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Public Administration Reform in Czechia after 2000 – Ambitious Strategies and Modest Results?

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Abstract

The chapter summarizes and discusses the main topics, developments and issues of Czech administrative reform, based on desk research, secondary literature on developments of administrative reform in the country and input obtained through mapping and analyzing ESF/ESIF support and interviews with employees of central bodies that are responsible for the coordination and evaluation of the use of ESF/ESIF support. It is based on findings prepared within the project European Public Administration Country Knowledge (EUPACK) that focused on researching dynamics of public administration in EU member states and the contribution of external support to improving public administration quality. The research indicates that partial results have been accomplished particularly in the following areas: openness and transparency, quality management implementation (by municipalities and regions) and e-government. Civil-service legislation has been consolidated rather recently, yet has changed various times, and this undermines every effort to evaluate its effects. A national PA evaluation system is being developed by the Ministry of the Interior but focuses (similarly to PA strategies and related operational programmes) on input indicators. This raises questions about possibilities to evaluate actual quality in PA and results of projects implemented within PA reforms.

Keywords:
public administration reform, Czechia, civil service, e-government, quality management

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Introduction

Administrative reform in Czechia has been developing since the change of regime in November 1989. Although the paper deals with the period 2004–2017, the preliminary phase has to be outlined, because main values had been incorporated at least into the legislation and the institutional structure of the Czech public administration that has been established, has not changed much in the new millennium and determines, among other things, the coordination and evaluation of the whole administrative system.

The first decade of reforming followed the patterns that are usually described with regards to the CEE region (the most recent summary has been published by Bileišis and Kovač 2017) and the "democratisation phase" of their reforms (Nemec 2008). It reacted to the characteristics of public administration from the period of communism – subordination of state administration under a centralized party rule and the abolition of the separation of powers were emblematic (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014). Initially, the main aim of the reform was the renaissance of democracy and democratic values in the legislation, and, as, for example, Hesse (1998) summarized, abandoning the principle of "democratic centralism." Democratization of the legal and policy-making rhetoric went hand in hand with the (re-) development and empowerment of self-governments. Actually, in particular these changes in leading values can be considered one of the main transformations that could be seen in the subsequent changes since 1989.

The first changes from the beginning of the 1990s established especially the main principles and the framework of local (municipal) self-government and relationships of municipalities to (central) state administration. Municipalities were understood as legal entities, and legislation distinguished between their own (self-governmental) competences and delegated competences (i.e. deconcentrated competences of central state administration). This is called a joint model of public administration in Czech administrative literature (e.g. Hendrych 1996; Vidláková 2000) and there are three main categories of municipalities (but in reality 15 types of municipalities – Špaček and Nemec 2017a) differentiated according to the amount of state administration they exercise, with "ORPs" (municipalities with enlarged responsibilities) representing those with the largest state-administration responsibilities since 2003. This solution brought about persisting discussions about optimal funding of state administration exercised by municipalities as well as questions whether municipalities in Czechia actually execute state administration rather than self-governmental tasks (Ochrana et al. 2015).

Early post-communist legislation also established the system of deconcentrated state administration. This consisted of district offices (based on the administrative division of the state from 1960, which defined 76 districts as territorial administrative units for district offices) and also of the so-called "deconcentrates";

parts of the responsibilities of abolished national committees – main units of the communist administrative system – were transferred mostly to the central level, which started to create its specialized deconcentrated bodies (like labour offices, financial authorities, social-security authorities etc.). This led to a rather complicated system of more than 700 specialized state-administration bodies that was, and still is, hard to coordinate, although some changes in organization of the deconcentrates were made particularly in the period 2011–2013 (when major reorganizations in financial administration, customs administration and social-services administration were implemented). What is more, the Czech municipal level is rather fragmented, represented by almost 6,250 municipalities, of which the majority has less than 1000 inhabitants. The last national initiatives that tried to solve fragmentation on the local level were realized late in the communist era; the amalgamation of municipalities is not on the political agenda due to its rather high political sensitivity and the fact that issues are solved by rather voluntary (and apparently also existential) approaches of inter-municipal cooperation.

Regions as higher self-governmental units have the same legal status as municipalities. They were anticipated in the Constitution from 1993, but their territories were established in 1997, and responsibilities were specified later in the legislation of 2000. Fourteen regions were established (including the Capital of Prague). Similar to municipalities, regions also exercise state-administration responsibilities, some of which were transferred to them after the abolishment of the district offices since the beginning of 2003 (while other responsibilities were transferred to newly established ORPs or central authorities). Particularly since that time a more visible shift in focus from organizational structures to internal processes of public administration can be seen on the administrative reform agenda in Czechia.

Following the EUPACK project, the chapter deals particularly with the period 2000–2017 (with some overlaps to the earlier and following phases). It summarizes main topics, developments and issues of Czech administrative reform, based on

- desk research (information and documents published by central authorities and bodies responsible for the formulation and implementation of reform programmes),

- secondary literature on developments of administrative reform in Czechia,

- input obtained through mapping and analyzing ESF/ESIF support and interviews with employees of central bodies that are responsible for the coordination and evaluation of the use of ESF/ESIF support that was carried out within the EUPACK project and used also for three reports (Špaček and Nemec 2017a and 2017b; Špaček 2018).

The chapter is structured as follows: First it outlines the development and content of the main PA reform programmes. Then it concentrates on the selected areas that were further surveyed within the EUPACK: transparency and accountability,

civil service, service delivery and quality management of public services. Within individual topics, an approach of national policy is outlined first and followed by a summary of results, issues and challenges.

Strategies and repeated topics of the reform agenda

Similar to practices in other CEE countries that were commented on, for instance, in the available PHARE evaluation reports (e.g. MHW Consortium 2007; EUROPEAID 2015), the first decade of Czech administrative reforms did not have any support in the form of a more robust written reform programme/strategy. Rather, changes were made following government manifestos and related legislative plans of the central government and were also determined by various external pressures, including the EU's requirements and the pre-accession strategy.

The first document, which is also sometimes considered the very first postcommunist public-administration reform strategy, was prepared in 1999 – *The Concept of Public Administration Reform*. It criticized the high level of centralization caused by insufficient levels of public administration, which had led to the establishment of the chaotic decentralized system and the system of "arrogance of power", the unbalanced decentralization characterized by the high number of small municipalities as well as the low level of professionalism in these municipalities. It was partly based on documents prepared by expert groups within the PHARE programme (*Proposed Strategy for Reform of the Public Administration of the Czech Republic*, October 1998) and included sections about improving public control and auditing, public-sector management, public-sector performance, public-finance efficiency and the use of information systems as well as sections on civil-service education and training and proposed changes to central structures. However, this strategy concentrated mainly on alternatives of organizational changes aroused after the constitutional establishment of regions as self-governmental units in 1997 (without further specification of their competences). Its evaluation of the PA system of that time was mostly qualitative, and this feature is apparent in every following PA reform strategy.

The *Concept for Modernising Central State Administration with Special Consideration to the Systematisation and Organisational Structure of Administrative Authorities* was discussed by the government in June 2001, but it did not have a major impact on the country's public administration system. A more systematic approach was taken by a reform programme from 2004 (*The Process and Main Directions of Central Administration Reform and Modernisation*), which repeated most of the aims from the previous period but attempted to implement project management ideas in the reform processes. For some time, reform coordination was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the Government. This programme specified five main directions for reform: 1. Rationalization of processes in central

state administration, 2. Improvement of management in central state administration, 3. Improvement of quality in central state administration; 4. Implementation and improvement of civil service; and 5. Rationalization of the finance and budgetary procedures in central state administration. As the following table indicates, they were repeated or rephrased in the following 2 programmes: *Efficient Public Administration and Friendly Public Services: Strategy of Implementation of Smart Administration in the Period of 2007–2015*, approved in 2007, and the current *Strategic Framework of the Development of Public Administration in the Czech Republic for 2014–2020*, approved in 2014.

Table 1

Comparison of priorities of the last two PA reform strategies

Smart Administration strategy (2007–2015)	The Strategic Framework for PA development for the period 2014–2020
To simplify administrative procedures and decrease regulatory burdens. To improve service accessibility via e-government.	To decrease regulatory burdens of businesses, citizens, public administration and other organizations (e.g. NGOs). To optimize territorial public-administration performance. To harmonize the country's territorial structure. To improve service accessibility via e-government.
To re-evaluate existing administrative structures and to bring public administration closer to citizens, also via e-government.	To introduce process-management tools. To re-evaluate existing agendas and activities. To optimize and harmonize administrative segmentation of the state. To develop further existing contact points (Czech POINT network and functionalities), basic registers, some core e-government services and full online submission.
To introduce strategic management elements.	To enhance the diffusion of strategic management and planning.
To introduce quality-management systems and performance management.	To develop a system for continual monitoring and evaluation of performance in public administration. To develop quality management in the public sector. To introduce performance management. To increase transparency via e-government.
To improve horizontal and vertical communication in public administration.	To reduce the regulatory burden imposed on self-government. To improve methodical help in various areas.
To implement a uniform system of human-resource management in public administration.	To make public administration more professional and to develop more unified human-resource management in public administration.
To fight against corruption.	To promote the principle of "open data".
	To optimize the financing of delegated competences and to decrease financial risks for self-governments.

Source: Author based on the strategies.

The Smart Administration strategy served particularly as a baseline for drawing resources from European structural funds in the 2007–2013 programming period. It was supplemented by the Integrated Operation Programme (IOP) and the Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment (OPLZZ). The IOP was based on the National Strategic Reference Framework of the Czech Republic 2007–2013 (NSRR), which reflected the National Programme of Reforms (NPR) for the period 2005–2008. One may indicate a growing number of rather broad and ambitious programmes that was apparently determined by requirements for the ESF/ESIF support, ex-ante conditionality and country-specific recommendations. The strategy was also supplemented by a list of 120 strategic projects that was approved by Government resolution 536/2008.

The current Strategic Framework for the period 2014–2020 is considered the main document for reform in the period. As indicated in the interviews, its abbreviation – SRRVS – is often used in communication inside public administration. It is supplemented by 4 implementation plans prepared for individual strategic goals. For the ESIF support, it is also supplemented by 10 national operational programmes (mainly by the Operational programme Employment – OPZ, supplemented by technical assistance, and the Integrated regional operational programme – IROP), programmes of cross-border cooperation and programmes of supranational and interregional cooperation. Similarly to all the previous strategies, the needs analysis that is included is rather weak, not evidence-based and mostly qualitative. Although this was again commented on with regards to practices in CEE countries in the available evaluation of the PHARE assistance, the situation has not changed much since 1999.

Interviews indicate that changes are more apparent in implementation strategies (that are more project-based), a higher stability of implementation mechanisms in the current period (there is a potential that the Act on the State Civil Service from 2014 will reduce politicization and changes in personnel) and also in the project pipeline. In the period of 2007–2013 a list of strategic projects was based on initiatives and requirements of individual ministries, and according to some interviewees it was a result of rather tough negotiations. The list also lost its importance later on as a consequence of political instability, and many of these strategic projects were not implemented. In the current period, projects are prepared in a more partnership way, they are discussed much more and in a more transparent way than in the previous period according to the interviews (the influence of the financial crisis has not been indicated in the interviews). On the other hand, the decision-making processes are now slower, and their result is sometimes a compromise that may miss an original idea (what to do and how). Unfortunately, the situation has not changed in the case of indicators that are specified for the evaluation of progress. They are rather output-oriented and cannot cover the scope of the last two strategies that also anticipate an increase in citizens' satisfaction (this is commented on more below).

Interviewees were rather consistent in their opinions that the last two reform strategies have both been rather ambitious. This was commented with regards to the readiness of potential recipients of external (e.g. ESIF) support from the central level (central authorities) and the absorption capacity of the public administration, both of which was considered not adequate. Interviews also indicate that there is now a clear effort of some central authorities to exempt some topics and projects (e.g. anticorruption measures) from the EU funding framework in order to have more autonomy in decision-making and to avoid burden related to project administration and evaluation. This is also the case with some projects that are under intensive scrutiny now due to suspicions about the misappropriation of co-funding (for instance, the Ministry of Finance suggested the exemption of the so-called "Čapí hnízdo" – Stork's nest, a project related to the current Prime Minister in demission).

The main reform directions and initiatives are presented below in individual sub-points, and they are structured according to the periods used within the EUPACK project that reflected the main phases of the EU support. The period of 2002–2017 (February 2018) was impacted by the instability of the central government and frequent changes in the office of Prime Minister:

- 15/7/2002–4/8/2004 Špidla
- 4/8/2004–25/4/2005 Gross
- 25/4/2005–16/8/2006 Paroubek
- 4/9/2006–8/5/2009 Topolánek
- 8/5/2009–13/7/2010 Fischer
- 13/7/2010–10/7/2013 Nečas
- 10/7/2013–29/1/2014 Rusnok
- 29/1/2014–13/12/2017 Sobotka
- The current government of Babiš has been in demission since 24 January 2018.

They also impacted negatively on the stability and functionality of structures established for the implementation and coordination of PA reforms and external financial assistance as indicated in the available evaluation reports (see below) as well as in the interviews made within the EUPACK project.

Developments and existing issues

Transparency and openness

The main reform directions and initiatives in the area of transparency and accountability are presented in Table 2 below. The table clearly indicates that basic preconditions for transparency and accountability were initiated late in the 1990s.

Table 2

PA reform directions and initiatives in the area of transparency and accountability

1996–2006	2007–2013	2014+
Instalment of national ombudsman based on legislation of 1999 Start of implementation of freedom of information legislation (1999) and more institutionalized personal data protection (2000, inc. Office for personal data protection) Development of financial control mechanisms in PA (2001, inc. Act on Financial Control in Public Administration) Revision of the first Act on Public Tenders from 1994 (2004) Implementation of the first law on conflict of interest (2006)	Amendments to legislation on public tendering with growing requirements on electronic access to information and documents related to public procurement	New law on the register of contracts and its implementation (2015), information system launched in 2016 New legislation on public procurement approved late in 2016 and new requirements on e-procurement and attempts to use National electronic tool (NEN) as a central e-procurement tool for central authorities (2016+) Amendments to legislation on conflict of interest. Initiatives related to Central register for asset delcarations (2017) Establishment of the Office for Supervising Economy of Political Parties and Political Movements (2017)

Source: Author, based on the Task 3 report prepared within the EUPACK project (Špaček 2018).

In the period 1999–2017 we can differentiate three main phases (waves) of developments as outlined in Table 3.

Laws establishing rights of access to information – as well as the institutional mechanisms to enforce these rights – are considered the basic building block for enhancing government transparency and accountability (OECD 2001). In Czechia legislation on access to public information was incorporated into legislation earlier than in other countries (OECD 2001 and 2009). Requirements on transparency and openness were stipulated and more specified particularly by the legislation from 1998 and 1999. Such legislation was perceived as a tool for improving relationships between public authorities and citizens (a principle of partnership was emphasized, for instance, by Korbel et al. 2005) and enhancing possibilities to control public administration (Kužílek and Žantovský 2002). Legal requirements on transparency and openness were also incorporated in various acts – related to budgeting, public tenders, disposals with property etc. It has also incorporated requirements of relevant EU regulations.

Requirements of the first legislation on public information were also reflected in national e-government/information society policies approved since 1999. Access to information was perceived here as a tool for supporting the development of the information society and improving public-administration efficiency. Later on, further use of ICTs to improve transparency and openness was emphasized by legisla-

tion (request for information can be sent electronically, this e-request is equal to its written form, no specific authorization is required). Recent amendments also specified requirements on open data. The National open data catalogue (NKDO) has been in practice since 2015. Other ICT-based instruments enhancing transparency have been established. For instance, the Contract Register was established in 2015 and its information system launched in 2016, but recently related legislation was amended (by Act 249/2017), and some duties were softened for smaller municipalities and some enterprises in which the State or a self-government has a majority. Media criticized the fast speed of these amendments.

Table 3
Waves of initiatives enhancing transparency in Czechia

Wave	Description	Time frame
1 – Basic preconditions	Basic preconditions (like law on information) implemented	1999–2000
2 – More advanced instruments I	First wave of more advanced instruments related to financial control and revision of public procurement legislation, first conflict of interest legislation	2001/2004–2013
3 – More advanced instruments II	Second wave (conflict of interest tools, contract register, open data, revision of public procurement and conflict of interest legislation, development of national PA evaluation system)	2014+

Source: Author.

The Central Register of Conflict of Interests was launched based on legislation from 2006. Again, this legislation has been amended several times. The last change is from 2017, when Act 14/2017 (also called "Lex Babiš" in the media) was approved after long discussions that occurred also within the government coalition. The revised act now limits possibilities to obtain subsidies and take part in public tendering to those who have more than a 25% share in media companies (radio or tv broadcasting and periodicals). The register is not completely public, which limits the possibilities of external control – citizens can see the data recorded only after they receive log-in data from a recording authority (a designated body of their municipality, region). This is also conditioned on their application for such log-in data, which are only temporary. This establishes an unnecessary burden. Also, following amendments of legislation, the new Central register for asset declarations (https://cro.justice.cz/) was launched by the Ministry of Justice in September 2017.

The Act on Financial Control (No. 320/2001 Coll.) was proposed and accepted as part of the EU accession process. It was revised following provisions of Act 255/2012 (the new Control Procedure Act). A new bill on public finances management and control was discussed in order to harmonize control mechanisms in pub-

lic administration, but was rejected by the Senate in August 2017, and the Chamber of Deputies did not vote down the veto.

As of January 2017 a new authority was established – The Office for Supervising Economy of Political Parties and Political Movements (https://udhpsh.cz/) – by Act 302/2016, which also specified limits of funding for political parties and election campaigns. Its full operation was anticipated in June due to employee selection procedures and the public tendering of equipment. Information on its web pages is still rather scarce (as of 8 October 2017), and the Office is becoming more active because of the date of general elections (20–21 October 2017). Also a new bill on lobbying and register of lobbyists is being discussed.

Requirements on openness and transparency have also developed with amendments on public-procurement legislation, which now requires contractors to publish specific information and documentation on the "contractor's profile" ("profil zadavatele" in Czech) that shall allow remote 24/7 access to information and documents on public tenders.

The EU's 2012 country-specific recommendation on public administration specifically mentioned the need to increase the efficiency of public administration and step up the fight against corruption. However, only limited progress has been made in adopting the priority legal acts under the Czech anti-corruption strategy for 2011–2012 according to the Council recommendation on Czechia's reform programme, which also required for a new anti-corruption strategy for 2013–2014 to be followed up by the urgent adoption of outstanding priority acts, such as the Public Servants Act, and measures in the area of public procurement and measures for better management of EU funds in the 2014–2020 programming period. Still in its 2016 recommendations the Council criticized the slow progress in the implementation of anti-corruption measures in the area of public tenders, conflict of interest and financing of political parties.

There is no formal control of meeting the deadlines when handling applications for information, and one must rely on the activity of the applicants. Also, although it was planned that sanctions for violating the freedom of information could be imposed on public authorities, this was not implemented. The protection of freedom of access to public information is not enhanced (there is no special information commissionaire or ombudsman, no criteria for applying principles of access to information have been passed, no special commission incorporating the freedom of information into RIA procedures etc.).

Due to the high degree of fragmentation of the administrative system (more than 6,200 municipalities exist) as well as the fragmentation of requirements on publishing some information (for instance those on anticipated disposals with real estates of municipalities and regions, those on public tenders), it is not possible to fully evaluate the current state of transparency and openness of the public administration in Czechia. Available international rankings (e.g. Bertelsmann Stiftung, Eu-

ropean Commission, World Bank, Transparency International, Gallup World Poll) indicate a relatively better-than-average performance in the case of access to government information. Although transparency initiatives have been implemented continuously, they are not evaluated on a systematic basis by responsible central authorities as well as academia. Evaluation is produced mainly on an ad-hoc basis by NGOs, especially by Transparency International and the like. The initiative otevřete. cz was trying to monitor existing practices, now organized around the initiative "Otevřená společnost". Within these initiatives, Infoliga has been organized since 2005, which tries to evaluate the content of web pages mostly on a self-evaluation basis that is altered by people from the initiative.

Findings on positive and negative practices related to publishing information as well as procedures related to access to information were indicated by Kužílek and Žantovský (2002), the otevřete.cz initiative and reports prepared by the Ministry of the Interior that supplemented proposals of amendments to the legislation. In particular the following problems were repeated:

- Requiring too high fees for the provision of information,

- Overuse of reasons like "trade secret" or "protection of personal data" for not disclosing,

- Overuse of deadline extensions,

- Refusing applications on the basis that a public authority is not a responsible authority according to the act,

- Refusing to make available at least a part of the information required that can be provided according to the act,

- Ignoring the act with the anticipation that no sanction will be imposed,

- Requests for authorizing electronic applications using e-signature (similarly to requirements imposed by the Administrative Procedure Act), which are not required by the act,

- Requests for giving reasons for the application, which is not required by the act,

- Insufficient clarification of some responsible subjects. For instance, there is no definition of "public institution" in Czech law, and freedom of information practices is determined by decisions of courts (for instance, in 2009 the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court (2 Ans 4/2009-93) considered ČEZ as a responsible institution, but the later decision of the Constitutional court (TZ 73/2017) exempted this company from responsibilities prescribed by the Act 106/1999). Such development indicates a rather long time spent on clarifications and undermines predictability as a precondition of legal certainty.

Civil service

Main reform directions and initiatives in civil service are outlined in Table 4. Civil-service reform was not paid systematic attention in PA reform. The 1999 Accession Partnership established as a short-term priority the adoption and implementation of the Act on the Civil Service. Furthermore, the government's 1998 Manifesto identified the Act on the Civil Service as one of the most important objectives to be reached by mid-election term (i.e. mid-2000), but particularly until 2003, Czechia was criticized by the European Commission and the OECD for the absence of civil-service legislation, which went hand in hand with the absence of a civil-service educational system. The education of civil servants was organized on an ad-hoc basis by various institutions; there was no central institution which would coordinate it, and reform programmes repeatedly pointed out the low level of professionalism and managerial competencies of civil servants in central as well as territorial public administration.

Table 4

PA reform directions and initiatives in the area of civil service

1996–2006	2007–2013	2014+
Development of strategy and first legislation on civil service: strategy for civil servants education (1999), first formal Code of Ethics (2001) binding for state authorities, not for self-government, approval of legislation on civil servants (separated acts on civil servants of self-governments and of state authorities (state civil service) (2002)	Continuous postponing of enforcement of the act on state civil service Proposals of new (unified) legislation on civil servants and their education New code of ethics for civil servants of state authorities (2012), binding for state authorities, not self-governments	New act on civil servants of state authorities (late in 2014) and its continuous implementation (already amended a few times)

Source: Author based on the Task 3 report prepared within the EUPACK project (Špaček 2018).

Czechia only formally responded to the European Commission's criticism with the acceptance of the Civil Service Act (Act No. 218/2002), because the legal force of this act was postponed nearly every two years since 2003. As a reason limited financial resources for the implementation of the act were repeated in official documents of the government. Besides the Civil Service Act, the Act on Civil Servants of Self-Governments (Act No. 312/2002) was approved, which came into force already in 2003. This act regulates only some specific areas (mainly requirements on recruitment, education, release of senior civil servants, accreditation of institutions providing education for civil servants); in the case of other areas the act refers to the general Labour Code. The ineffectiveness of the Civil Service Act caused a situation where in reality the education of civil servants of central administrative bodies was, in a non-coordinated way, drawn from the requirements of

the government ordinance on education of state civil servants (no. 1542/2005) that established a rather decentralized system of education in central administration. Meyer-Sahling (2009, 7) summarizes the situation as follows: "… Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are all classified as cases of 'destructive reform reversals'. In all three cases civil service institutions have been eliminated since accession, without the establishment of new frameworks. For the time being, the civil service systems of these three new Member States have not reached an intermediate degree of compatibility with European standards of administration."

In summer 2007, the government approved a project of uniform and complex legal specification of civil service. The Ministry of the Interior was anticipated to prepare an act that would unify fragmented legal specification of employees of territorial and central authorities. The act should have built on "stabilized positive practices stipulated in the act on civil servants of territorial self-governments". A bill was discussed publicly, particularly in the period between autumn 2007 and autumn 2008, but was not approved. In July 2009, the government passed a resolution requiring the Ministry of the Interior to submit the modified proposal of an act on civil servants of public administration and their education until the end of 2009. Other versions of bills have been discussed since that time, and not long before the new and final Act 234/2014 on the State Civil Service was actually passed, another version had anticipated that a unified act incorporating particularly a model based on general labour law with some specifics concerning recruitment, education and rewards (a solution similar to the Act on Civil Servants of Territorial Self-Government) would come into force at the beginning of 2014. But at the end the attempted uniform (more integrated) legislation on the civil service was abandoned and there are three main acts in place (Act 234/2014, Act 312/2002 and the general Labour Code) regulating in different levels of depth several aspects of HRM in public administration.

The ex-ante RIA of Act 234/2014 was not elaborated, because the act was approved after a relatively short discussion procedure rather swiftly (most probably as a consequence of the EU ex-ante conditionality) and is based particularly on the legislative initiative of members of the Chamber of Deputies, rather than the more systemic preparation of the Ministry of the Interior – a central authority that is also responsible for the development of HRM and the civil service.

Available information indicates that effects of the act on the state civil service were surveyed more only by Pokorná during January and February 2016. According to her research (Pokorná 2016), which focused on perceptions of employees of the Ministry of Finance, civil servants were rather reserved in their replies to questions on effects on the reduction of political influence. They were also rather sceptical about effects on the improvement of quality and professionalism as well as the unification and systematization of HRM practices. Also a decrease of the attractiveness of employment in state administration was commented on by some respondents of

her survey. Respondents perceived several issues brought by the act, particularly those producing administrative burden for HRM, to be without real benefits – for instance long recruitment procedures (in some cases 3 months or even longer), issues related to recruitment for some free positions (related to the unwillingness of experts to work for PA; this was partly confirmed in interviews that indicated issues to recruit IT experts and the rejection of applicants for certain positions due to the length of the recruitment procedure). According to the findings of Pokorná, some respondents were also of the opinion that the act had brought only frustration and made experts leave state administration. Such issues were also expressed in barriers of implementation of various projects in the available evaluations of progress of the current Strategic framework for PA development (see above). They were also mentioned in various interviews with Josef Postránecký (e.g. Chum 2015), the Director-General for the Civil Service (he referred particularly to the insufficient number of IT experts and lawyers). Pokorná also pointed out that State civil service is open for candidates from the private sphere only after previous recruitment rounds were not accomplished successfully and, according to her, this limits the real benefits of the act. She referred to rather frequent practices when a recruitment procedure has to be finished and re-announced because no appropriate candidate is selected. According to her analysis, also the process of systemization is rather exhausting due to requirements on filling out forms that are not pre-filled automatically with data included in the information systems. Also in some cases methodological help was perceived as insufficient (for instance for the differentiation of state-service positions and positions regulated by the general Labour Code or for the specification of positions in the State service).

Some of these issues are to be reduced by amendments of the State service approved from April to May 2017. The amendments have softened particularly requirements on recruitment procedures and the necessary education of employees that are already working as state servants but do not have the required education. Such amendments that are made not long after the first version of an act is approved limit the evaluation of the effects. Other amendments are being discussed at present (as of 23 February 2018). The government that is in demission is being criticized by the opposition for changes made on some posts at the Government Office and some ministries not long after it was appointed by the president in December 2017 and also for changes that are intended in order to recruit as well as terminate an employment more simply. Also a relocation of the State civil service from the Ministry of the Interior to the Government Office was deliberated, and the media raised the question to what extent the current prime minister intends to have the area under his more direct control.

Service delivery and quality management of public services, e-government

Particularly the first reform strategy from 1999 and the two last reform strategies directly addressed the issue of public service delivery. The main reform directions and initiatives in service delivery are related to quality management and digitization (e-gov). However, quality-management initiatives have been implemented particularly by municipalities and regions. They started to be more visible on the level of central authorities only recently with the regulation and framework of minimum-quality management standards for authorities subjected to Act 234/2014 on the State Civil Service.

Table 5

PA reform directions and initiatives in the area of service delivery and digitization

1996–2006	2007–2013	2014+
Development of the first national quality policy (2000+), support of quality management (implemented mainly on local and regional level) Development of e-gov strategic framework (strategies and actions plans – 1999+) and related regulation (first general law on public administration information systems – 2000 – and its following amendments, inc. those on accessibility from 2006, E-Signature Act (2000), launching of the first PA portal	Further focus on digitization in strategic documents and legislation (e-Gov Act of 2008), first more inter-sectoral projects like Czech POINTs and data boxes, basic registers launched in 2012 Reorganizations in some state administration fields: financial administration, customs administration, labour offices, social services administration	Development of more standardized quality management in state civil-service authorities (first guidelines published in 2017) Strategy for ICT Services Development in Public Administration (2015) and more requirements on open data, development of new coordination mechanisms in e-government (inc. eGovernment Chief Architect and its Office) + cybersecurity measures Revision of national PA portal and development of more PA e-services anticipated mainly since July 2018 (together with new eIDs)

Source: Author based on the Task 3 report prepared within the EUPACK project (Špaček 2018).

Quality management has been perceived as important by every public-administration reform policy since the late 1990s. The first National Policy on Quality Support in the Czech Republic (the "National Quality Policy") was approved by the government in 2000, stressing EU recommendations concerning the European quality charter, the role of education, benchmarking and learning from good practices, the EFQM excellence model and the ISO 9000 series. Also the Quality Council of the Czech Republic was established under the competence of the Ministry of Industry and Trade in order to coordinate the activities of governmental and non-governmental bodies in quality policy and to help the government as an advisory, initiation and coordination body. In addition to the Quality Council, the National Information Centre for Quality Promotion was created, with a Consulta-

tion Centre for Statistical Methods. A civic association, the Czech Association for Quality, was also created in order to support quality practices in the private and public sectors. Later, the Government Council for Sustainable Development was also established. Following more complex initiatives from the period 2002–2004 that also contained, for instance, a list of social services, medical rescue services, alcohol and drug sobering-up stations, access to museums and fine-art collections, library and information services and transportation services, binding quantitative and qualitative criteria for their provision by municipalities and regions have not been implemented (Špaček 2010). Some of them were incorporated in various regulations at least partially (this is, for instance, the case of regulation related to social services from 2006, and legislation specifying e-government services – see below).

In addition, the methodological guidance in quality management provided by the central government (especially by the Ministry of the Interior) has been more visible. In particular, the Common Assessment Framework of EIPA and benchmarking have been methodically elaborated for a longer time period. Official guidelines have been published on various official quality-management websites – in particular those of the Ministry of Interior, the National Quality Council and the Czech Association for Quality.

Czech central governments have avoided being highly directive and top-down in their approach to quality management in public administration. No quality instrument is obligatory for public authorities, and quality management in public administration is mostly voluntary. However, more regulation can be found in some areas, such as in e-government, where the government has tried to standardize the management of public-administration information systems and requires public authorities to work with "long-term" management, specifically with information strategies and subsequent documentation in order to guarantee the quality (and security) of management (as specified in Act No. 365/2000). Social services represent a more regulated area where legislation (particularly Act No. 108/2006 Coll.) anticipates that provider inspections will focus on the quality of services provided. For this purpose, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs defined quality standards for which point scores are to be awarded and specified for individual types of defined social services (in Decree No. 505/2006, which came into force already in 2007). Also quite recently, Quality management guidelines for authorities were approved as minimum quality-management standards subjected to the State Service Act.

Available studies indicate that particularly benchmarking, the CAF, Local Agenda 21 and the ISO 9001 certification have been implemented in public authorities in Czechia, especially by local and regional self-governments. Regions and larger municipalities started to implement quality-management systems in the late 1990s, the CAF has been implemented in about 60 self-governments, Local Agenda 21 is used by more than 80 self-governments, benchmarking by more than 70 mu-

nicipalities, ISO norms by more than 30 self-governments (Špaček 2015b). Municipalities and regions often faced the following barriers (Špaček and Neshybová 2010; Zikmunda 2010, Špaček 2015b): lack of support of the political leadership, lack of employee interest, lack of time for implementation and an unwillingness to implement the new instruments, insufficient communication on quality-management implementation across organizations. Implementation was usually based on a trial and error approach in its beginnings as well as award-driven. A survey of perceptions of senior executives of municipalities and regions indicated that the average opinion was that using quality management tools did not increase efficiency and client satisfaction or, in general, lead to the anticipated improvements (Zikmunda 2010). Within the surveyed group of authorities, the CAF was mostly perceived as an instrument that can integrate more methods in order to identify the current situation of public management. The CAF and benchmarking produced real effects according to the public servants surveyed. It can also result in stagnation, and public authorities were struggling with the question of how to motivate CAF teams and produce further improvements. Some had even started to look for new methods, emphasizing EFQM for its stronger link to private-sector experience and potentially better feedback on public-management practices. On the other hand, there can be a rather weak link between quality management and employee appraisal and remuneration (Špaček 2015b).

As in other CEE countries (as outlined by Verheijen 1998), e-government became more explicit in national reform policies in the late 1990s and later in reaction to eEurope and the subsequent EU policies. The document *State Information Policy: The Road Towards an Information Society* (SIP) from 1999 is usually considered to be the country's first e-government strategy. Here, e-government represented one part of a more complex policy focused on the creation of an information society. Later on e-government became a separated topic in various action plans and was also elaborated in more complex documents focused on administrative reform programmes. This is also the case of the last two reform programmes – the Smart administration strategy and the current Strategic framework.

Since 1999 particularly initiatives relative to the whole administrative system have been more or less repeated in the aims of e-government programmes (or sections of broader policies dedicated to e-government) for a rather long time (Špaček 2014, updated):

- Establishment of public-administration contact points, where citizens or organizations would be able to handle their affairs with state administration in a single location,
- Establishment of basic registers as main sources of up-to-date, precise and exclusive (not duplicated in other systems) information on citizens, organizations (from the private as well as the public sector) and real estates,
- Development of a public-administration portal,

- Creation of a public-procurement information system,
- Establishment of public-administration communication infrastructure,
- Establishment of more effective coordination mechanisms.

Later on, initiatives related to electronic communication inside and with public administration were emphasized, and the related project of data boxes was accentuated in the national policy (particularly since the Smart administration strategy).

National e-government strategies were often not updated and specified on a continuous and systematic basis. Only the first formalized State information system (SIS) strategy and aims enumerated in the last two broader administrative reform programmes (the Smart Administration Strategy and the current Strategic framework) were specified and supplemented by action plans. Often the general e-government strategies did not integrate projects of strong central authorities, such as the Ministry of Finance (projects like e-taxes and e-treasury) or the Ministry of Social Affairs (projects like social cards and e-forms). The strategies were also high-flying, but not evidence-based (Špaček 2014).

The plans were delivered only partially. Particularly the Czech POINT project is often perceived as the successful e-government project of the 2007–2013 EU programming period. This was confirmed in the interviews. The project was tested during the year 2007, its full practice was launched officially at the beginning of 2008, and the project has been developing since that time. Although a number of services provided by Czech POINT were growing and ministerial plans presumed that Czech POINT terminals would allow its users to proceed with any communication with any public authority at any place in the future, Czech POINTs still represent a network of physical terminals (citizens can now visit one of more than 7,200 Czech POINT workplaces) that provide Czech POINT reception services mostly during office hours of public authorities. They mostly do not deliver services to users on a 24/7 basis via the internet. Also, only a limited number of services are available at Czech POINT – mostly related to the validation of extracts from various registers, rather than to core administrative services (IDs and travel documents, change of permanent residence, car registration etc.).

The so-called data boxes were legally facilitated by the "e-Government Act" (Act 300/2008), which came into force in July 2009. The act specifies data boxes as electronic communication instruments that shall simplify communication between public authorities and businesses and citizens. Most formal communication between state authorities was in paper form, and electronic communications have only been accepted if it was guaranteed through a classified electronic signature. As of 1 July 2009, all public authorities are obliged to communicate electronically with each other, and with certain private sector entities and individuals, by using official data boxes. Data boxes are designed for sending and receiving official documents in electronic form. The communication through data boxes is now compulsory mainly

in interactions between public authorities and between public authorities and corporate bodies which are registered in the Commercial Register.

Czech eGovernment practice was also dependent on the effectiveness of legislation on basic registers, i.e. main data sources for PA activities. Relevant legislation was approved in February 2009. It was planned that the act would come into force in July 2010, but the enforcement was postponed to 30 June 2012 in order to extend the testing period for one more year (also because of delays in public tenders on some of the registers).

In 2015, the Strategic framework was specified partly by the Strategy for ICT Services Development in Public Administration and Government resolution no. 889, which anticipated the reestablishment of the Government Council for Information Society (RVIS), the creation of a new coordination authority – the Department of the eGovernment Chief Architect (ÚHA) – and basic principles of ICT purchases that came into force in January 2016. The strategy also recommends the continuation/finalization of some projects anticipated in former strategies – the continuation of process modelling of public administration agendas and the eHealth project, the finalization of the projects e-Collection-of-Law (eSbírka) and eLegislation (eLegislativa) and the establishment of a state network of shared services centres.

No more visible explicit aims for e-governance (larger inclusion of citizens and representatives of organizations into decision-making processes) were stipulated in national reform programmes, and such tools are used rather sporadically and especially by few large cities and regions (Špaček 2014, 2015b and 2017).

The national evaluation of the e-government progress is rather scarce. It was not included in the needs assessment presented in the last two reform programmes, and there is no evaluation report on e-government that would work at least with the output-oriented indicators (specified for the evaluation of the last two reform programmes) published by bodies responsible for its development, particularly by the Ministry of the Interior. Findings presented in various benchmarking studies (including the last EU e-gov benchmarking report – Tinholt et al. 2017; Špaček 2016) indicate that most public e-services surveyed are still not available online in Czechia. This situation is also determined by the non-existence of a real national public-administration portal (currently portal.gov.cz mostly contains information, and its transactional part is rather limited in comparison with the situation in other countries), also by the low availability of key enablers for businesses and citizens, including the eIDs, and the lack of vision in case of core administrative services for citizens (for obtaining IDs, passports, related to moving, car registration etc.). The "digital by default" principle has been applied particularly in the case of e-services for businesses and for communication between public authorities. Also, the development of some (especially) e-government initiatives has been slowed down by decisions of the Office for the Protection of Competition related to violations of public tendering legislation (for instance, this has been the case for information systems

for car registers, social allowances, the national e-procurement tool – NEN). New legislation on eIDs has been approved only recently, and new eIDS are to be issued and a new form of Citizens portal launched in July 2018.

Policy-making, coordination, implementation (and evaluation)

Main reform directions and initiatives in the area of policy-making, coordination, implementation and evaluation are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

PA reform directions and initiatives in the area of policy-making, coordination, implementation (and evaluation)

1996–2006	2007–2013	2014+
Establishment of Office for Public Information Systems (2000), replaced by the Ministry of Informatics in 2003 (abolished in 2006 and coordination activities transferred to the Ministry of the Interior) The Government Offices became responsible for coordination of PA reform 2004–2006 (after shift of responsibilities from the Ministry of the Interior)	Start of main initiatives on administrative burden analysis (since 2007), focused particularly on businesses Start of RIA initiatives and its continuous development Establishment of basic registers and the Office for the Administration of Basic Registers (2010)	More explicit requirements on cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance in e-gov development (2014) Revision of implementation and coordination mechanisms (due to new Strategic framework) Push from the Ministry of Regional Development on strategies and strategic planning (2014+) Appointment of the Deputy of the Minister of the Interior for Civil Service (2015) Establishment of eGovernment Chief Architect and its Office (since 2016) Piloting national framework for monitoring and evaluation of PA performance (2017)

Source: Author based on the Task 3 report prepared within the EUPACK project (Špaček 2018).

The need to improve policy-making and coordination within the existing administrative system (and its sub-system of fragmented municipalities) and to enhance communication with stakeholders has been emphasized in various Czech policy documents and is one of the core critical aspects mentioned by international evaluations (for example, European Semester documents: "… policy making based on evidence and impact assessment is not universally applied and the frequent changes in the regulatory framework put pressure on the business environment").

The departmentalization problem and the low level of horizontal coordination among central authorities have come under continual criticism. Coordination problems were emphasized explicitly in the very first written strategy on public-administration reform from 1999. The mentioned Phare-based study from 1998 stressed (Národní Vzdělávací Fond 1998): "The main aim of central government is its strategic, methodical and coordinating functions, but this is not the main focus

of central authorities. One of the major weaknesses of central government is the low level of horizontal coordination among individual subjects. … So-called functional management completely dominates, resulting in the problem of departmentalisation." The strategy from 1999 claimed that this situation was caused by a "high level of centralisation on the central government level, which restricted the activities of these authorities to no more than an operational character." This statement was rephrased in all following reform strategies.

Initiatives on deregulation and administrative simplification rely extensively on the development of e-government, the quality of regulatory impact assessment and also on the implementation of a process-modelling initiative (PMA), which has not been accomplished yet, but this has not brought about results according to interviews made for the Task 3 report. General principles for assessing the impact of regulation were approved in 2007, although related aims can be found already in the 2004 reform strategy. As part of the methodological support for ministries, complementary methodologies to the main RIA methodology (RIA General Principles) have been prepared since 2007. The methodology has been revised various times, and the current framework is based particularly on revisions from 2012. This year the RIA methodology was revised into a less formal process following the principle that RIA should be proportionate in respect of the problem issue to be solved. Further revisions from 2016 also brought templates for impact overviews and new guides for training. RIA is compulsory particularly for bills that the government propose to the parliament and mainly for bills anticipated in the Legislative plan of the government. The ministries are currently required, but they hardly ever comply with this assignment, to proceed in line with the general rules of the Regulatory Impact Assessment when drafting their non-legislative texts, which have material impact and are construed in line with the Rules of Procedure of the Government. There is no requirement to assess impacts of legislation that is already in effect, so it is not possible to compare the impacts assessed ex ante and the real impacts resulting from the new legislation. However, such assessment would have its limitations, because bills often do not leave the legislative process in a form that is identical to the original bills. Some types of legislative proposals are exempted from the duty to prepare RIA (for instance, the Constitution and constitutional acts, bills on the State budget, proposals prepared in times of legislative emergency and crisis, if stipulated so in the Legislative rules, as decided by the Legislative Council, implementing legislation).

Also there has been a push from the Ministry of Regional Development on strategies and strategic planning. New ICT-based tools were established with the aim to enhance the diffusion of strategic planning and to support such diffusion with methodological help – the Database of strategies and the Portal of strategic work in the Czech Republic. Also ICT-based methodical support focusing on the preparation of development documents of municipalities has been launched, and a special online application has been made available (www.obcepro.cz). The Ministry

also initiated the creation of an expert group for strategic work, the first meeting of which took place in May 2015 at the Ministry. These activities were perceived rather positively in interviews that we conducted for the Task 3 report and that focused on contributions of EU support to changes in public administration in Czechia. On the other hand, some other coordination initiatives of the Ministry – for instance the National electronic tools for e-procurement (NEN) or Information system MS2014+ for the administration of projects supported from EU structural funds – are perceived rather as failures.

The last two strategies on public administration reform – the Smart Administration strategy and the current Strategic framework – anticipated that coordination structures would be established for their implementation and evaluation. These structures have included specific supra-departmental as well as inter-departmental and intra-departmental units. These structures have been supplemented by bodies responsible for the coordination of operational programmes for which responsibilities for preparing project calls timelines, evaluation and cooperation were specified. Also, special Monitoring committees have been established for some programmes (like OPZ). The evaluation of sectoral policies (on social services, healthcare services etc.) is rather decentralized in the responsibilities of various sectoral ministries. There are also various steering mechanisms in place on the national level, particularly organized around the Office of the Government and its committees and advisory bodies (about 20 of such bodies exist). Also other committees exist outside the scope of the Government Office – for instance the Government Council for quality. Available information speaks of 13 of these advisory bodies, including those that represent a part of a special institutional structure for the implementation and coordination of public-administration reform programmes. This indicates a rather fragmented evaluation system and raises challenges of a more integrated future evaluation. Accountability initiatives have to be linked to quality-management initiatives that have been implemented particularly by larger municipalities and regions. They are outlined below.

Since the smart-administration strategy the establishment of a system for quality management and performance monitoring in public authorities was anticipated. Also it was emphasized in the strategy that the development of programme budgeting would enable a better monitoring of progress and performance and the realization of performance audits. The insufficient focus of actual practices on related goals was criticized in the ex-ante evaluation of the strategy (Ministerstvo vnitra 2016a). The responsibility for measuring has been assigned to the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry has published the following documents: analysis of the use of quality-management methods in public administration (Ministerstvo vnitra 2016b), analysis of the measurement and evaluation of public-administration performance in Czechia (Ministerstvo vnitra 2016c), description of the system (Ministerstvo vnitra 2017) and a supplementary dataset with indicators. The description contains a proposal of the system for pilot testing that would concentrate only on

some (46) indicators. It is anticipated that the dataset will be the key component of the system interlinked with other components of the system: process modelling of agendas ("PMA" project), RIA, strategic planning and management, availability and quality and international comparisons. First more integrated results are anticipated in 2019. indicators that are used in the current phase are mainly output-oriented (focused on quantity as are the indicators anticipated by Implementation Plans supplementing the Strategic Framework), and therefore it is rather questionable to what extent they can be used in the evaluation of PA quality (no monitoring of citizen satisfaction and related indexes are anticipated in the preliminary dataset, also determinants of technology acceptance and public e-services take-up are not surveyed, savings brought by ICT use for PA and citizens etc.). Also links to strategic aims and sub-goals of the Strategic Framework are debatable, should be clarified more and are rather low in some cases. The data obtained indicate that there is no direct link between the developed national monitoring system and systems related to the EU-supported programmes for public administration (like the MS2014+).

Overall implementation dynamic and reform outcomes – concluding comments

The first decade of post-communist administrative reforms in Czechia focused mainly on institutional changes and the incorporation of modern public-administration values. In these aspects in particular the reforms were more radical and also successful – they established basic democratic and administrative structures in the country. Most studies (for example, Bouckaert et al. 2008; Nemec et al. 2011) have stressed that an incremental approach is apparent in various modernizations of public administration in Czechia after 1999.

With regard to the period till 2008, Nemec, for instance, concluded that after accession, reforming public administration became a more "voluntary" and nationally motivated process, and Czechia was considered a country that had slowed down the reform pace and focused on small changes. Among the reasons also allocation priorities of the EU were pointed out (their focus on the increase of administrative capacities and efficiency; Nemec 2008). This can also be seen in the following period, but instruments used by the EU (the ex-ante conditionality, for instance) has certainly motivated and initiated important reforms, like the implementation of the State Civil Service Act. Another reason why reforms have been incremental, rather than radical, may be that reformers have relied too much on changes in legislation. Changes in legislation (as pointed out by de Vries with regards to changes in constitutions and also to path dependencies on the legalistic traditions in many CEE countries) proved to be the easiest part of the whole reform process in the post-communist countries (de Vries 2017).

The development in Czechia clearly calls for a separation between what is written in a formal reform strategy and what is actually achieved. Also it clearly shows that the reform has not been a straightforward process with a coherent incremental (and natural) development in specific areas. In fact, the way to partial successes was rather bumpy, with various detours as well as pull-in landings. In Czechia, it is apparent what Bileišis and Kovač (2017) concluded with regards to other CEE countries – where the EU-level regulation was of high importance, reforms continued to be implemented, but often in a top-down manner, rather than through peer-to-peer networks, as commented by Bileiš and Kovač. This has been frequently criticized by representatives of Czech self-governments and their main associations with regards to new duties imposed on self-governments, new information systems developed for agendas executed by municipalities etc. Some representatives of self-governments have criticized reform efforts also because the reform of territorial and central administration was separated and new duties were allocated by new regulations in an asymmetric way – more duties were specified especially for self-governments, rather than for central authorities, often in a rather chaotic and fast way. Similarly to Slovakia and Hungary, the "box ticking" logic can be seen in Czechia – reforms that are needed are adopted formally without following up with substantive changes in public management (this is, for instance, the case of the development of the civil-service reform). The last two reform strategies have declared very similar goals. This might be seen as a positive feature, showing continuity in reform. If we look at reform achievements, however, it becomes apparent that in many cases the planned goals were not achieved and needed to be repeated in order to be implemented. Also, many of the aims enumerated in the last two strategies are similar to those stipulated in the 2004 reform programme.

Interviews clearly indicate that the EU support has increased capacities related to project management and the programming of changes, it also has helped speeding up some changes. But it can be seen now in Czechia that some central-administrative authorities aimed at exempting some projects from the EU co-funding framework with various motives. On one hand this may enhance the flexibility of decisions on priorities of PA reform, on the other hand this can have a detrimental effect on their future evaluation, because EU funding instruments enhanced the discipline in project management in Czech public administration according to interviews made with representatives of central units responsible for the coordination of EU co-funding. Similarly to other CEE countries (as commented by Bileišis and Kovač 2017), new modes of citizen engagement do not represent a consolidated reform agenda yet.

Benchmarking reports indicate a relatively better-than-average performance of Czechia in the case of access to government information. Also, during the reform various instruments and mechanisms have been implemented on a more or less continuous basis that have enhanced possibilities to control public administration (from inside as well as from outside by more independent controlling bodies as well

as citizens and civil society). On the other hand, the actual practice may differ, as indicated in scores usually given to the transparency of government and the value of the corruption perception index as published by the Transparency International.

Partial successes have been accomplished in the area of e-government – for instance the continuous development of the Czech POINT projects (that should be more ambitious according to some interviews conducted for the EUPACK project that pointed out the Contact points project currently implemented in Slovakia), the system of data boxes and core public administration information systems (basic registers) were perceived as beneficial in the interviews. Further progress will be determined by the development of other key enablers of further e-government development, especially new eIDs that are anticipated as of July 2018 and the subsequent electronization of core public services for citizens (similarly to other countries digitization has focused particularly on e-government services for businesses where the digital-by-default principle has also been implemented in legislation).

Also at least partial success has been indicated in the further development of RIA and the diffusion of quality-management tools, especially in larger municipalities and regions. The implementation of such tools in central authorities has actually been initiated rather recently. Also regulatory burden-reduction initiatives have focused mainly on businesses. The administrative burden imposed on citizens and other organizations has been tackled only recently, and mainly partial analyses are available, not actual measures.

Effects of projects implemented in the current period 2014–2020 are hard to evaluate, because many projects have not been implemented, or their implementation has started only recently because of delays in calls for project proposals. Also effects of legislation that was approved rather recently is hard to evaluate – this is also the case with the new State Civil Service Act (234/2014), which has been revised recently in order to reduce the administrative burden imposed on recruitment by the original version of the Act.

Initiatives focused on the diffusion of strategic management and quality-management tools are usually perceived as beneficial. Particularly larger municipalities and regions have been actively implementing new instruments again. Relevant practices of central authorities have started recently, together with initiatives focusing on the first national framework of more integrated and systematic continuous evaluation of performance in public administration. Standardization has been visible only in some areas (e-government planning and development, social services), but the standardization of public-sector agendas and initiatives like the process-modelling initiative – PMA (already the third phase of the project started) – is usually perceived as progressing slowly with minimum real impacts.

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