public services. However, the training for civil servants provided for within the strategy and tracking of time spent in addressing user requests were omitted from the action plan. Furthermore, the measure is limited to central state bodies and covers neither organisations that do not belong to the state administration (such as agencies) nor local and regional self-government units. The Ministry of Public Administration is in charge of heading these processes.

#### 4. Centre of Government and its Role in the Coordination of Government Policies

Coordination is traditionally considered to be a management function aimed at overcoming fragmentation and the lack of cohesiveness stemming from specialisation in performing certain organisational tasks (Gulick, 1937). Lack of coordination often leads to shifting problems from one unit or organisation to another, or to unnecessary duplications. Political and administrative decentralisation spread to many European countries during the 1980s and 1990s, especially under the influence of New Public Management, and resulted in new difficulties in the field of coordinating government policies. A new issue to emerge was that of ensuring the implementation of a particular public policy, especially with regard to crosscutting issues, covering more than one sector (OECD, 2014, p. 13).

In order to ensure effective coordination, specific coordination mechanisms and institutions are formed. While a traditional coordination mechanism was the budget, in the case of coordination going beyond mere fiscal matters, a Centre of Government (CoG) is often established as a specific institution in charge of coordination tasks (Alessandro et al., 2013, p. 5). In general, the CoG lends support to the executive branch by linking the political and the administrative level (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 213). The structure of CoGs usually includes the prime minister's office, ministers' cabinets, public relations units, units for technical and logistical support, coordination of public policies, planning, legislation, monitoring of decision implementation, specialised units for horizontal issues, and the like (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 213).

In a more narrow sense, the CoG only includes units located in the proximity of the chief executive and serving him or her exclusively. On the other hand, the CoG can be conceived more broadly and also include in-



stitutions performing crosscutting governmental functions, but not located in the proximity of the chief executive or serving him or her exclusively (Alessandro et al., 2013, p. 9). Besides, certain ministries and other state administration bodies (for instance, ministries of finance, public administration, justice, foreign affairs, and the like) often perform a coordinating function. Bearing in mind the various tasks of a contemporary politico-administrative system, which requires different modes of coordination (OECD, 2014, p. 14), it is best to take a functional approach with regard to the CoG and note the functions performed by those institutions or units.

Dumas et al. (2013) identify five key functions of the CoG: political coordination, strategic planning, policy coordination (regarding both design and implementation), monitoring of performance, and communication and accountability of actions and achievements. Regarding policy coordination, it is of utmost importance to find the right balance between the strength of coordination and the freedom of line ministries and other organisations in designing and implementing certain policies (Alessandro, 2013, p. 18). In any case, the strength of coordination depends on the relationship between the chief executive and the ministries, but also on the intensity of governmental activities (Alessandro, 2013, pp. 20-21). Crosscutting issues like, for instance, measures aimed at reforming public administration require a specific type of coordination unit in charge of providing support to ministries and other organisations in the implementation process.

Providing support in the implementation of a particular policy is usually related to horizontal relations and coordination performed among organisations at the same level. Accordingly, coordination is not based on imposing hierarchical decisions, but on voluntary cooperation and communication (Bouckaert et al., 2010). However, some standardisation mechanisms may also exist, whether obligatory or simply recommended.<sup>4</sup> In public administration, hierarchy is traditionally the most widely represented coordination mechanism, but horizontal mechanisms such as networks and soft law have been taking their place to a greater extent. Therefore, a particular policy recommended coordination units can be

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<sup>4</sup> Bouckaert et al. (2010) indicate three coordination mechanisms: hierarchy, market, and networks. Hierarchy is based on impositions and constraints, and includes imposing rules, goals, and the monitoring of these. Market is based on exchange, supply and demand, price, and competition, while networks are based on common values, understandings, norms, and confidence among participants.

fostered by means of legal regulations whose implementation is obligatory, but also by means of various soft law mechanisms such as strategies, programmes, guidelines, white papers, and even laws based on voluntary application. When these are designed in cooperation with the stakeholders participating in their implementation, it is expected that this kind of self-regulation will contribute to regulation legitimacy and better implementation. In that case, a special institution acting as a coordination body has the primary role of supporting stakeholders in the development of the regulation by providing technical assistance, expert consultancy, and coordination of the whole process. Some other functions of the CoG are closely tied to policy coordination and implementation. In order to stay the course and achieve particular goals, the CoG also plays a role in setting strategic priorities and defining indicators of progress, as well as in performance monitoring, thus ensuring ex ante and ex post quality control of a particular public policy (Alessandro et al., 2013, p. 22).

## 5. Quality Management in Spanish Public Administration

In order to determine the institutional mechanisms that could foster the implementation of a QM policy, a study on QM in Spanish public administration has been conducted. Namely, Spain has had a long tradition of QM in public administration, dating back to the 1980s, which makes it suitable for the verification of theoretical models and the development of proposals for countries without sufficient experience in the field. The QM models used in Spanish public administration and the institutional framework designed to foster their implementation are determined by conducting desk research and an interview in the unit dealing with coordination activities in the field – the Spanish Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services (*Agencia de Evaluación y Calidad, AEVAL*).

### 5.1. Quality Management Models Applied in Spanish Public Administration

In Spain, QM models are applied on a voluntary basis and each organisation is free to decide which model is going to be used, according to its capacities and an assessment of the benefits which the model may produce.

The following pages will give a brief overview of the most common QM models in Spanish public administration: citizen satisfaction surveys, public service (citizen) charters, models based on (self-)evaluation (EFQM, CAF, and EVAM), and quality awards.

Citizen satisfaction surveys started to be conducted in the 1980s within the Centre for Sociological Research (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*). In 2009, AEVAL's Observatory for the Quality of Public Services published its first document on the citizen perception of public services in Spain, comprising the results of 50 studies conducted from 1985 to 2008. Since 2009, reports on the quality of public services based on citizen perception have been published annually. In addition to the national one, there are four regional observatories for the quality of public services: in Madrid, Cantabria, Extremadura, and Andalusia (Feinstein and Zapico-Goði, 2010, p. 10). Individual administrative organisations also conduct citizen satisfaction surveys. For example, the City of Madrid, i.e., its Observatory of the City, biannually conducts and publishes surveys on the opinions, expectations, needs, and satisfaction of the citizens with regard to different public services provided by the city.

Ideas on strengthening the citizens' position in relation to public administration on the basis of public service charters at the central level were realised in 1999, by means of Royal Decree 1259/1999 (Criado, 2007, p. 59). This initiative was followed by administrative organisations at the regional and local level. Public service charters represent voluntary quality improvement instruments initiated by political officials or public managers. They are aimed at informing citizens about the services provided by organisations, quality standards, and user rights. However, public service charters in Spain are considered to be more of a managerial instrument prescribing standards to be achieved, which makes them closer to the Anglo-American than to the continental European charter model (Torres, 2006, p. 163). AEVAL evaluates and certifies the charters developed in accordance with requirements on underlying methodology and quality standards (Žurga, 2008, p. 186). Structure guidelines are also developed and development work in the preparation of charters is undertaken at the regional and local level. In addition, the implementation of charters is monitored, either by quality units or as part of the evaluation process within the implementation of other QM models (e.g. ISO standards or EFQM) (Torres, 2006, p. 161).

Central state organisations in Spain provide documents on the quality of services, based on an internal or external quality evaluation conducted as part of the process of implementing QM models recommended by

the State Secretary for Public Administration in 2006: EFQM Excellence Model, Common Assessment Framework (CAF), and EVAM (*Modelo de Evaluación para el Aprendizaje y Mejora*) (Žurga, 2008, p. 186). The EFQM Excellence Model was developed for private sector organisations by the *European Foundation for Quality Management – EFQM*, a non-profit organisation established in the late 1980s. After some time, it was introduced to public sector organisations as well. It comprises self-evaluation, external evaluation, and the rewarding of organisations ([www.efqm.org](http://www.efqm.org)). In Spain, more than 430 organisations (in both the private and public sector) have obtained EFQM excellence recognition ([www.ub.edu/web/ub/en/](http://www.ub.edu/web/ub/en/)). Based on the EFQM Excellence Model, a self-evaluation instrument for public sector organisations (the CAF) was created in 2000. It is a questionnaire aimed at detecting the strong and the weak points of an organisation, and serves as the basis for the development of an improvement action plan. In October 2017 3,969 organisations in 55 countries and several European institutions were registered as CAF users, and 56 of these were from Spain (mostly at the regional and local level) (<http://www.eipa.eu/en/topic/show/&tid=191>). EVAM is a Spanish QM model developed by the Ministry of Public Administration and AEVAL, and is founded on the EFQM and CAF models. Evaluation is conducted in five main areas: a) policy (*política*), planning and strategy through leadership (*planificación y estrategia a través del liderazgo*), b) processes (*procesos*), c) people (*personas*), d) partnerships and resources (*alianzas y recursos*), and e) results (*resultados*). Each of these contains 10 self-evaluation questions and the development of an improvement plan (AEVAL, 2009, p. 34; AEVAL, 2013).

National quality awards in Spanish public administration were established in 2000. Since 2013, public administration organisations have received awards in two categories; i.e., three sub-categories as categorised by AEVAL. The *Award for Excellence in Public Administration* recognises significant improvements in the quality of services and evaluation on the basis of the selected model (EFQM, CAF). The *Award for Innovation in Public Administration* recognises innovative practices in public service delivery (the *Citizen Award*) and organisational and managerial improvements indirectly affecting citizens and other users (*Award for Innovation in Administration*). It seems that the demonstration of good practices and recognition of excellence constitute a part of the organisational culture in Spanish public administration, because Spain is the leader in the number of projects which have been put forward for the EPSA (*European Public Sector Award*) programme. This competition is organised biennially and organisations receive awards for projects competing in two or more categories. In addition,

between 32 and 64 projects are awarded with good practice recognition. Spanish organisations have participated in all the competitions held so far, with a total of 165 projects. The data on the total number of competing projects, the number of Spanish projects which have competed and won awards, and the number of recognitions obtained by Spanish organisations are shown in Table 1. Bearing in mind that there is only one award per category, Spanish organisations are not just leaders in the number of projects competing, but also in the number of awards received.

Table 1. Projects which have competed and won awards in EPSA competitions

Competition	Competing projects	Competing Spanish projects	Spanish projects that have won awards	Good practice recognitions obtained by Spanish organisations
EPSA 2007	209	1	-	1
EPSA 2009	304	32	+	3
EPSA 2011	274	47	+	8
EPSA 2013	227	46	one mention	6
EPSA 2015	266	39	+	7
Total	1.280	165	three awards and one mention	25

Source: Author's own, based on [www.eipa.eu](http://www.eipa.eu)

In addition, two Spanish organisations are among the nine organisations to have been awarded the European Prize for Innovation in Public Administration by the European Commission in 2013.<sup>5</sup>

## 5.2. Institutional Framework for the Implementation of Policy on Quality Management

Numerous documents in the field of QM in public administration have been passed since the 1990s. Quality programmes were legally institution-

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm?section=admin-innovators](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=admin-innovators).

alised in 1999 by Royal Decree 1259/1999<sup>6</sup>, when public service charters and quality awards were regulated. A systemic regulatory framework for central state organisations was established by Royal Decree 951/2005<sup>7</sup>, which provided six programmes for quality improvement in public administration, namely:

- Expectation analysis and customer satisfaction measurement
- Citizen charters informing citizens about the services provided by public administration organisations and the rights citizens have in relation to public administration
- Complaints and suggestions
- Organisational quality assessment according to specific models of excellence
- Recognition (organisation certification and awards)
- Observatory for the Quality of Public Services (preparation of reports on quality development in state organisations and citizen perception of quality of public services).

Institutionally, QM issues are within the remit of AEVAL, which was founded in 2006 as part of the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration.<sup>8</sup> It is a typical policy coordination body because its aim is to improve the design of public policies and programmes by means of analysing their results and effects (Clifton & Alonso, 2013, p.7). Bearing in mind the position AEVAL has in the structure and functions of the central state, it may functionally be considered part of the CoG. Due to the high degree of autonomy of subnational units, AEVAL acts as a coordination body primarily for central state organisations, although it cooperates with subnational levels of public administration as well.

In order to collect more data on how AEVAL operates, in November 2016 an interview was conducted with the principal evaluator in the

<sup>6</sup> *Real Decreto 1259/1999, por el que se regulan las cartas de servicios y los premios a la calidad en la Administración General de Estado, Official Gazette no. 190 of 10/8/1999.*

<sup>7</sup> *Real Decreto 951/2005, por el que se establece el marco general para la mejora de la calidad en la Administración General del Estado, Official Gazette no. 211 of 3/9/2005 and 227 of 22/9/2005.*

<sup>8</sup> As this paper was being prepared for publication, AEVAL was abolished by Royal Decree 769/2017 (*Royal Decreto 769/2017, por el que se desarrolla la estructura orgánica básica del Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública*) and its functions transferred to the State Secretary for Public Function; namely, its Institute for the Evaluation of Public Policies and the General Directorate of Public Governance.

Department of Quality of Services. Because only one person was interviewed, the results are not statistically significant but could be used to get a better insight from the practitioners' point of view into AEVAL's role in the implementation of QM policy in Spanish public administration. It was assumed that the picture on implementation issues would become clearer following the interview conducted in the unit dealing with coordinative issues in the field of QM policy.

AEVAL provides public organisations with support in the form of consulting, standardisation, evaluation, and certification, and it evaluates the quality of services. It publishes two groups of guidelines: one on the evaluation of public policies and the quality of services, and the other providing instructions and methodological protocols for the implementation of self-evaluation tools and models of excellence.<sup>9</sup> By passing the guidelines for the preparation of public service charters, it provides organisations with performance indicators, thus assuming a part in strategic planning and performance monitoring. Moreover, its Evaluation Department is in charge of monitoring and supervision of regulatory policies and preparation of strategic plans of key public policies. On the other hand, the Service Quality Department deals predominantly with analysis, training, advice, and promotion of quality culture and assessment.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, AEVAL, and particularly its Service Quality Department, has the role of a coordination mechanism based on networks and soft law instruments.

In order to motivate organisations to implement QM models, AEVAL undertakes systematic communication actions and organises trainings, annual awards, and certification procedures. In addition, there is an annual state incentive programme initiated by the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration, with a budget of approximately 800,000 EUR granted to the 10 best-certified organisations. This is intended to be used as an extra bonus for organisational personnel. The advantage of quality award programmes is that awards are visible outside the organisation, so politicians find them useful for promoting their work.

With regard to citizen perception of the quality of public services, the surveys conducted by AEVAL are general and the data collected cannot

<sup>9</sup> All guidelines are published and available on the AEVAL website.

<sup>10</sup> AEVAL is also in charge of coordination of an inter-territorial network of quality public service management aimed at fostering territorial cooperation between national and subnational governments, but it seems that the institutionalisation of evaluation driven by the state administration results in tensions between different levels of government and even in jurisdictional conflict (Clifton & Alonso, 2013, pp. 10-12).



be extracted.<sup>11</sup> Thus a huge amount of information collected over several decades has a purely informative function and does not serve as a basis for the development of specific public policies and quality improvement.

At the local level, QM in public administration is promoted by the Spanish Municipalities and Provinces Federation (*Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias*, FEMP – <http://www.femp.es/>), by means of fostering cooperation among administrative organisations in the areas of e-government and quality of services.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, the Ministry of Public Administration, in cooperation with FEMP, the academic community, and other organisations, published several guidelines for local public management (Žurga, 2008, p. 189). In addition, FEMP has published guidelines for the development of quality plans and modernisation in local self-government and guidelines for the application of evaluation methodology. Due to a lack of central monitoring of local self-government and a large number of local units, comprehensive data on the use of QM instruments in Spanish municipalities and provinces are not available. However, a study conducted in 2009 by Ignacio Criado showed that 88% of autonomous communities had developed general quality policies, and the rest (Aragón and País Vasco) had quality policies for specific sectors at that time (Criado, 2009, p. 26).

Institutional support at the micro-level is provided by internal organisational units responsible for quality issues.

## 6. Discussion and Lessons for Croatia

In order to achieve its aim of implementing a QM policy in public administration and ensuring inter-territorial coordination, Spain started with the establishment of a basic institutional and regulatory framework. Regarding coordination issues, it seems that institutions are required for effective realisation. Starting from the point of institutionalism, which states that “institutions matter”, individual actors and their contributions

<sup>11</sup> The only exception in this regard are data on transparency, available since 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Additionally, there are some other organisations in Spain acting as coordinating bodies in QM issues, in general or in specific sectors, such as the State Secretariat for Public Administration and the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA). However, AEFVAL is in charge of territorial coordination of these organisations, although it seems that it has not been successful at achieving this aim (Clifton & Alonso, 2013, p. 12)

are relegated to the background (March & Olsen, 1984; Olsen, 2007). However, AEVAL failed to play the role of inter-territorial coordinator effectively, which might be a consequence of its rather limited authority. On the other hand, its role in providing support for the implementation of QM policy at central state level seems to have been quite successful. A regulatory framework and an organisation providing support in terms of know-how, strategies, and guidance, and even financial support, can encourage individual organisations to implement QM tools and mechanisms. In addition, the measurement of QM effects (often in the form of citizen satisfaction surveys) represents evidence of the value of QM policy implementation. However, sometimes the success of the implementation of horizontal policies depends not only on formal structures (like the CoG), but also on its capacity to lead and motivate (OECD, 2014, p. 11).<sup>13</sup>

For the first time, Croatia has recognised the importance of QM in public administration and has indicated specific goals and implementation activities in the strategy and the action plan for its implementation. Taking into consideration the general postulates on the role of CoG and the experiences of AEVAL, the following lessons could be drawn with regard to an effective implementation of QM policy:

*Institutional support of QM in public administration.* Strengthening those parts of the CoG in charge of the implementation of horizontal public policies should be a priority. An organisational unit within an existing public administration body (e.g. the Ministry of Public Administration as one of the horizontal ministries) or even a special organisation should be established in order to coordinate QM projects in public administration and to ensure the effective implementation of a QM policy. This unit would be in charge of technical and analytical tasks, such as the analysis of current QM practices in Croatian public administration, preparation of guidelines for the implementation of QM models, monitoring and evaluation of citizen satisfaction, and the like. In cooperation with other institutions functioning at the subnational level (such as the Association of Cities in Croatia), it could expand its activities from the central to subcentral government units. Even in Spain, where the high degree of autonomy of autonomous communities, provinces, and municipalities does

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, context also matters, and the implementation of QM in a particular organisation depends on many different factors, such as organisational culture, leadership, and empowerment of employees (Drewry, 2005, p. 334; Ohemeng, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 22; Ra & Joo, 2005; Thomassen et al., 2014).

not allow administrative supervision on part of the central state, AEVAL provides support to those subcentral government units interested in the implementation of QM practices.

*QM systems and instruments based on voluntary implementation, with strong state support.* The basic idea of most QM instruments is to stimulate and develop the overall organisational commitment to quality improvement. Because this requires a specific organisational culture and orientation to work, making the implementation of QM models obligatory would probably miss the point and result in non-intended effects. Therefore, general campaigns and promotions of QM models and the development of quality culture at the central state level should be carried out by the CoG, i.e., its special units. Because administrative organisations in Croatia lack experience and know-how (and occasionally the financial resources) to introduce a QM system, they should be provided with technical, personnel, material, and other resources. This could be done by the central organisation or the unit established in order to act as a coordination body in this field. The action plan for the implementation of the strategy covers only central state organisations, but this should be understood as the beginning of a broader implementation of QM in the future. Unlike Spain, the Croatian central state has certain authority over all parts of public administration and should use its coordinative competencies to promote and support QM not only in central state administration, but also in local and regional self-government and all other organisations in public administration. Croatia has some coordination difficulties, which arise from the lack of a strong CoG and lesser autonomy of subnational governments than is the case in Spain. Therefore, the failure that AEVAL experienced in inter-territorial coordination should not be expected in the case of Croatia. In case of limited financial resources, competition among organisations could be introduced.

*Cooperation network in the field of QM in public administration.* This type of networking is required for the exchange of knowledge and experience, good practices, cooperation, and specific activities regarding quality improvement in public administration. It could include public administration organisations, civil society organisations, the Institute of Public Administration<sup>14</sup>, and all others interested in quality issues. Cooperation

<sup>14</sup> The Institute of Public Administration is a citizens' association founded in 1997, with the purpose of promoting and improving public administration in Croatia, as well as establishing the prerequisites for the development of a modern administration which adheres to European standards and contributes to the development of the economy and other

could be institutionalised in the form of regular conferences on quality in public administration, organised by the state coordination body for QM in public administration.

*Citizen satisfaction surveys conducted on a regular basis by experts.* There are no general surveys on citizen satisfaction with public services in Croatia.<sup>15</sup> In order to orient public administration more towards the citizens and their needs, citizen satisfaction surveys should be conducted regularly, with the help of experts. In addition, the results of the surveys should be extractable, so they can be used for quality improvement and the development of public policies.

*Development of a citizen-oriented organisational culture.* Perhaps the most difficult task is to change the organisational and overall social culture so as to render old bureaucratic attitudes obsolete and introduce the idea of public administration as a service acting in the favour of citizens. In this respect, continuous promotion of quality commitment and supportive leadership are of key importance, especially in the face of strong resistance on part of the employees. Because public management reforms in general, and cultural changes in particular, require a longer period of time to be seen as effective, it is important not to push for their implementation overnight.

*Indication of performance targets and effective monitoring thereof.* In order to ensure the implementation of a horizontal QM policy, specific performance targets with deadlines and a responsible body should be defined. Monitoring, for instance, in the form of regular report submission, should be ensured as well. In Croatia, the action plan for the implementation of the strategy has already defined performance targets in the field of QM policy, the organisation in charge (the Ministry of Public Administration), implementation deadlines, and monitoring mechanisms. The part which refers to the management of strategy implementation provides for the foundation of specific coordination bodies and groups for the implementation of the strategy. However, in spite of their valuable role, working

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aspects of social organisation. It promotes the academic and professional training of employees in central state administration, units of local and regional self-government, public institutions and other legal entities with public authority, and attempts to enhance the administrative profession and administrative research overall. More information is available at: [www.en.iju.hr](http://www.en.iju.hr).

<sup>15</sup> At the local level, very few local units conduct this kind of survey regularly. Sometimes they hire external organisations for the purpose, but in most cases superficial surveys without appropriate expertise are carried out (Džinić, 2015).

groups in charge of individual reform activities are temporary bodies, which lack the authority required for continuous development and support regarding the implementation of QM policy. The submission of progress reports by the Ministry of Public Administration to the government and then to then to the Croatian Parliament is envisioned as a monitoring mechanism. In addition to political accountability, a revision of the action plan is provided for as a correction mechanism when performance targets are not achieved.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to determine institutional and other mechanisms which affect the effective implementation of QM policy and to draw some lessons for Croatia on the basis of Spanish experience. Spain has had a rather long tradition in the development of QM policy in public administration, while Croatia is at the very beginning of this process and still lacks some basic institutional mechanisms required for the implementation of this policy, at least at the central state level. Although the two countries belong to different groups of administrative tradition, their systems of public administration have certain similarities that could be used to exchange experiences in administrative reforms and the implementation of particular public policies.

Regarding horizontal policies, the role of the CoG and its specific parts is of crucial importance. In order to foster the uniform implementation of a particular policy, the CoG is responsible for policy coordination (with regard to both design and implementation) and performance monitoring. In Spain, the coordination role in the field of evaluating public policies and the quality of public services has been assigned to AEVAL, an internal unit of the horizontal Ministry of Finance and Public Administration. Although successful in providing support to central state organisations willing to implement specific QM models, it failed to ensure inter-territorial coordination between different governmental levels.

Several lessons were proposed for Croatia on the basis of general postulates on the role of the CoG in fostering the implementation of particular policies, and Spanish experiences in the horizontal implementation of QM policy. These include the following: institutional support of QM in public administration should be provided in the form of a special unit or ministry responsible for public administration, or a special coordination

organisation; QM systems and instruments should be implemented voluntarily, but provided with state support; a cooperation network should be developed; citizen satisfaction surveys should be conducted on a regular basis by experts; a citizen-oriented organisational culture should be fostered; and performance targets should be set and their effective monitoring ensured. Croatia should follow good Spanish experiences in the development of institutional mechanisms fostering the implementation of QM policy in public administration. Because coordination problems in Croatia stem from different sources than those in Spain, the formation of a strong coordination unit at the central state level might result in better inter-territorial coordination than was the case in Spain.

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EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF A QUALITY MANAGEMENT  
POLICY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EXPERIENCES FROM  
SPAIN AND LESSONS FOR CROATIA

*Summary*

*The aim of the paper was to determine institutional and other mechanisms which affect the effective implementation of a particular policy, and to draw some lessons for Croatia on the basis of Spanish experience in the implementation of a quality management policy in public administration. To this end, the mechanisms of the Centre of Government which may foster a particular policy were discussed and research was carried out on the quality management policy in Spanish public administration. The study is based on desk research and an interview conducted at the Spanish Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services – AEVAL. The paper analyses Spanish experiences in quality management policies, models, and practices in public administration in order to make some proposals for the effective development and implementation of a policy on quality management in Croatian public administration. Following a brief description of Croatian practices in quality management and plans to make further improvements, four of the most frequently implemented quality management instruments in Spain are analysed; namely, citizen satisfaction surveys, public service charters, quality evaluation conducted according to specific models, and quality awards. Furthermore, the institutional and regulatory framework for quality management in Spanish public administration is presented. Taking into consideration Spanish experiences, some lessons are proposed for the successful implementation of a quality management policy in Croatian public administration.*

*Keywords: quality management, public administration, Croatia, Spain, implementation*

## UČINKOVITA IMPLEMENTACIJA POLITIKE UPRAVLJANJA KVALITETOM U JAVNOJ UPRAVI: ŠPANJOLSKA ISKUSTVA I LEKCIJE ZA HRVATSKU

### Sažetak

Cilj rada jest utvrditi koji institucionalni i drugi mehanizmi utječu na djelotvornu primjenu određene politike te na temelju španjolskog iskustva u primjeni politike upravljanja kvalitetom u javnoj upravi izvući određene lekcije za Hrvatsku. Stoga se u radu raspravlja o mehanizmima centra vlade koji bi mogli potaknuti implementaciju određene javne politike te se provodi istraživanje o politici upravljanja kvalitetom u španjolskoj javnoj upravi. Studija se temelji na pretrazi podataka i intervjuu provedenom u španjolskoj Agenciji za evaluaciju javnih politika i kvalitete usluga – AEVAL. Analiziraju se španjolska iskustva u politikama, modelima i praksama upravljanja kvalitetom u javnoj upravi s ciljem davanja prijedloga za uspješan razvoj i implementaciju politike upravljanja kvalitetom u hrvatskoj javnoj upravi. Nakon kratke prezentacije hrvatskih praksi upravljanja kvalitetom i planova za daljnja unaprjeđenja, analiziraju se četiri najčešće primjenjivana instrumenta upravljanja kvalitetom u Španjolskoj: istraživanja zadovoljstva građana, povelje javnih službi, vrednovanje kvalitete provedeno prema posebnim modelima i nagrade za kvalitetu. Osim toga, predstavlja se institucionalni i regulacijski okvir upravljanja kvalitetom u španjolskoj javnoj upravi. Uzimajući u obzir španjolska iskustva, predlažu se lekcije za uspješnu implementaciju politike upravljanja kvalitetom u hrvatskoj javnoj upravi.

Ključne riječi: upravljanje kvalitetom, javna uprava, Hrvatska, Španjolska, implementacija