EUPAN Presidency Brief Report
Croatia
1 January - 30 June 2020

„Strengthening trust in public administration"

June 2020

General information

This report offers a short overview of the Croatian EUPAN Presidency during the first half of 2020. Having in mind the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred earlier this year, plenary meetings of EUPAN, originally scheduled for April and June of 2020 had to be cancelled, as well as most of other informal meetings planned to take place during the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The decision to cancel EUPAN WL and EUPAN DG meetings was necessary due to the circumstances caused by the pandemic and the resulting inability to ensure a quality programme for the events. However, in order to keep things running, EUPAN 5 kept in touch for the duration of the Croatian Presidency and consequently, both EUPAN 5 Secretariat meetings took place as planned, but via videoconference. Having the above in mind, preparations for the WL and DG level meetings were mostly left out of the agenda of both EUPAN 5 meetings. The topics discussed in these meetings were primarily of technical nature, ensuring basic continuation of the work done by EUPAN, providing EUPAN with some basic information of the work done by the Croatian Presidency, and preparation for the German Presidency.

Efforts invested in Croatia's first ever presidency in these difficult circumstances have not yielded the results expected due to the inability to hold the workshops planned for the plenary meetings. As previously stated, the focus of the Croatian presidency would have been on strengthening citizens' trust in public administration by addressing the topics stated in the Rolling Programme, specifically: Innovative tools in ethics infrastructure, Tackling the challenge of employment and retention in the civil service, Development of complex digital services for citizens and businesses and the possibilities of applying new digital technologies i.e. Blockchain technology in public services.

With the idea of continuing the good practice of cooperation with relevant stakeholders, experts from the academic community were involved in the preparation of the workshops. In light of the unfortunate events during the last four months and the resulting cancellation of our plenary meetings, including the workshops, we haven't been able to gain a deeper understanding of the four topics and engage in discussions. Therefore, no joint conclusions have been made. Nonetheless, we pursued the

research of these topics and have produced four short Research Findings, provided as parts of this Report. We did our best to give some feedback to the EUPAN community, hoping it will benefit the community, provide some insight into the topics and possibly be utilized in the future.

Proposed EIPA-EUPAN project

Furthermore, EUPAN was contacted by an EIPA DG, Mr. Ongaro, who brought to our attention a potential project for EUPAN and EIPA, as one of EIPA's missions is to share knowledge and expertise related to European public administration governance. EIPA was contacted by the startup Apenhet, which had developed a platform for a user-friendly presentation of data and information (example of a project with the EU and the OECD: https://sigma.apenhet.com/service-delivery-2019/1). In this regard, there is a vast body of research and analysis done during various EUPAN presidencies, but it is sometimes difficult to locate and access it because it is spread across multiple repositories. The proposition is to retrieve all the data, integrate it in this platform and present it via EIPA's website. This would guarantee full access to the data for all citizens, and EUPAN would remain the owner of the data. This proposal was discussed in the EUPAN 5 DG Meeting, and the reactions were very positive. Of course, there are some issues which require further discussion, such as the adequacy of having the data available on multiple platforms. This matter is therefore open for discussion and is to be addressed in plenary meetings during the German presidency, in order to receive feedback from other EUPAN member states and observer countries. Also, details of the project are to be further discussed with EIPA during the German presidency. It was agreed that EUPAN 5 Secretariat would keep track of all the arrangements and work done regarding the proposed project.

Preparations for the German presidency

As presented earlier, the main topics of the upcoming presidency will be demography, diversity, digitalisation, and ethics and integrity. Due to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Germany decided to change the timetable of EUPAN meetings and cancel the events originally envisaged for July and September, and to have a strong start in October. At that point, the Summer School proposal will be presented for comments, with a possible addition of the topic of coronavirus crisis management to the agenda. The Summer School concept will also be elaborated further during the German presidency, the focus being on civil service ethics and integrity, and professionalization of the civil service.

We wish the best of luck to Germany in their efforts, and hope that the situation will not interfere too much with the planned activities, and that they will have lots of success and quality discussions, and altogether a fruitful presidency.

CAF State of play

CAF2020 is considered the European quality tool for good governance and excellence in public sector organisations, focusing on digitalisation, agility, sustainability, diversity, and innovation. The EU CAF Resource Centre (EIPA – European Institute for Public Administration) organised few video meetings for the CAF correspondents network (in May with Mr. Stéphane Jacobzone, Head of Unit at OECD Public Governance, Evidence, Monitoring and Policy Evaluation, and Dr. Gregor Virant, Head of Programme SIGMA and OECD) due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The CAF network has taken up the invitation from our Portuguese colleague to begin to collaborate with the OECD / PEM.

Based on the inputs and comments from the national CAF correspondents, the Croatian Presidency, together with the EU CAF Resource Centre, worked on and adopted the first version of the document entitled "Guidelines for implementing the CAF". The Guidelines encompass 7 domains, with measures and indicators intended primarily for the Member States in the challenging task to promote and measure the impacts of the CAF on good governance and to facilitate further implementation of the CAF in line with the EUPAN strategy papers, as well as to have a framework for monitoring and informing EUPAN DGs and stakeholders on the added value of the CAF. Monitoring of data would be of great use for benchlearning and benchmarking between countries in the use of CAF2020, identifying agenda topics for the future work of the CAF network, as well as for keeping the CAF standard up-to-date.

Table of contents

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Public
Administration

EU20HR
Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

5. Tackling the challenge of employment and retention in the civil service Research findings

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5.1. Goals of the study and its relevance

This comparative study on the main challenges of employment and retention in the civil service has a twofold goal. First, its purpose is to present the empirical results of the study on employment and retention conducted in the EUPAN network. Second, it gives an analytical view on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the existing employment and retention systems.

The empirical part of the study consists of three interconnected parts. In the *first* part, the question of employment and changes thereof is examined. One can mention that Lievens and Chapman (2019) list some of the most important contemporary topics in this field: impact of technology on recruiting, quality of applicants, role and importance of recruiter and employer branding, and of the image of the employing organization, addressing the needs of an aging population, attracting temporary workers and applicants' reaction to the selection procedure. In this part of the research, the basic questions are: a) to assess the respondents' perception of their employment in the civil service, since this can have an impact on the attractiveness and recruitment potential of the civil service, b) whether there have been some recent changes in employment procedures in the countries of the EUPAN network. Since Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen (2008) researched similar topics, the answers to some of the questions offer a longitudinal perspective. They allow the assessment of whether the passage of twelve years from the last study has led to some changes in different countries. Additionally, Spiliotopoulos (2014) examined the selection procedure, but only for top civil servants, while this research intends to encompass all categories of civil servants and give a general view.

In the *second* part of the research, the topic is performance appraisal and competency framework development. Performance appraisal and broader performance management are contemporary trends in human potential management (Bach, 2019) (hereafter: HPM). As Kreitner (2008, p. 283) puts it: "performance appraisal is the process of evaluating individual job performance as a basis for making objective personnel decisions". Competency management "involves identifying the competencies that people need to perform a job well in all areas of organizational activity, constructing a framework and using it as the foundation for recruitment, selection, training and development, rewards and other aspects of people management" (Horton, 2002, p. 3).

Both individual performance appraisal[1] and competency management[2] have been researched within the EUPAN network, so the object of this study is not to assess the performance appraisal system as a whole, but to connect it with competency frameworks and examine whether the proper functioning of both can enhance the attractiveness, employment and retention potential of the civil service. Namely, the study's basic thesis is that a functional performance appraisal system and the existence and use of competency frameworks create a positive image of the civil service, enhance its transparency and influence the attractiveness of the government as employer.

The *third* part of the empirical research examines the retention of civil servants, specifically, whether the respondents see that the number of persons leaving the civil service has increased, and what are the measures to increase the retention potential of the civil service. This has been recognized as an important factor. In his study on attracting and retaining the best people in public administration, Koprić (2009, p. 7-8) identified two types of factors that influence the retention capacity of the civil service. The first are external (such as an unfavourable economic situation, the situation in other sectors, poor legal norms that regulate working conditions in the civil service, etc.), and the second are internal (inadequate education and working conditions, lack of a strategic vision, low ethical standards, etc.)

In the concluding part of the study, a SWOT analysis of challenges in the employment and retention system is conducted to open doors for future research in those areas, which seem to be problematic for the majority of EUPAN countries.

5.2. Methodological remarks

To conduct the study, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to all EUPAN member states (27 countries), observer countries (seven of them), the European Commission, EIPA (European Institute of Public Administration), and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in the period from 5 February to 19 February 2020. The representatives of public administration institutions responsible for the EUPAN network were asked to fill in the questionnaire according to their best knowledge.

Twenty-six answers were received, which is a response rate of 70% (26/37). All the answers were analysed using the method of descriptive statistics, while open questions were analysed qualitatively. Additionally, the countries were divided into three groups: a) old EU member states and other Western

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[1] Staroňová, 2017; Demmke, Hammerschmid & Meyer, 2007; Demmke, 2007.
[2] Nunes, Martins & Duarte, 2007; Tronti, Della Rocca & Tomassini, 2014.

European countries (Norway and Switzerland),[3] b) new EU member states (which entered the EU in 2004 and later) and EU candidate countries,[4] c) European Commission.[5] Separate data and data discussions for these groups of countries are provided.

In the questionnaire, the civil service was defined as the central civil service system (state administration). This includes central state administration bodies and/or branches located at different levels of the state territory, but excludes semi-autonomous or more autonomous bodies and organizations such as public (regulatory and executive) agencies, providers of the services of general interest and subnational levels of government (local/regional self-government).

It is important to notice that not all the respondents answered all the questions in the questionnaire, for different reasons (question not applicable to them, question not clear to them, etc.). Besides, some respondents gave additional comments or specific remarks to some of the questions or answered a question in different ways. In this questionnaire, all questions, except one, contained predefined answers and the respondents could choose or fill in one or more of the proposed answers. Accordingly, only the predefined answers chosen by the respondent have been taken into consideration, not their accompanying explanation. However, the authors have used the explanations during the discussion of the results. Specific methodological remarks are given within the text when presenting the results of certain questions.[6]

The results should have been discussed on the two EUPAN meetings that were planned to be held in Zagreb in April and June 2020. However, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings were not held and the results could not be discussed with country representatives. Consequently, although not all the results are representative because of different ways used by the respondents to fill in the questions and the lack of live discussion with them, they still enable examination of the research topics and presentation of some conclusions as well as open the door for future research direction within the EUPAN network.

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[3] Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland.

[4] Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey.

[5] In the text, the official county codes are used (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tutorial:Country_codes_and_protocol_order#Codes.2C_names_and_protocol_order_of_Eu ropean_Union_.28EU.29_Member_States). That is: BG – Bulgaria, CH – Switzerland, CZ – Czech Republic, DK – Denmark, DE – Germany, FR – France, HR – Croatia, IT – Italy, CY – Cyprus, LV – Latvia, LU – Luxembourg, HU – Hungary, ME- Montenegro, NL – Netherlands, NO – Norway, AT – Austria, PL – Poland, PT – Portugal, RO – Romania, RS – Serbia, SI – Slovenia, SK - Slovakia, FI – Finland, SE – Sweden, TR – Turkey. The European Commission is labelled as EC.

[6] For the questionnaire, s. Appendix 1.

5.3. Employment and its innovation

The first part of the questionnaire was meant to research the perception that the interviewed organizations have of certain aspects of the civil service.

Table 1: Perception of aspects of the civil service

	Average	Average old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	Average new EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
The government is attractive as employer	3.72	3.83	3.58	4
Young people are interested in the work in the civil service	3.52	3.58	3.42	4
Civil service has a policy for attracting the best people to the civil service	3.32	3.58	3.08	3
The media convey a positive image of the civil service	2.64	2.75	2.50	3
People prefer to work in the civil service over work in the private sector	3.17	3.00	3.33	3
People prefer to work in the civil service over work in public agencies	3.04	2.90	3.08	4
People prefer to work in the civil service over work in subnational government (local/regional self-government)	3.39	3.30	3.42	4
People prefer to work in the civil service over work in the services of general interest	3.14	3.10	3.18	3
Civil service has no problem in filling vacancies	3.04	3.18	2.83	4

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

For each of the statements listed in Table 1, the respondents could grade their level of agreement (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). As the data shows (Table 1), the majority of respondents has an average opinion of the civil service – level 3. The only statement that shows a more negative perception is that the media convey a positive image of the civil service, and this can presumably have an effect on the attractiveness of the government as employer as well as on its capacity to retain high-quality people. In this sense, the perception that the media convey a negative image is the highest in Bulgaria, France, Italy and Romania (Table 2).

This data is comparable with the data examined by Demmke, Henökl and Moilanenin their EUPAN report in 2008. They asked their respondents to indicate what kind of image the media / politicians / other opinion leaders convey of public employees in their countries. The results showed that, for the most part, the image was rather bad. The only group of countries with a rather good or neutral image of their public employees were the Scandinavian countries, while the image was the worst in Eastern European countries (Demmke, Henökl & Moilanen, 2008, p. 96). The same holds for this research: the average image of the civil service that the media convey is negative to neutral (average score 2.64). When the responding countries are divided into two groups: a) old EU member states or countries outside the EU but from the Western European group of countries (12 countries), and b) new EU member states or candidate countries (13 countries), the results show that the image conveyed by the media in the new EU countries and candidate countries is worse than in the old EU countries. Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen indicated a solution to this problem: "Thus, administrations should be more active in their communications with the media and offer them success stories as well. Agencies should also use their www-pages in a more active fashion" (2008, p. 96). 12 years later, the same recommendation holds, since we can see no real improvements.

The data shows that respondents from all member states have an average to positive perception of attractiveness of the government as employer (average score 3.72) and attractiveness of the civil service for young people (average score 3.52, most respondents opted for 4). This perception is more positive in the old EU member states than in the new ones. Although in this case the questions were not the same so the data are not completely comparable to data from the research done by Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen (2008, p. 113-114), their data shows that, in 2008, most middle and top managers in the public service considered work in central public administration attractive. Most regular employees had a neutral opinion. The opinion was lower in Eastern European countries (new EU member states). Thus, having compared the two sets of data, we can state that 12 years in between have had no considerable effect on the attractiveness of the civil service and the differences between the two groups of countries.

However, it is important to notice that in the new EU countries and candidate countries people prefer work in the civil service to work in the private sector, sub-national government or public agencies to a higher degree than in the old EU countries. This could signalize that other parts of public administration

or private sector are seen as less stable work environments, so the central civil service takes precedence.

It seems that most of the countries have some problems filling the vacancies in the civil service. This is reported especially by countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, but also new member states such as Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Latvia. Since the old member states reporting problems with filling the vacancies are also the countries which have policies for attracting the best people to the civil service (Table 2), it seems there is a general problem with increasing the attractiveness of the government as an employer.

The old EU countries have policies for attracting the best people to the civil service to a higher degree than the new member states and candidate countries. Hungary, Latvia and Turkey are the only countries in this group stating they have a policy for attracting the best people to the civil service. Hence, the majority of new member states and candidate countries ought to make greater progress in this area.

Table 2: Perception of the civil service per country

	5- I strongly agree	4 - I mostly agree	3- I do not agree or somewhat disagree	2- I mostly disagree	1- I strongly disagree
The government is attractive as employer	1 LU	18 AT, CY, DK, EC, FI, DE, HU, IT, LV, NL, NO, PL, RO, SK, SI, SE, CH, TR	4 HR, FR, ME, RS	2 BG, PT	
Young people are interested in the work in the civil service		17 AT, CY, DK, EC, FI, DE, HU, IT, LV, LU, ME, NL, RO, SI, SE, CH, TR	4 HR, FR, RS, SI	4 BG, NO, PL, PT	

Civil service has a policy for attracting the best people to the civil service	2 HU, CH	10 AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, LV, LU, NL, SE, TR	17 CY, EC, ME, PL, RO, SK, SI	6 BG, HR, IT, NO, PT, RS	
The media convey a positive image of the civil service		4 FI, DE, NO, TR	12 AT, DK, EC, HU, LV, NL, PL, RS, SI, SK, SE, CH	6 HR, CY, LU, ME, PT	4 BG, FR, IT, RO
People prefer work in the civil service to work in the private sector		8 CY, IT, LU, ME, RS, SI, SE, TR	13 HR, DK, EC, FI, DE, HU, LV, NL, NO, PL, RO, SK, CH	2 BG, FR	1 PT
People prefer work in the civil service to work in public agencies		3 EC, HU, ME	17 BG, HR, FI, FR, DE, IT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, RO, RS, SI, SK, CH, TR	2 CY, PT	
People prefer work in the civil service to work in subnational government (local/regional self-government)	2 BG, DE	6 EC, HU, ME, NO, RS, SE	13 HR, FI, IT, LV, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, CH, TR	1 FR	

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Public Administration

EU2020HR
Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

		3	19		
People prefer work in the civil service to work in the services of general interest		HU, ME, PT	BG, HR, CY, EC, FI, FR, DE, IT, LV, LU, NL, NO, RO, RS, SI, SK, SE, CH, TR		
	2	8	6	7	2
Civil service has no problem in filling vacancies	CY, PT	AT, DK, EC, FI, NO, SI, SE, TR	HR, HU, ME, RO, RS	FR, DE, IT, LV, LU, NL, SK	BG, PL

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

Afterward, the respondents were asked to specify which innovations had been introduced in their recruitment system in the last five years. It was an open question, so a variety of answers and a variety of instruments implemented by countries can be noticed. On the one hand, some states have made steps to *centralize the recruitment* of all or just senior civil servants (i.e. Italy, Latvia, Portugal). On the other hand, some states such as Romania have *decentralized the recruitment system*.[7] In the new EU member states and candidate states, especially in those belonging to Southeast Europe, there is talk about competency development and *development of competency frameworks* for civil servants recruitment and appraisal. For example, Serbia indicates that a system of competencies has been introduced for all the functions of human resources management.[8] Slovenia indicates that the project

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[7] "National Agency of Civil Servants (NACS) no longer makes *ex-ante* controls for the competitions, no longer validates the procedures, the public institutions themselves organize the open competitions" – respondent's answer.

[8] "With the adoption of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Civil Servants in December 2018 (Official Gazette, No. 95/18) (hereinafter: the Law), legal basis has been provided for the introduction of a system of competencies in all the functions of the human resources management (selection, transfer, taking over, evaluation of work performance, etc.) competitions" – respondent's answer.

"Establishment of a uniform model for civil service competency" was finished and the competency framework will be used in recruitment. A plan for the development of a competency model is reported by Romania, while Montenegro indicates the introduction of a competency framework for senior managers. Competency-based tasting is also reported by Slovakia. The only old member state explicitly mentioning a competency framework is Luxembourg, where "*new exams, which focus on competencies and situation judgments (IQ testing and common assessment exercises)"* (respondent's answer) have been introduced. A topic that is common for both groups of countries is an *increased usage of ICT in the recruitment procedure* (i.e. Austria, Norway, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and Sweden). Respondents point to the *usage of social media* as a way to make the civil service accessible to possible candidates and to disseminate information on vacancies (i.e. Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland). Apart from these, some answers point to particular topics which can help the recruitment process: *specific programs targeting young professionals* (i.e. European Commission, Slovakia), *changes in the recruitment procedure* (Czech Republic, France, Finland, Montenegro, Croatia), *employer branding* (Denmark, Sweden), *introduction of financial incentives for posts that are difficult to recruit for* (Germany), *new forms of employment* (Turkey).

5.4. Performance appraisal and competency system

In the following part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to explain the basic features of their performance appraisal and competency system. Although competencies have mostly been used in private sector organizations, particularly for managers, it was noticed that there are not many differences in the required competencies between private and public managers, except that the former deal with the market and the latter with politicians and citizens. Competency frameworks bring many advantages for HPM in both private and public organizations, especially as a tool for connecting recruitment, evaluation and development processes in organizations. It is a key tool for recruiting officials, for the remuneration process, design of training and development programs, as well as for assessing employees' performance, career planning and talent management (Skorková, 2016, p. 228-230)

The purpose of this section was to create a link between performance appraisal and competencies – whether competency frameworks are used and whether they influence the performance appraisal process. It is expected that a properly functioning performance appraisal system, supplemented with solid competency models, can increase the quality of civil servants' work and, at the same time, make the civil service more attractive. The existence of competency frameworks enables clear guidance on the competencies that civil servants and public managers need to possess to enter into the civil service,

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Public Administration

EU2020HR
Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

and the connection between performance appraisal and competency models enables civil servants to know how those competencies will be assessed.

25 out of 26 respondents indicated that they have regular performance appraisals and 23 of them have this system set for all civil servants (except for the European Commission[9] and Poland[10]). This is in line with the last research on performance appraisal conducted within the EUPAN (Staroňová, 2017), which showed that the majority of countries have some sort of a system of performance appraisal.

22 countries reported that they have a some kind of a competency framework provided for their civil servants, and this competency framework is applied in all HPM areas, with a predominant usage for recruitment purposes. Table 3 shows that the Western European states use a competency framework to a higher degree. Specifically, competency frameworks are used by at least 9 (out of 12) countries for all HPM purposes (at least 75%). It should be mentioned that Germany did not provide an answer to this question, so it is not excluded that this country has a competency framework for all HPM areas too. On the other hand, 9 out of 13 (69%) new EU member states and candidate countries reported using a competency framework for recruitment, but less for other purposes, such as: 61% (8/13) for performance appraisal, 53% (7/13) for education and in-service training, and only 46% (6/13) for career development. This could be a signal of the still existing practice of politicization of the civil service in those countries. The EU noted such practices during the negotiation process, hence their abolition and the establishment of professional public administration with a clear separation between politics and administration was one of the prerequisites for EU entry (SIGMA/27, 1999, p. 21-26). The fact that competencies are not the basis for all HRM areas could facilitate the use of political criteria in HRM decisions. Research signalizes that there is still a high level of politicization in those countries (Mayer Sahling & Veen, 2011; Marčetić & Lopižić, 2018).

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[9] The EC indicated it has this system for: "All statutory staff including officials, temporary agents and contract agents with long-term contracts are subject to an annual appraisal exercise. Contract agents with shorter-term generally must be assessed as from their third year of engagement"(respondent's answer).

[10] Poland indicated that performance appraisal excludes top positions: "All civil servants with the exception of senior positions (e.g. directors and their deputies)" (respondent's answer). In addition, Austria indicated that certain jobs such as e.g. judges are excluded from the performance appraisal system. The same was reported by Slovakia: "exceptions for certain categories are determined in the Civil service Act e.g. the civil servants in public function" (respondent's answer).

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Public
Administration

EU2020HR
Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

Table 3: Usage of competency frameworks according to human resources management areas

	Total countries	Old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Employment / recruitment	21	11 AT, DK, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, NO, PT, SE, CH	9 BG, HU, LV, ME, PL, RS, SI, SK, TR	1
Performance appraisal	18	9 DK, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, CH	8 BG, CZ, HU, LV, PL, RS, TR	1
Career development	16	9 AT, DK, FI, FR, LU, NL, NO, PT, CH	6 BG, LV, PL, RS, SI, TR	1
Education and in-service training	18	10 AT, DK, FI, FR, LU, NL, NO, PT, SE, CH	7 BG, HU, LV, PL, RS, SI, TR	1
Other	2	0	1 LV	1
Respondents from some countries indicated that: a) they have a decentralized system of performance appraisal, b) have other specificities in their performance appraisal system, or c) the question is not applicable to them. They have been included in the table if they provided answers but these remarks should be taken into consideration when analysing the results provided in the table.				

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

The next question dealt with the usage of a competency framework during performance appraisal. 16 countries and the EC indicated that they use a competency framework during performance appraisal. These are 9 out of 12 (75%) old member states (Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland) and 7 out of 13 (53%) new member states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Serbia, Turkey). The data shows that, during performance

appraisal, competency frameworks are mostly used for deciding on education and in-service training, and it is an area where old and new EU member states show equal usage of competency frameworks. As for promotion and career development, the old member states rely more on competency frameworks. In the area of pay decreases and pay increases, there is a slightly greater usage of competency frameworks by the new EU member states. Apart from the EC, all the states listed in the category "Other" indicated the use of competency frameworks during performance appraisal for pay increases or other decisions on civil servants' salaries (Table 4). However, this data shows that there is still no complete correlation between performance appraisal and competencies, especially in the new EU member states and candidate countries, and this is an area where improvements are needed.

Table 4: Usage of a competency framework during performance appraisal

	Total countries	Old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Promotion	11	7 FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PT, CH	3 BG, RO, TR	1
Career development	13	7 FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PT, CH	5 BG, HU, PL, RO, TR	1
Pay decreases	6	2 FI, CH	3 CZ, HU, RO	1
Education and in-service training	15	7 FI, FR, LU, NL, PT, SE, CH	7 BG, CZ, HU, LV, PL, RO, TR	1
Other	6	2 PT, SE	3 CZ, HU, PL	1
Respondents from some countries indicated that a) they have a decentralized system of performance appraisal, b) have other specificities in their performance appraisal system, or c) the question is not applicable to them. They have been included in the table if they provided answers but these remarks should be taken into consideration when analysing the results provided in the table.				

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

The following question was intended to examine what are the three most important competencies in different areas of HPM. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they think a competency is 1-most important, 2-quite important, or 3-important. However, only 17 respondents (out of 26) answered this question. Most of the reasons for not responding were that they thought competencies could not be ranked globally, but only according to a specific position. Besides, respondents answering this question gave their answers in different ways (some ranked all the competencies; some ranked just three in total, etc.). Therefore, the answers to this question are not representative and do not allow ranking of the competencies. Nevertheless, the answers can show some tendencies (Table 5).

Table 5: Top competencies in different human resources management areas

	Employment /recruitment	Performance appraisal	Career development	Education and in-service training
Literacy and communication skills (oral and written)	**6**	3	1	2
Problem-solving capacities	1	6	**5**	2
Interpersonal capacities	1	4	1	1
Teamwork	0	3	1	3
Analysis and synthesis	5	4	2	1
Autonomy in task execution	2	4	2	1
Compliance and rule-following	2	5	3	3
Planning capacities	1	2	1	1
Ethical behaviour	1	3	2	1
Professional expertise	**6**	4	3	3
Goals achievement	1	**9**	3	1
Leadership capacities	1	3	4	2

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

If the number of times that a certain competency was indicated as the most important is taken into consideration, the data shows that there are considerable differences between different HPM areas. Namely, in the area of recruitment, literacy and communication skills combined with professional expertise seem to be the most important competency. One explanation of this could be that these are

the competencies that can be examined most easily by using standardized tests, interviews, or even relying on the educational background. In the performance appraisal area, goals achievement is the most important competency, which is in line with the entire performance philosophy that relies on setting clear goals and measuring their achievement (Van Dooren, Bouckaert & Halligan, 2015). For career development purposes, the problem-solving capacity emerges as the most important competency, while there is no conclusion about the competency considered most important when deciding on the education and in-service training of a civil servant.

Table 6: Perception of the performance appraisal system

	Our performance appraisal system clearly distinguishes different levels of performance	Non-satisfactory performance is sanctioned financially (i.e. pay decreases)	Non-satisfactory performance is sanctioned non-financially (i.e. fewer days off, decrease in career grade, freeze to career promotion, etc.)	Good performance is rewarded financially (i.e. bonuses)	Good performance is rewarded non-financially (i.e. more days off)	Performance appraisal system has a strong motivational potential
Average	4.21	2.92	3.52	3.67	2.78	3.38
Average old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	4.10	2.60	3.44	**3.90**	**2.89**	**3.50**
Average new EU countries (including candidate countries)	**4.23**	**3.00**	**3.46**	3.69	2.85	3.15
European Commission	5	5	5	1	1	5

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

When examining the difference in respondents' perception of their performance appraisal system (Table 6 and 7), a very good sign is the fact that almost all respondents think that their performance appraisal systems allow clear distinguishing between different levels of performance, which is an indispensable step in conducting real performance appraisal. There are no major differences between the groups of countries, except in two aspects: the use of financial sanctions and the motivational potential of the performance appraisal system. The new EU member states and candidate countries rely more on financial sanctioning of non-satisfactory performance. On the other hand, the old EU member states prefer the use of financial rewards for good performance. Since the motivational

potential of the performance appraisal system is higher in the old member states, the reliance on rewards rather than sanctions could be one of the important factors. However, the fact that the old member states have their performance appraisal systems more clearly connected with the competency framework could be a factor facilitating higher motivation of civil servants.

Table 7: Perception of performance appraisal system per country

	5- I strongly agree	4 - I mostly agree	3- I do not agree or somewhat disagree	2- I mostly disagree	1- I strongly disagree
Our performance appraisal system clearly distinguishes different levels of performance	11 HR, CZ, EC, FI, FR, HU, LV, PT, RO, RS, SK	9 BG, DE, IT, LU, NL, PL, SE, CH, TR	2 ME, SI	2 CY, NO	
Non-satisfactory performance is sanctioned financially (i.e. pay decreases)	7 CZ, EC, HU, LV, RS, SK, CH	4 FI, IT, SI, SE	1 PT	4 CY, ME, NL, TR	8 BG, HR, FR, DE, LU, NO, PL, ROM
Non-satisfactory performance is sanctioned non-financially (i.e. fewer days off, decrease in career grade, freeze to career promotion, etc.)	6 HR, CZ, EC, HU, LV, RS	9 BG, FI, FR, DE, NO, PT, SI, SE, TR	2 ME, NL	3 LU, PL, CH	3 CY, RO, SK
Good performance is rewarded financially (i.e. bonuses)	7 HU, LV, PT, RS, SK, SE, CH	9 BG, CZ, FI, FR, NL, NO, RO, SI, TR	4 DE, IT, ME, PL	1 LU	3 HR, CY, EC
Good performance is rewarded non-financially (i.e. more days off)	3 LV, PT, RS	7 DE, HU, LU, ME, PT, SI, SE	3 BG, FR, TR	2 NL, NO	8 HR, CY, CZ, EC, FI, RO, SK, SE
Performance appraisal system has a strong	6 CZ, EC, FI, FR, HU, SE	4 BG, SK, CH, TR	10	1 RO	3 HR, CY, LU

motivational potential			DE, IT, LV, ME, NL, NO, PL, PT, RS, SI		

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

As is well known, the performance appraisal system presents different challenges, which has been widely debated in literature (Beaumont, Cardona, Daley, Demmke, Gabris, Grima, McGregor, Mani, Marčetić, etc.). Hence, the respondents were asked to indicate which challenges they see as the dominant ones (Table 8). They were allowed to choose as many challenges as they saw fit. The Table 8 shows that the new EU member states and candidate countries have most problems in this regard, and the most important challenge is the subjectivity/partiality of managers during performance appraisal. The research conducted by Marčetić (2016) about the performance-related payment in Croatia and ex-Yugoslavian countries confirms that these problems occur not only in central state administration but on all territorial levels. This probably has to do with the fact that the performance appraisal system is not connected with a competency framework in all HPM areas. A stronger connection between the two would enable clearer performance assessment criteria and decrease the level of subjectivity. Additionally, there is a problem with a lack of training for managers in the new EU countries, while the old EU countries do not perceive this as a considerable challenge.

Table 8: Most important challenges in the personnel appraisal system

	Lack of ability of managers to assess the competences	Lack of ability of managers to set objectives for staff	Performance appraisal criteria are not sufficiently developed and elaborated	Subjectivity/ partiality of managers during performance appraisal	Lack of adequate training to implement new performance appraisal method	Lack of time for conducting performance appraisal
Total	10	11	7	17	9	7
Total old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	4	5	2	5	3	**4**
Total new EU countries (including candidate countries)	**6**	**6**	**5**	**11**	**6**	3
European Commission	0	0	0	1	0	0

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

5.5. Retention

When examining the categories of civil servants leaving the civil service, there are no differences between the groups of countries. Young people with a university degree are the ones leaving the service, so most of the retention measures should be aimed at this specific group of civil servants (Table 9).

Table 9: Categories of civil servants who mostly leave the civil service

	People with up to five years of experience	People with more than five years of experience	People with a university degree	People without a university degree
Total	**11**	4	**13**	2
Total old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	6	1	6	0
Total new EU countries (including candidate countries)	5	3	**7**	2
European Commission	Specific problems			

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

The European Commission has its particular problems in the area of retention, stating that "the category of staff members who are most likely to resign is that of contract agents (half of whom can be employed for a maximum duration of 6 years) with less than 5 years of experience, with or without a university degree."

Since there is a problem with retaining some groups of civil servants, the respondents were asked to indicate, according to their best knowledge, which measures have the best potential for retaining people in the civil service. Table 10 shows how many times a measure was indicated as an important one.[11] Although the measure of "Increasing salaries" received most votes when looking at the category of the most important measures, in total, it is slightly preceded by the measures of "Increasing career development opportunities" and "Changes in the working conditions". This means that although financial incentives are important, they are not the sole decisive factor. This becomes even more evident if the category "Other measures" is taken into consideration. Namely, respondents indicated

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[11] Two respondents gave their answers without grading the measures (from 1-3), so those answers were not taken into consideration. Some respondents graded all the measures, while some graded just three of them. All these answers were taken into consideration, since they indicate the importance of certain measures, although the results are not representative.

different measures but most of them concern the purpose of the job and tasks – civil servants want to know that their job has a purpose and that their tasks are sufficiently autonomous and meaningful: "meaningful tasks with scope for design and action" (Switzerland), "more interesting work tasks" (Sweden), "possibilities to work more autonomous and independent" (Germany). Therefore, non-financial measures and motivational instruments are becoming more and more important. This is in line with Spector's research which showed that the correlation between pay and job satisfaction is surprisingly small, only .17, but fairness in pay is valued much more (Spector, 1997, p. 42). In addition, many psychological studies and theories of motivation (e.g. Adams' theory of fairness, Locke's & Latham's theory of goal setting) argue in favour of motivational factors unrelated to financial rewards. However, in this question, the discrepancy between old and new EU member states becomes evident. In particular, out of 9 times the measure of "Increasing salaries" was indicated as the most important one, 7 answers were given by new EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania). Out of the old EU member states, only Italy and Portugal chose this measure as the most important one. Taking into consideration the economic situation of both Italy and Portugal, as could be expected, this measure predominates in countries with economic problems. When the economic situation stabilizes, other measures assume greater importance and greater retention potential.

Table 10: Importance of different retention measures

	Number of times indicated as most important	N. times indicated as most important	N. times indicated as less important	Total
Increasing salaries	**9**	2	4	15
Financial/non-financial rewards for good performance	4	3	4	11
Decreasing the influence of daily politics on professional work	1	3	3	7
Changes in the working conditions (part-time jobs, better work-job balance, more traveling, collaboration with international colleagues)	6	3	**6**	15
Increasing job security	1	2	2	5
Increasing social security	2	2	1	5
Increasing career development opportunities	7	**7**	2	**16**
Changes to the performance appraisal system	1	3	1	5
Changes to the competency system	2	4	1	7
Changes to the employment system	1	2	1	4
Possibilities of more civil service training	2	5	2	9
Other	**8**			8

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

Finally, the last question examined the respondents' perception of their retention policy and the number of civil servants leaving the service. Contrary to the results of previous questions, in this aspect, the new EU member states and candidate countries seem to have made better progress than the old EU countries. Specifically, the possibilities for retaining high-quality servants have increased somewhat more in the former than in the latter. In addition, he respondents from the former group of countries feel to a slightly lesser degree that the number of civil servants leaving the service has increased.

Table 11: Retention possibilities

	In the last five years, the number of employees leaving the civil service has increased	In the last five years, the possibility of retaining high-quality civil servants has increased
Average (including EC)	3.11	3.2
Average old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	**3.25**	3.09
Average new EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	3.15	**3.38**
European Commission	1	**2**

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

Table 12 shows that only three countries completely agree with the statement that the number of civil servants leaving the civil service has increased: Austria, Finland and Germany, but other countries report this problem, too. Austria states demographic reasons and Finland a high rate of retirements to explain this. Demography and age problems are starting to create problems for the civil service, and they should be addressed.

A universal problem for all EUPAN member states seems to be the lack of policies for retaining high-quality civil servants, since only a few countries are reporting positive changes in this aspect, hence further consideration should be given to this problem.

Table 12: Retention possibilities per country

	5- I strongly agree	4 - I mostly agree	3- I do not agree or somewhat disagree	2- I mostly disagree	1- I strongly disagree
In the last five years, the number of employees leaving the civil service has increased	3 AT, FI, DE	9 BG, FR, HU, LV, LU, NL, PL, RS, SE	6 HR, CZ, DK, ME, SK, TR	4 CY, NO, RO, SI	4 EC, IT, PT, CH
In the last five years, possibilities	1	6	15	3	0

for retaining high-quality civil servants have increased*	HU	CZ, IT, NO, RO, SK, TR	BG, HR, CY, DK, FI, DE, LV, LU, ME, NL, PT, RS, SI, SE, CH	EC, FR, PL	
*No data for Austria					

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

5.6. Analysis – SWOT aspects

The presented empirical results can be used to conduct a SWOT analysis of the current situation in the field of employment and retention. When *strengths* are examined, there are some positive signs. In the first place, the civil service is still considered to be attractive in most countries. Only Bulgaria and Portugal mostly disagree with the statement that the government is attractive as an employer, and Croatia, France, Montenegro and Serbia state some level of disagreement. This is important because attractiveness influences the quality of the people filling vacancies. If the level of attractiveness starts to drop, it is hard to expect the best people will want to join the civil service.

Secondly, a lot of member states report having policies for attracting the best people. Thus, countries such as Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Turkey should be taken as an example of good practice in this field.

Thirdly, most countries reported positive innovations in their recruitment system. This shows a high interest in this area. For example, some countries reported using ICT and social media to make the civil service accessible and user-friendly, which is an indispensable step if the civil service wants to attract new generations. Scholars signalize that greater focus should be on improving the image of each organization and on branding the government as an attractive employer (Lievens & Chapman, 2019). Countries reporting steps in this direction (i.e. Denmark, Sweden) should be taken as an example.

Finally, the results have shown that most states have established performance appraisal systems, which are used despite different problems. The old member states show high reliance on the competency framework, which is praiseworthy and shows a necessary development step for the new countries.

However, the research has shown different *weaknesses* in the employment and retention system. Firstly, although most states still consider the civil service to be attractive, they also report that the media convey a negative image of the civil service. This influences the attractiveness potential of the civil service, and should be addressed and solved.

Secondly, for the most part, the old member states have policies for attracting the best people, but they are also the ones reporting that in the last five years the number of civil servants leaving the civil service has increased (Table 11). Most of these countries (with the exception of Italy and Norway) have

indicated that the possibilities for retaining high-quality civil servants have not increased in the last five years. In the long term, this opens up the question of how to recruit and keep the best people in the civil service.

Thirdly, the new EU member states and candidate countries are reporting problems with their performance appraisal systems. In general, two problems have emerged. The first one is the fact that in the new EU member states and candidate countries there is a lack of knowledge on how performance appraisal should be conducted, and the second is the fact that subjectivity/partiality of managers during performance appraisal is still a big problem. One of the solutions is certainly to invest in the education and in-service training of public managers. However, it seems that this is missing, since new member states usually report a lack of adequate training. Thus, the existence of a performance appraisal system that is managed by persons who are not trained for it can cause bigger problems that the non-existence of a performance appraisal system. The perception of a performance appraisal system as fair and just is a prerequisite for its proper functioning (s. for example Eisenberg & Ingraham, 1993; Manojlović, 2016, Marčetić, 2016). The next problem with performance appraisal in the new member states is that, in many of them, it is not connected with the competency framework. Competencies should be the guiding motif when selecting and appraising civil servants. High-quality competency frameworks provide clear guidance when conducting the performance appraisal process.

Finally, low reliance on non-financial incentives can be noticed. Many countries report that they mostly do not have non-financial rewards for good performance (Table 6 and 7). Since the data show that improving working conditions can be an equally important retention measure as increasing salaries (Table 10), it is essential to draw attention to this non-monetary aspect of rewards. However, the data show that some countries, mostly new EU member states, have problems with low salaries, and their increase is seen as the most important retention measure. However, it is doubtful whether in the present economic situation this will be possible.

The presented strengths and weaknesses open up space for some *opportunities*. As said, modern technology opens up space for using it as a means to enhance the attractiveness of the civil service and to improve the recruitment process. This was indicated by some respondents when listing innovations in their recruitment system, e.g.: "some offices have introduced an on-line application" (Poland); "user-friendly service, job agent' informs about new postings of vacancy" (Austria); "sharing job announcements on social media" (Austria); "social media such as Instagram and Facebook is also frequently used in spreading vacancies" (Netherland); "video recruitment platforms are being used more widely" (Finland); "more use of computer-based selection systems" (Norway); "more use of digital forms and test to minimize subjective assessment and increase focus on the qualified applicants" (Sweden). Thus, new technology combined with employer branding initiatives gives new opportunities to make the civil service attractive for younger generations.

Additional opportunities come from establishing competency frameworks in the new member states and candidate countries. External forces (such as EU funds) are stimulating some of these countries. For example, Croatia is currently implementing the project "Developing a competency model for public

service employees", which is co-financed by the EU. Slovenia has a similar project: "The Public Sector Directorate at the Republic of Slovenia's Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) has in 2019 concluded the project Establishment of a uniform model for civil service competency." (Slovenia). Thus, external factors open up opportunities to develop some parts of the employment and retention system.

One additional opportunity comes from the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the consequences of the pandemic are mostly a threat to member states, a possible new economic crisis opens up the opportunity to use non-financial rewards and to devote attention to working conditions, which are an essential retention measure.

Finally, there are different *threats* to the employment and retention system. An immediate one stems from the COVID-19 pandemic. Namely, it is expected that the pandemic will lead to economic crisis and economic downturn, and to the overburdening of public budgets in most countries. During the last economic crisis, a general response of most EU member states was to decrease the number of civil servants and to cut or freeze their salaries (Bach, 2019). The forthcoming crisis could again lead to decreasing the number of civil servants or lowering their pay. In addition, bans on further employment in the civil service could be imposed. All of this could decrease the attractiveness of the civil service as well as its retention potential. This could also lower the motivation of present and future civil servants for work in the civil service.

Additional threats come from the still existing politicization of the civil service in many new EU member states and candidate countries, which decreases the possibility of innovation in recruitment, performance appraisal and retention processes in those countries. Again, if the economic situation is taken into consideration, it is expected that it will influence the resources designated for civil service education and training. The combination of politicization and the lack of training could jeopardize the success of new opportunities (such as the creation of competency frameworks).

As a final point, the last two threats stem from the demographic situation. Some countries reported that the number of civil servants leaving the service was growing. One of the factors is most certainly the demographic one – Europe is aging and people are retiring. This creates a twofold problem. If many older people leave at the same time, will there be enough employees left to transmit the "organizational memory" to new generations? In this aspect, it is necessary to think about diversity management and the integration of older and younger employees so that knowledge can be transferred. The second problem that the demographic situation creates is the question of whether there will be enough young people interested in working in the civil service.

Table 13: SWOT analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS	
S - Strengths	**W- Weaknesses**
- Civil service is still attractive - Existence of public policies for attracting best people (especially in old member states) - Existence of positive innovations in the recruitment system of most states - Performance appraisal system developed in most countries	- Media portray a negative image - Problems with civil servants leaving the service and retention problems, (particularly young and those with a university degree in old member states) - Problems with performance appraisal especially in new member states (especially subjectivity and lack of training in new member states) - Low reliance on non-financial incentives for good performance - Low salaries (more pronounced in new EU member states)
O- Opportunities	**T - Threats**
- Use of digitalization and social media for recruitment and changing the image of the civil service - Employer branding for attracting people - Development of competency frameworks - Changes in working conditions as an important retention measure	- Upcoming economic crisis (COVID-19) - Politicization of civil service in new member states - Age situation – older employees leaving the service - Demography – not enough young people - Overburdened public budgets - Lack of motivation for work in the civil service

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

5.7. Conclusion

New methods and techniques of HPM have brought significant changes to traditional civil service systems, particularly in the field of recruitment and remuneration. Besides the radical managerial method, which refers to decreasing the number of public employees in Anglo-Saxon and many other countries, the last decades have been marked by individualization and flexibilization of employment in the civil service, contractual arrangements, outsourcing, as well as the introduction of performance appraisal and performance-related pay systems. Lower salaries and the annulment of previously guaranteed rights have led to a weakened civil servant status and feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction (Marčetić, 2007, pp. 187-198), which is reinforced by the negative image of public administration portrayed in the media. Although civil servants in EU countries still have a relatively protected status, demographic trends and changes in the labour market environment as well as the emphasized need for new knowledge and skills pose increasing challenges.

The data presented in this study has enabled identification of some main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the civil service employment and retention system in the countries belonging to the EUPAN network. Hence, in future EUPAN activities, attention should be focused on four topics.

First, countries should pay attention to the image of their public administration in the media and to public perception in general, which is connected to building trust in public institutions. One can notice that trust in politics and PA institutions is low in many EU countries. Eurobarometer findings for 2019 show that only 34% of Europeans trust their national parliaments and governments (EU, 2019). This is not surprising considering the numerous corruption scandals and instances of unethical behaviour of politicians and public servants which the media focus on. A negative image in the media decreases the level of citizens' trust in public administration and, as a consequence, reduces the attractiveness of the government as employer. The data presented in this report show that almost all countries have problems with how public administration is depicted in the media. Therefore, as already stated by Demmke, Henökl and Moilanen (2008, p. 96), public administration should devote attention to proper communication with the media and try to get the media interested not only in scandals but also in positive changes and events happening in public administration. The experiences indicated by some countries (Denmark, Sweden), which report initiatives devoted to employer branding, should be taken as examples of good communication patterns with the media and citizens in general. Additionally, public administration should devote attention to its image and adapt it to new circumstances. In this aspect, the use of ICT and social media can be of great help. Therefore, within the EUPAN network, broader activities should be undertaken to make the civil service attractive and shed a positive light on its work, and proper implementation of new technologies and social media could be an essential tool.

Second, attention should be paid to the necessity to connect performance appraisal and competency management processes to have clear guidance on how the performance of a civil servant can be evaluated and what competencies civil servants need to have to reach the expected level of performance. Namely, data from the report show that almost all countries have set up a performance appraisal system, but there are many difficulties with its proper functioning. A proper connection with competency frameworks could decrease the level of those problems. If the required competencies are known and specified in advance, some of the most important problems in performance appraisal (such as subjectivity or partiality of managers during performance appraisal) can be reduced. Besides, the report has shown that many countries, particularly the new EU member states and candidate countries, are setting up competency models for their civil servants, so further work inside the EUPAN network could focus on the proper implementation of those models and the advantages thereof. That said, one can mention that scholars emphasize two purposes of the performance appraisal system, which are both focused on organizational efficiency, but their goals and approaches are different. The first is evaluation (i.e. external rewards and penalties), and the second is the development potential of the individual (Daley, 1998, Beaumont, 2002, etc. in Marčetić, 2007, pp. 225-227). Hence, instead of

assessing only the current knowledge and skills of civil servants, the appraisal system should focus on the development of new competencies needed for quality and efficient performance of tasks. Additionally, in the new EU members, research signalises a continued presence of high-level politicization. These countries have most problems with the performance appraisal system, and the most important challenge is the subjectivity/partiality of managers during performance appraisal.

Third, retention policies should be discussed. The data obtained in this research have shown that attention should be focused not only on the monetary incentives but also on new possibilities for career development and better working conditions. This coincides with many earlier pieces of research that showed differences in the behaviour and motivation of employees in both the private and the public sector (Boyne et al, 1999, Frederickson, 2000, Houston, 2000, Denhardt et al, 2002, Suff et al, 2007, in: Marčetić, 2016, pp. 6-7). Moreover, much of the evidence against performance-related pay emanates from the public sector. This can become very important in the post-COVID-19 period, when many countries will experience an economic downturn and monetary incentives will no longer be available or will not be available at the same level as before. It is essential to examine non-monetary motivational factors for work in public administration and try to stimulate their implementation. Thus, within the EUPAN network, a broader discussion on retention policies should be undertaken, and non-monetary elements should be examined as important retention factors. However, one should bear in mind that much less research on the motivation and retention of civil servants has been conducted in the Eastern European countries. It seems that job security and regular salary are among the important factors of staff retention in the civil service in those countries, and especially highly educated professionals do not want to enter the civil service or they leave it because of extreme politicization and demotivating circumstances, which do not support professionalism and quality work. According to the findings of a survey by Koprić (2009), which was conducted among 150 civil servants in the Southeast European region,[12] 54% of respondents believe that the salary is an important motivating factor, while regular payment of wages is the second most ranked factor that attracts people to the public service, just below the safety of work, which stands out as the strongest factor.

Last, the demographic situation in European countries should be addressed. Most public administration organizations in Europe are facing two problems. The first is the aging of their populations, which leads to a growing number of civil servants leaving the service. The retirement of many civil servants highlights a problem that has only recently received attention: the loss of a significant amount of institutional memory (*know-how*) and continuity. A second problem is the decreasing number of young people. If the decreasing number of young people is combined with the negative image of public administration and lack of attractiveness of the civil service, one serious problem appears: who will fill the position left open by civil servants who are retiring? Consequently, the EUPAN network should discuss not only how to attract and keep the best servants in the civil service, but also how to ensure a proper transfer of knowledge from civil servants retiring to trainees

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[12] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia.

and newcomers in public administration. Therefore, new solutions to the growing number of retiring civil servants should be found.

Finally, despite different cultural characteristics, historical heritage, institutional context, political-administrative traditions and the level of a country's development, this survey indicates some general trends in EU member states regarding the challenges of employment and retention in the civil service. Therefore, solutions to the new challenges should be sought on a common platform, where EUPAN will undoubtedly play an important role.

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6. Innovative tools in ethics infrastructure
Research findings

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6.1. Goals of the study and its relevance

This comparative study on innovative tools in ethics infrastructure has a twofold goal. First, its purpose is to present the empirical results of the study on ethics infrastructure in the civil service conducted in EUPAN member states. Second, it gives an analytical view of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the existing ethics infrastructure in researched countries.

The empirical part of the study consists of three interconnected parts ("Blocks"). The *first* part of the empirical research was aimed at identifying the elements of ethics infrastructure in the civil service. According to the OECD (2000, pp. 24-25), there are eight elements of the ethics infrastructure: political commitment, workable codes of conduct, professional socialization mechanisms, ethics co-ordinating body, supportive public service conditions, effective legal framework, efficient accountability mechanisms and active civil society. Although all these elements are important, this study focuses mostly on codes of conduct, ethics bodies and effective legal framework, because in recent decades, in the field of public administration ethics, the emphasis has been on the institutional and organizational framework. One can notice that in current debates and literature about ethics in public administration (hereafter: PA) a smaller number of scholars are interested in fundamental ethical issues, while ethics in general is not seen as a goal in itself but as being in the service of other values such as efficiency, legality, transparency or quality. Answers to questions about how to restore or gain public trust in politics and PA, and the role of public servants in the environment of violated ethical values are practically oriented. They focus on practical issues and deal with the realization of ethical principles in practice and legal mechanisms that support them, such as anti-corruption strategies, laws on the prevention of conflicts of interest, civil service legislation, codes of ethics, commissions, etc. (Marčetić, 2017, pp. 26-30). Additionally, at institutional and organizational levels, in many countries, independent bodies and the so-called "institutions of integrity" are set up to promote ethical and legal behaviour in politics and PA, such as information commissioners, ombudsmen, audit offices, conflict prevention commissions, ethics committees and the like. They provide insight into the activities of public bodies and the possibility of complaints about their work. Those institutions are guided by the principle of transparency, providing citizens with information about the results of their work and thus indirectly controlling PA. The law gives many of them the authority to control the supervised subjects, make decisions, set standards, monitor and sanction inappropriate behaviour (Musa, 2016).

In the *second* part of the empirical research, the aim was to examine the content of codes of ethics (hereafter: CoE) or codes of conduct (hereafter: CoC) issued in EUPAN member states. The Codes seek to strengthen trust in public and civil service, reduce unethical behaviour and set the basic values and standards of conduct for employees. They are considered to be one of the most important mechanisms

for developing professional identity, shared standards and commitment to ethical practice. Scholars emphasize the distinction between a CoE, a CoC, and, additionally, a code of rules in PA ethics. *Codes of ethics* are regarded as general statements of core values. These codes do not elaborate on the implementation of stated values in concrete situations, and are generally very abstract. On the other hand, *codes of conduct* set specific standards of behaviour that are expected in realistic situations, and they show how specific values should be implemented in practice. CoCs try to anticipate and prevent certain undesirable behaviours (i.e. conflict of interest, corruption, etc.). Finally, the *codes of rules and regulations* are highly concrete. They set behaviour expectations and disciplinary sanctions for their breach (Moilanen, 2007, Gilman, 2005, Whitton, 2001, in Marčetić & Manojlović, 2011, pp. 68-69). Although the differences among these codes are clear in theory, CoEs and CoCs cover approximately the same matters in practice. Many codes encompass both components, so one can observe that sometimes CoEs are very close to being called a CoC.

A further aim of the second part of the research was to determine how many and which countries kept a register of complaints about unethical behaviour of civil servants, and whether significant changes in the number of cases of ethical misbehaviour and complaints could be noticed. In addition, the aim was to examine the respondents' perception of the acceptance of codes by civil servants, citizens' familiarity with codes, and the need to provide further training for civil servants and to inform citizens. *The third* part of the empirical research was intended to determine whether (and which) new measures for the prevention of unethical behaviour were planned to be introduced in the examined countries, as well as the respondents' perception of the changes in ethics infrastructure that would be most appropriate for increasing the level of citizens' trust in the civil service. The issue of ethics and innovation in ethics has already been researched within the EUPAN network. Specifically, Demmke and Bossaert (2004) did a research on the elements of ethics in the public services of the European Union member states, while Mungiu-Pippidi et al. (2015) did a research on public integrity and trust in Europe. This study offers a new perspective on innovations, which can increase the level of public integrity and ethical behaviour.

The study also contains a SWOT analysis, i.e. an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the field of ethics in the civil service of the examined countries. Thus, the results obtained by the empirical research are classified as strong or weak points that countries should further work on, as well as environmentally favourable and unfavourable conditions affecting ethics and trust in the civil service.

6.2. Methodological remarks

To conduct the survey, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to all EUPAN member states (27 countries), observer countries (seven countries), the European Commission, the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the period from 5 February to 19 February 2020. The representatives of public administration

institutions responsible for the EUPAN network were asked to fill in the questionnaire according to their best knowledge.

A total of 25 answers were received, which is a response rate of 67.6% (25/37). All the answers were analysed using the method of descriptive statistics, while open questions were analysed qualitatively. Additionally, the countries were divided into three groups: a) old EU member states and other Western European countries (Norway and Switzerland),[13] b) new EU member states (which entered the EU in 2004 and later) and EU candidate countries,[14] c) European Commission.[15] Separate data and data discussions for these groups of countries are provided.

In the questionnaire, the civil service was defined as the central civil service system (state administration). This includes central state administration bodies and/or branches located at different levels of the state territory, but excludes semi-autonomous or more autonomous bodies and organizations such as public (regulatory and executive) agencies, providers of the services of general interest and subnational levels of government (local/regional self-government).

It is important to notice that not all the respondents answered all the questions in the questionnaire, for different reasons (question not applicable to them, question not clear to them, etc.). Besides, some respondents gave additional comments or specific remarks to some of the questions or answered a question in different ways. Most questions in the questionnaire were questions with predefined answers, and respondents could choose or fill in one or more of the proposed answers. In several cases, they were asked to complete the answer with additional short information (e.g. to indicate the name of the body that issued the code of ethics) and two questions required longer answers, which were afterwards analysed qualitatively. In the first type of questions, only predefined answers chosen by the respondent have been taken into consideration. However, the authors have used the accompanying explanations during the discussion of the results. In case the answer was provided in the national language, or the answer only contained a link to the national website, the authors have translated and classified the answer according to their best knowledge. Specific methodological remarks are given within the text when presenting the results of certain questions.[16]

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[13] Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland.

[14] Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey.

[15] In the text, the official county codes are used (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tutorial:Country_codes_and_protocol_order#Codes.2C_names_and_protocol_order_of_European_Union_.28EU.29_Member_States): BG – Bulgaria, CH – Switzerland, CZ – Czech Republic, DK – Denmark, DE – Germany, FR – France, HR – Croatia, IT – Italy, CY – Cyprus, LV – Latvia, LU – Luxembourg, HU – Hungary, ME- Montenegro, NL – Netherlands, NO – Norway, AT – Austria, PL – Poland, PT – Portugal, RO – Romania, RS – Serbia, SI – Slovenia, SK - Slovakia, FI – Finland, SE – Sweden, TR – Turkey. The European Commission is labelled as EC.

[16] For the questionnaire, see Appendix 1.

The results should have been discussed during the two EUPAN meetings that were planned to be held in Zagreb in April and June 2020. However, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings were cancelled, and the results could not be discussed with country representatives. Nevertheless, despite partially conducted research and lack of overall discussion, the results obtained by the survey were sufficient to determine the current state of affairs and to prepare a basis for further research in the field of ethics in civil service.

6.3. Ethics infrastructure

The first part of the questionnaire was intended to identify which elements of ethics infrastructure exist in particular countries. The respondents were asked to indicate whether a country has a law on ethics / civil service legislation on unethical conduct, a code of ethics / code of conduct, an independent body for ethical issues, and/or ethics commissioners in particular organizations. Respondents could also add any other element of ethics infrastructure present in their country.

Table 14: Elements of ethics infrastructure

Elements of ethics infrastructure	N*	Total	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Law on ethics / civil service legislation on unethical conduct	25	25	12	12	1
Code of ethics / code of conduct	25	20	8	11	1
Independent body for ethical issues	25	9	2	6	1
Ethics commissioners in particular organizations	25	13	6	7	-
Other	16	16	6	9	1

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire
* N = number of responses to a question

All countries have two or more elements of ethics infrastructure. Laws and other legislation containing provisions on ethics in public administration and special codes of ethics conduct are the most represented elements. In general, the new EU member states and candidate countries are more inclined to ethics infrastructure development. When compared to the old EU member states, Norway and Switzerland, more of them have issued a code of ethics and introduced a body or person responsible for ethical issues. This is a logical consequence of the fact that the new EU member states have greater problems with ethical breaches and corruption. If we take into consideration the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index[17], lower scores (higher corruption) are

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[17] https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results/ita.

noticeable in the new EU member states and candidate countries, although significant differences exist even in this group of countries.[18] To help countries cope with the problem of corruption and ethics in their public and civil services, influential international organizations have developed various recommendations since mid-1990s (e.g. UN[19], OECD[20] and Council of Europe[21]). Those recommendations were particularly important for countries in the EU accession process, when they were expected to adopt EU standards. Hence, all former candidate countries (which are now members of the EU) had a stronger motif for building and developing an ethics infrastructure than the old members. The same applies to the current candidate countries.

None of the analysed countries has a special law on ethics or civil service legislation on unethical conduct which exclusively regulates ethics in PA.[22] However, all the countries have many laws and other regulations containing provisions on ethical principles and institutes. In particular, (un)ethical behaviour is regulated by the constitution, laws on the civil service, administrative procedure, procurement, prevention of conflict of interest, criminal codes, etc. When comparing the longstanding EU member states (including Norway and Switzerland) with new EU member states and candidate countries with regard to the period when such legislation was passed, it can be noticed that most of the old EU member states regulated ethics in PA much earlier than the rest of the countries. The latter mostly adopted regulations containing provisions on ethics during the 2000s. As mentioned earlier, this is a consequence of EU pressure, since one of the prerequisites for EU accession was the professionalization of civil service, which includes the development of ethical norms and standards. In its report, SIGMA (1999, p. 27) differentiated between legal and ethical values: "Legal values are not the same as ethical values, even if they can broadly overlap. Ethical values are guides for action, and their breaching deserves social reproach." This means that attention should be focused not just on legal values and legislative changes, but also on the ethical aspect of the civil service. Many candidate countries responded to this pressure by way of adopting codes of ethics/conduct. The majority of codes in transition countries appeared at the beginning of the new millennium (Marčetić, pp. 9-10). Palidauskaite was among the first authors to do a comparative study of the codes of ethics and conduct as well as draft documents pending adoption at the time, for public servants in ten Central and Eastern

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[18] Research conducted by Fries, Lysenko, and Polanec (2002) in 22 transition countries showed that a high level of *state capture* was usually identified in countries which had implemented partial and weak reforms in the political and economic sense, while, on the other hand, liberalization and privatization had advanced. Contrary to that, in countries which implemented significant institutional reforms, grand corruption hardly occurred, and a level of petty corruption was equally low.

[19] *International code of conduct for public officials* – UN Resolution adopted by the General Assembly (A/RES/51/610) Action against Corruption, 12th December 1996.

[20] *Recommendation on Improving Ethical Conduct in the Public Service Including Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service*, C(98)/70, 23 April 1998

[21] *Recommendation No.R (2000) of the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on codes of conduct for public officials*, 11 May 2000.

[22] In that sense, Romania represented an exception from 2004 to 2019. A Code of Conduct was adopted in 2004 as a separate law (Law no. 7/2004), but it was integrated into the newly passed Administrative Code in 2019.

European countries.[23] According to her opinion, "*such codes are a rather new phenomenon on the basis of which the newly established democracies are building new administrative traditions*" (Palidauskaite, 2006, pp. 36).

Most countries have special codes of ethics or codes of conduct for PA, except for *Finland, France, Germany, Sweden,* and *Romania*. Romania had a code of conduct until 2019, when it became a part of the Administrative Code. On the other hand, the Ministry of Finance in *Finland* has issued various guidelines with provisions on conduct for civil servants, which are going to be consolidated in one document (Code of Conduct) in 2020. It is important to notice that the countries without a CoE or CoC are among the countries with the best scores for perception of corruption.[24] Therefore, these are the countries where ethical behaviour is deeply rooted and internalized in the civil service. France and Germany are countries dominated by the rule of law, so the behaviour of civil servants is regulated by civil service legislation and the case law of administrative courts. On the other hand, the Scandinavian countries are starting to codify these principles and enact codes of conduct to make it even easier for civil servants and citizens to know what kind of good behaviour they can expect. For example, Denmark and Norway published a shortened or very short version of the codes with additional explanations and comments (Kregar, Marčetić & Grubišić, 2016, pp. 109-110). The existence, content, length and role of such codes in a certain country depend mostly on that country's administrative and legal tradition and culture.

In addition to general codes of ethics/ conduct regulating civil servants employed in central state administration, there are special codes adapted to the specificities of individual services, and, in some countries, each organization can issue its own code of conduct (e.g. *Austria, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal*).

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[23] She has reviewed: Estonian Public Service Code of Ethics (1999), Bulgarian Civil Servants' Code of Conduct (2000), Latvian Principles of Ethical Behaviour for Civil Servants (2000), Czech Republic Code of Ethics of Public Servants (2001), Macedonian Code of Ethics for Civil Servants (2002), Polish Civil Service Code of Ethics (2002), Albanian Draft Law on Rules of Ethics in Public Administration (2002), Slovak Draft Code of Ethics for Civil Servants, (2002), Romanian Draft Law on the Passing of the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants (2003), and Lithuanian Draft Law of Code of Conduct for Public Officials (2003) (more in Palidauskaite, 2006, pp. 35-48).

[24] https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results/nor

In the following table, data on the authorities that have issued a CoE/CoC are presented.

Table 15: Authorities responsible for issuing codes of conduct/ethics

Authority responsible for issuing a code of conduct/ ethics	Total	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Parliament	1	-	1	-
Government	11	3	7	1
Public administration	8	6	2	-
Independent body	2	-	2	-

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

In most countries, codes are issued by the government (*Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia*) and/or public administration itself – a ministry, agency, other public administration organisation or top management (*Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland*). The codes in *Hungary* and *Serbia* have been issued by independent bodies (Hungarian Chamber of Government Officials as a self-regulating body / High Civil Servants Council in Serbia), while in *Turkey* a regulation on the principles of ethical behaviour in the civil service has been enacted by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. In this respect, the difference between old and new EU member states is that in two-thirds of the new EU member states and candidate countries CoE/CoC have been issued by political bodies (mostly by the government), while in two-thirds of the old EU member states such codes have been issued by public administration bodies. This might indicate that in the old EU member states self-regulation is considered a more appropriate regulatory instrument when ethical principles are concerned. While legislation is left to political bodies, *soft law* mechanisms are delegated to lower levels of the political-administrative system. In contrast, in the new member states there is a stronger reliance on laws due to a weaker democratic and administrative-political culture. In many of them, there is often no clear distinction between law and ethics, which is evident from the very structure of the codes. Numerous codes in Central and Eastern European countries show a similar structure to laws and contain definitions, principles, practical application of principles, sanctions, a link to existing laws, etc. (Palidauskaite, 2006, pp. 36, Marčetić, 2013, pp. 18).

Approximately one-third of the countries analysed have an independent body for ethical issues in the civil service, with either advisory or disciplinary competences. Most of them are new EU member states and EU candidate countries (75%) which established the body in the last 15 years (Table 3).[25] In practice, there is often no clear distinction between ethics committees or similar bodies which should have an advisory and educational role and disciplinary or civil service tribunals, which determine legal sanctions for breach of official duty.

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[25] In Luxembourg, the National Ethics Commission was founded in 1988, and in Poland, independent bodies in charge of ethical issues in public administration were established in 1996.

Table 16: Countries with an independent body for ethical issues

Country status	Country	Name of the authority	Year of establishment
Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	FI	Advisory Board for Civil Service Ethics	2014
	LU	National Ethics Commission; Ethics Committee	1988
New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	HR	Ethics Commission	2008
	HU	National and Territorial Committees of Ethics	2013
	PL	Public Service Council; Higher Disciplinary Commission	1996
	RS	High Civil Servants Council	2005
	SK	Council for the Civil service	2018
	TR	Council of Ethics for Public Officials	2004
European Commission		Independent Ethical Committee	2003

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

On the organizational level, 13 out of 25 countries (52%) have ethics commissioners as a collective body responsible for ethical issues and/or similar authorities (*ethics advisors* in *Poland, Portugal, Romania,* and *Slovakia*, *contact person for corruption prevention* in *Germany, integrity trustee* in *Slovenia*).[26] In some countries, public administration organizations are not obliged to appoint an ethics commissioner, but it is highly recommended to do so. For instance, in *Poland,* there are no ethics commissioners as such, but the Head of the Civil Service strongly promotes and recommends the function of ethics advisors in the civil service. In most cases, ethics commissioners are appointed by the head of office (*Croatia, France, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia*), in several countries either by the top management (*Italy, Portugal*) or the Secretary General (*Slovakia*), while two countries have a specific approach to the appointment of ethics commissioners. In *the Netherlands*, they are appointed via general recruitment procedure for the civil servants of the central government, while in *Poland* it is up to the head of the office to decide how to appoint a person to the function of ethics advisor, but it is recommended for the advisor to be elected by employees in general and anonymous elections. The question on the role of ethics commissioners was open, i.e. the respondents were asked to describe the role of the ethics commissioner in their country. Afterward, the authors of the study arranged the powers of ethics commissioners indicated by the respondents in several groups. It was established that ethics commissioners usually have several functions, ranging from advisory and supportive role to monitoring and disciplinary powers (Table 4).

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[26] In France, it can be either a single ethics officer, a network of ethics officers, or a commission. Latvia also has a combination of a single person and a collective body, while in Croatia one or more individual ethical commissioners can be appointed in one state administration body over 50 employees.

Table 17: Role of the ethics commissioner

Role of the ethics commissioner		Total	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)
Informing about and promotion of ethical conduct		6	AT[27] FR DE	HR LV RO
Consulting and advising public administration organizations and civil servants in ethical issues		6	FR DE PT	PL RO SK
Preparation and/or providing training on ethics		3	DE IT	LV
Coordinating activities and participating in an inter-organizational network in ethical issues		2	NL	SI
Supporting the head of organization/management in their activities related to ethical issues		4	DE	HR PL RO
Monitoring the application of the code of conduct/ethics and/or providing proposals for improvements		6	DE IT	HR RO SK SI
Control of civil servants in the process of recruitment or of termination of service due to ethical issues; rotation of civil servants in positions with a high corruption risk (prevention of unethical behaviour of individual civil servants)		2	FR IT	
Examines if a complaint on unethical behaviour is well-founded and prepares a report to the head of the body		1		HR

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

In most countries, the role of the ethics commissioner is to provide civil servants and citizens with information and recommendations on ethical issues, to promote ethical behaviour in the civil service, and to monitor the application of the CoE/CoC and other provisions related to ethical issues.[28] To prevent unethical behaviour in particular cases, the ethics commissioner *"alerts colleagues on institutional practices or procedures that could lead to violations of the principles and rules of conduct in the activity of civil servants"* (*Romania*), but sometimes also has the authority to ensure respect of ethical principles in the processes of recruitment and termination of civil service(e.g. by running a

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[27] The answer has been classified according to the authors' best understanding, based on the hyperlink provided in the national language.

[28] In Slovenia, integrity trustees have a specific role in ensuring respect for ethical principles: they are responsible (together with the head of the body) for the implementation of the Integrity Plan on the organizational level. The Integrity Plan is a tool for establishing and verifying the integrity of an organization through the assessment of the level of vulnerability of the organization and its exposure to unethical and corruption practices. It helps an individual institution to assess corruption risks and manage them efficiently.

conflict-of-interest check) (*France*), or by ensuring a regular rotation of servants working in positions with a high corruption risk (*Italy*). In a smaller number of countries, ethics commissioners prepare trainings on ethics for civil servants, coordinate activities related to ethics in a particular organization, participate in inter-organizational networks and provide heads of the organization with support in ethical issues, while in *Croatia* the ethics commissioner conducts procedures to examine whether complaints about unethical behaviour are well-founded, and possibly gives proposals of appropriate measures to be taken by the head of a body. Sometimes the role of the ethics commissioner goes beyond pure ethical issues, as in the case of *Romania*, where the ethics commissioner can conduct surveys of citizens' opinions about the quality of the services offered by a public authority or institution. In most cases, extra remuneration for this function is not provided. In *France*, ethics commissioners can obtain remuneration when they are not civil servants or, if they are, when this duty is not a part of their job description (for example, if they were appointed as the ethics officer by a body different from the one they are employed in). In *Poland*, the function of ethics commissioner is not considered as an additional paid task, but there is a possibility of rewards.

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate other elements of ethics infrastructure in their country. Most answers relate to special institutions and bodies directly or indirectly dealing with ethical issues in the civil service, such as ministries (*Croatia*), anti-corruption agencies (*Serbia, Slovenia*), parliamentary committees (*Cyprus*), disciplinary bodies (*European Commission, Romania*), audits (*Poland*), schools/academies for civil service training (*Poland, Slovenia*), etc.[29] For instance, the Ministry of Public Administration in *Croatia* has numerous functions related to ethics in the civil service, within its broader coordinating role (e.g. proposes improvements of ethical standards in line with international practices, receives complaints regarding unethical conduct, keeps records of complaints, keeps records of ethics commissioners, gives instructions and explanations to ethics commissioners). The Investigation and Disciplinary Office of the *European Commission* carries out disciplinary procedures, coordinates preventive measures, including training and informing officials and other servants on their rights and obligations under the Staff Regulations, and maintains inter-departmental and inter-institutional relations in the area of staff rules and discipline. In *the Netherlands*, ethical issues are addressed within a specific administrative network, the Interdepartmental Platform on Integrity Management, supported by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. It is focused on cross-government integrity policy, monitoring and registration of violations and development of new instruments. The rest of the answers are exclusively related to activities conducted to prevent unethical behaviour. Among them are education and training programs for civil servants, awareness-raising campaigns, protection of whistle-blowers and disclosure of information obtained by whistle-blowers, compulsory declaration of assets and financial interests, obligations after leaving the service/PA, sanctioning procedures for non-compliance with rules, establishment of transparency routines to provide general access to information, facilitating the involvement of and scrutiny by citizens, etc.

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[29] However, some respondents only indicated the name of the body, without specifying its competences.

6.4. Codes of conduct / Codes of ethics

The second block of questions related to the content of CoE/CoC, the existence of the registers of complaints filed against unethical behaviour of civil servants, and respondents' perception of several issues related to ethics in the civil service. These are acceptance of the code by civil servants, citizens' familiarity with the code, change in the frequency of unethical behaviour and complaints, and the need for further education and information activities in the field.

First, the respondents were asked to checkmark topics covered by the CoE/CoC in their respective country. They could also add other topics that exist in their respective code but were not mentioned in the questionnaire.

Table 18: Content of the codes of conduct / codes of ethics

Subject covered by the code	N	Total	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Increasing trust is one of the goals of the code	25	23	11	11	1
Principle of public interest	25	25	12	12	1
Principle of integrity – adherence to laws and administrative policies	25	25	12	12	1
Principle of efficiency and effectiveness	25	22	9	12	1
Principle of looking after public resources	24	22	9	12	1
Principle of attentiveness, fairness and impartiality	25	25	12	12	1
Non-discrimination	25	25	12	12	1
Conflict of interest and disqualification	25	24	12	11	1
Termination of service	22	13	7	5	1
Disclosure of assets	22	12	6	6	-
Confidential information	24	21	11	9	1
Engagement in political activities	24	17	8	8	1
Reporting additional jobs and/or other activities	24	19	11	7	1
Acceptance of gifts/other favours	25	22	10	11	1
Use of official credit cards, business travel expenses	23	8	4	3	1
Appearance of civil servants in the media (including social networks)	24	15	7	7	1

The Code is part of provisions governing the employment of civil servants	23	17	7	9	1
Existence of enforcement mechanisms	23	19	10	8	1

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

* N = number of responses to a question

In a high percentage of the countries (92%), increasing trust is one of the goals of the code. One can mention a UN Report (2001) about the global effects of New Public Management, which produced many weaknesses. At the national level, it engendered "apathy, cynicism, and alienation as citizens concluded that their governments do not care or have lost control while democracy itself has become a sham. This has been accompanied by massive human insecurity in large parts of the world, random violence, organized crime, and a rapid deterioration of the environment" (United Nations, 2001, in Olowu, 2002, p. 348). Although countries have been trying to find new solutions for good governance since then, citizens' trust is still low. The Eurobarometer findings for 2019 show that only 34% of Europeans trust their national parliaments and governments (EU, 2019). This trend is not equally pronounced or linear everywhere, but it is undoubtedly a problem which should be considered. Many countries are trying to restore trust through regulations. This is in line with previous research by Demmke and Bossaert (2004, p. 84), who indicated that the rules of conflict of interest "may contribute to establishing a more open and transparent civil service, which is vital if legitimacy and citizen's trust is to be increased". Is the same true for CoEs/CoCs – can their establishment create a more open, transparent and user-friendly civil service, which can influence citizens' overall trust? Opinions differ, ranging from the one that CoEs/CoCs promote ethical behaviour and guide individuals in resolving ethical problems to the opinion that codes are irrelevant to practitioners and are not useful for promoting ethical conduct.[30] One can say that CoEs/CoCs should not be overestimated, but they should not be underestimated either. They are certainly valuable tools. A combination of strong institutions, clear strategies, laws, codes and management mechanisms is necessary to prevent corruption and promote integrity and ethics in PA more than ever.

All or nearly all codes of ethics/ conduct (>90%) contain provisions on the principle of public interest, principle of integrity, principle of care for public resources, principle of attentiveness, fairness and impartiality, non-discrimination, and conflict of interest and disqualification. Other well-represented topics (60%-90%) are the principle of efficiency and effectiveness, confidential information, engagement in political activities, reporting additional jobs and/or other activities, acceptance of gifts or other favours, appearance of civil servants in the media (including social networks). In a similar percentage of countries, the code is part of provisions governing the employment of civil servants, and there is an enforcement mechanism provided. The least represented provisions (<60%) are those on

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[30] For example, Grundstein-Amado (2001, p. 462) criticizes the codes because they are not based on systematic moral reasoning or firmly grounded in a well-developed ethical theory, and for being overly legalistic and restrictive.

the termination of service, disclosure of assets, and use of official credit cards and business travel expenses. However, it should be noted that these are rather specific topics covered by only a limited number of codes of conduct, and codes of ethics are not even supposed to contain them.

When comparing the two groups of countries, no relevant differences can be noticed, except in relation to reporting additional jobs and/or other activities. 61.1% of the codes containing this provision were adopted in old EU member states, Norway, and Switzerland.

Several respondents added some other provisions of the codes regulating conduct in the civil service of their countries. For instance, in *the Netherlands* and *Latvia*, communication/dealing with lobbyists also forms part of ethics provisions. CoEs/CoCs in *Austria* and *Denmark* contain special provisions on the disclosure of wrongdoing, while in *Poland* guidelines for compliance with the principles of the Civil Service Code of Ethics provide civil servants with a clarification of more general ethical principles. Thus, the principle of public service is expressed, *inter alia,* as *"non-evading making difficult decisions and bearing responsibility for their actions, bearing in mind that the public interest calls for prudent, yet effective actions that are resolutely implemented"* (Ordinance No. 70 of the Prime Minister). In the latter case, the principle of effectiveness is encompassed in the principle of public service.

To conclude, the fact that there is no great difference between countries in the topics covered by the codes of conduct/ ethics indicates that there are certain values and rules of behaviour which have been accepted by all European countries and which create a common European sense of ethical behaviour. The innovations introduced by some countries (the Netherlands, Latvia) can serve as a good example, and their experiences should be closely followed.

Secondly, the respondents were asked to indicate whether a register of complaints against unethical behaviour of civil servants existed in their country. 11 out of 25 respondents (44%) confirmed the existence of such a register. there is no significant difference between the two groups of countries. However, the existence of concrete data on ethical behaviour could increase the credibility of the civil service and point to the most important unethical behaviour. Having such data could show whether additional measures should be taken for some ethical aspects. Therefore, countries that have such registries should be taken as examples of good practice.

Table 19: Countries keeping registers of complaints about unethical behaviour in the civil service

Total number of countries keeping a register of complaints against unethical behaviour of civil servants	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
11	4 (DE, IT, LU, NL)	6 (HR, HU, RO, RS, SK, TR)	1

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

The third question in the block related to the respondents' perception of certain environmental aspects of CoEs/CoCs, in particular the acceptance of the code by civil servants, citizens' familiarity with the code, change in frequency of unethical behaviour and complaints, and of the need for further training and information activities in the field of ethics. For each of the statements listed in Table 7, the respondents could grade their level of agreement with the statements (from 1– strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree).

Table 20: Perception of selected aspects of ethics in the civil service

	N	Average countries	Average old EU countries (including Switzerland and Norway)	Average new EU countries (including candidate countries)	European Commission
Code of ethics/conduct is well accepted by civil servants	23	4.26	4.36	4.18	4
Citizens are acquainted with the code of ethics/ conduct	23	3.04	**3.18**	2.91	3
The frequency of unethical behaviour decreased in the last five years	22	2.86	**3.3**	2.55	2
The number of complaints against unethical behaviour decreased in the last five years	21	2.86	**3.22**	2.64	2
Further training on the role of codes of ethics/conduct should be provided to civil servants	23	4.17	4.09	4.27	4
Further information on codes of ethics/ conduct should be provided to citizens	22	3.77	3.3	**4.18**	4

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire
* N = number of responses to a question

As the data presented in Table 7 show, on average, the respondents mostly agree that the CoE/CoC is well accepted by civil servants in their country, but, on the other hand, they also mostly agree (on average) that further training on the role of the CoE/CoC should be provided to civil servants. On average, the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statements related to citizens' familiarity

with codes and the need for further provision of information to the citizens. It seems that they could not assess those statements due to the lack of official data. On average, the respondents mostly disagree that the frequency of unethical behaviour and complaints decreased in the last five years. However, when comparing the two groups of states, more profound data are obtained, which leadto different conclusions. Respondents from the new EU member states and EU candidate countries, (on average) mostly disagree that the frequency of unethical behaviour and complaints decreased in the last five years. There is also a significant difference with regard to the statements related to citizens. Respondents from the new EU member states (including EU candidate countries) mostly disagree (on average) that citizens are acquainted with the code of ethics/ conduct, while, on the other hand, they mostly agree (on average) that further information on codes of conduct/ ethics should be provided to citizens. It is obvious that the opinions of respondents from new EU member states and candidate countries affected the average value of all countries included in the research, since respondents from the old EU member states, Norway and Switzerland (on average) neither agree nor disagree with these statements.

Table 21: Perception of selected aspects of ethics in the civil service per country

	5- I strongly agree	4 - I mostly agree	3- I do not agree or somewhat disagree	2- I mostly disagree	1- I strongly disagree
Code of ethics/ conduct is well accepted by civil servants	FR, DE, HU, IT, NO, RO, SE, CH	HR, CY, DK, EC, LV, ME, NL, PL, PT, RS, SK, SI, TR	FI, LU		
Citizens are acquainted with the code of ethics/conduct	CH	HR, DK, DE, NO, SI, TR	CY, EC, IT, LU, ME, NL, PT, RS, SK	FI, FR, HU, LV, PL, RO, SE	
The frequency of unethical behaviour decreased in the last five years		FR, IT, NL	HR, CY, DK, FI, DE, LV, LU, ME, NO, PT, RS, SK, SI, SE, TR	EC, HU	PL, RO
The number of complaints against unethical behaviour decreased in the last five years		HR, FR, NL	CY, DK, FI, DE, IT, LV, ME, NO, PT, RS, SK, SI, SE, TR	EC, PL	HU, RO
Further training on the role of codes of ethics/ conduct should be	HU, LU, ME, NO, PL, RO, CH, TR	HR, CY, DK, EC, FI, FR, IT, LV, NL, PT, RS, SI, SE		DE, SK	

provided to civil servants				
Further information on codes of ethics/conduct should be provided to citizens	HU, LU, ME, PL, PT, RO, TR	HR, EC, FR, LV, RS, SI	CY, DK, FI, IT, NO, SE	DE, NL, SK	

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

6.5. Innovations in ethics infrastructure

In the last block of questions, the respondents were asked to indicate whether their country planned to introduce new measures in the field of ethics to prevent unethical behaviour, and, if so, what measures were planned. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to checkmark and rank three changes in ethics infrastructure that could, in their opinion, increase citizens' level of trust in the civil service the most.

Table 22: Countries planning to introduce new measures in the field of ethics

Total number of countries planning to introduce new measures in the field of ethics	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
13	4 (AT, FI, LU, PT)	8 (CY, CZ, HU, LV, ME, PL, SK, TR)	1

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

Most of the countries (66.67%) planning to introduce new measures are new EU member states and EU candidate countries. The question on the types of new measures was completely open, i.e. the respondents were asked to write down what new measures were going to be implemented in their country. Afterward, the authors of the study arranged the measures indicated by the respondents in several groups (Table 10). In the majority of countries (61.54% – *Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Turkey*), those measures are related to education and training in public service ethics. In *Austria, Finland* and *Latvia*, e-learning in ethics is going to be implemented for all or specific public administration bodies. Other specificities in the field of education concern the "training of trainers" (*Turkey*), introduction of training for specific categories of civil servants (senior civil servants in the *Czech Republic,* newly appointed officials in *Hungary*), and preparation of case studies (ethics guidelines) for joint publication (*Czech Republic, Latvia*). Cooperation and networking between various organizations (e.g. chambers and organizations responsible for ethics in *Hungary,* the

Council for Civil Service and universities in *Slovakia*) and persons (e.g. a network of trusted persons in ethical issues in *Latvia,* a network of ethics advisors in *Poland*) is the second most represented new measure in ethics infrastructure. In two countries (*Luxembourg, Czech Republic*), new codes of ethics are under preparation. In case of the former, the code is confined to ministers and high political officials in the civil service. As the respondent from the *Czech Republic* stated, the new Code of Ethics is intended to introduce a new perception of ethics in the civil service. It will be based on *soft* mechanisms for ethics improvement, such as information campaigns, publication of case studies, enhancement of ethical leadership, management of values, education in ethics, advisory bodies, etc. In *Poland,* the focus is on the evaluation of the level of integrity culture in the civil service, with the aim to identify areas for improvement, as well as on the promotion of the function of ethics advisors. On the other hand, in *Portugal*, special internal control departments and standards were established, based on the knowledge-sharing model, for public bodies exposed to the risk of unethical behaviour.

Table 23: Types of new measures in the field of ethics in the civil service

Type of new measures	Total	Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Education and training in public service ethics	8	2 (AT, FI)	6 (CY, CZ, HU, LV, SK, TR)	-
Cooperation and networking between organizations and persons	4	-	4 (HU, LV, PL, SK)	-
New codes of ethics	2	(1 LU)	1 (CZ)	-
Advisory bodies/ethics advisors	2	-	(2 CZ, PL)	-
Strengthening of internal control	1	(1 PT)	-	-
Prevention of harassment	1	-	-	1

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

In the last question from this block and the entire questionnaire, the respondents were asked to tick three out of twelve proposed changes in ethics infrastructure that could, in their opinion, increase citizens' level of trust in the civil service the most. They were also asked to rank the top three changes from most important to important.

Table 24: Perception of the importance of changes in ethics infrastructure for citizens' trust in the civil service

		Total	1 – most important	2 – quite important	3 – important	Total Old EU countries (including Norway and Switzerland)	Total New EU countries (including EU candidate countries)	European Commission
Stricter control and more severe punishments for civil servants and politicians		6	-	3 (EC, TR)	2 (FR, RS, SI)	1 (FR)	4 (HR, RS, SI, TR)	1

Stricter punishments for citizens offering a bribe to civil servants and politicians		2	1 (CY)	1 (SI)	-	-	2 (CY, SI)	-
Higher salaries for civil servants		2	-	-	1 (SI)	-	2 (LV, SI)	-
Education in ethics for civil servants		18	**10** (CZ, DK, FR, HU, IT, LU, NL, RO, SI, TR)	4 (CY, FI, PL, PT)	2 (ME, RS)	8 (DK, FR, IT, LU, NL, FI, PT, SË)	10 (HR, CZ, HU, RO, SI, TR, CY, PL, ME, RS)	-
Providing greater opportunities for citizens to file complaints about the work of civil servants and political functionaries		2	-	2 (HU, SI)	-	-	2 (HU, SI)	-
Less formal documents and lengthy bureaucratic procedures		7	-	1 (IT)	4 (FI, LU, PT, SI)	5 (FI, DE, IT, LU, PT)	2 (LV, SI)	-
Adoption of a code of ethics/conduct, which should be signed by all civil servants and politicians		4	2 (EC, SI)	-	1 (HU)	1 (DE)	2 (HU, SI)	1
Establishment of a special independent body or bodies for the examination of ethical breaches		6	-	3 (CZ, ME, SI)	2 (DK, SI)	2 (DK, NO)	4 (CZ, ME, SK, SI)	-
Better education of citizens about their rights		6	1 (SI)	3 (RO, SK, TR)	2 (CY, IT)	1 (IT)	5 (CY, RO, SK, SI, TR)	-
Imposing an obligation on civil servants and politicians to explain their actions in the media		2	1 (SK)	-	1 (SI)	-	2 (SK, SI)	-

Encouraging civil servants to report all ethical breaches in their office (protection of "whistle-blowers")		9	1 (SI)	2 (DK, FR)	3 (EC, NL, PL)	5 (DK, FR, NL, NO, SE)	3 (LV, PL, SI)	3
Political commitment to combat unethical behaviour		**13**	**6** (FI, ME, PL, PT, RS, SI)	2 (LU, NL)	2 (CZ, RO)	6 (FI, DE, LU, NL, NO, PT)	7 (HR, CZ, ME, PL, RO, RS, SI)	-

Source: authors, based on the questionnaire

The number of respondents to this question was 23. Due to the fact that some respondents did not rank selected changes according to their importance, the total number of countries which marked specific changes is in some cases higher than the sum of ranked changes. In addition, one respondent ranked all the proposed changes, and one ticked only two instead of three changes. According to the opinion of the majority of respondents, education in ethics for civil servants and political commitment to combat unethical behaviour are the changes that could most positively affect citizens' level of trust in the civil service. Moreover, most respondents within the groups consider these changes as most important. Encouraging civil servants to report all ethical breaches in their office was also ticked by a high number of respondents as an important measure for the improvement of citizens' trust, both in old and new EU member states. Stricter control and more severe punishments for civil servants and politicians, establishment of a special independent body or bodies for the examination of ethical breaches and better education of citizens about their rights are changes which were ticked much more frequently by respondents from new EU member states and candidate countries. On the other hand, less formal documents and lengthy bureaucratic procedures are the measures which were ticked by a much higher number of respondents from old EU member states. This coincides with the findings of a survey by Marčetić (2013), in which all three groups of Croatian respondents (1420 of them) – civil servants, local servants and citizens – chose, out of eleven proposed measures, the measure of (a) "stricter supervision and more severe sanctions for public servants and political functionaries" as one of the three best methods of preventing unethical behaviour of public servants. However, public servants on both territorial levels gave considerable weight to the measure of (d) "enhancement of the level of education of public servants" as a preventive measure which should be given more attention in the future. On the other hand, only citizens chose the measure of (f) "providing greater opportunities to citizens for filing complaints about the work of civil servants and political functionaries". It seems that in the new EU member states extrinsic mechanisms of motivation and of changing the relationship between civil servants and citizens as well as coercive methods are still considered as appropriate and even necessary measures to increase citizens' level of trust in the civil service.

6.6. Analysis – SWOT aspects

Based on the empirical research and results obtained, an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) can be carried out.

Major *strengths* in the field of ethics in the civil service are generally a well-developed ethics infrastructure, high acceptance of the codes of ethics/conduct by civil servants, emphasis on education and training in the field, cooperation and networking, and other *soft* mechanisms oriented towards changes in the civil service culture. All the countries have broadly regulated ethical issues, either by legal regulation or by a particular code of ethics/ conduct. Many of them have special ethics commissioners or advisors on the level of individual organizations, with a good balance of information, advisory and monitoring competences. The results of the empirical survey about innovations in ethics infrastructure show that most innovative tools are related to the education and training of civil servants, often including e-learning and case studies. In many countries, ethical issues are delegated to public administration itself. It means that the bodies of state administration, top management or even a self-regulating professional body of civil servants, as in the case of Hungary, issue codes of ethics. More often, ethics infrastructure is prepared within working groups and other administration networks. For instance, in the Netherlands, the Interdepartmental Platform on Integrity Management (IPIM) has been established to look after "*cross-government integrity policy, monitoring and registration of violations, and the development of new instruments*". All this indicates a change in trends from a focus on disciplinary measures towards the implementation of *soft* tools in ethics infrastructure, aimed at changing the civil service culture. Besides, many countries consider self-regulation as the most appropriate type of regulation in the field of ethics. It seems that professionals are seen as those who can develop ethics infrastructure in the best possible way. Grundstein-Armado emphasizes the importance of the process of internalising the code's provisions. He states that "when members of an organization are able to relate the code's provisions to their personal integrated values systems, greater compliance and commitment will prevail" (Grundstein-Armado, 2001, p. 461). This means that no measure can succeed if we do not accept it on a personal level, and if we do not take responsibility for our actions in our everyday lives. This new approach may prove to be more sustainable and appropriate for the improvement of citizens' trust in the civil service.

The *weaknesses* of the analysed countries in the field of ethics are perceived in the part of the empirical research relating to the content of codes of conduct/ ethics and registers of complaints against unethical behaviour of civil servants. The issues that are more relevant for top management (e.g. use of official credit cards and business travel expenses) are regulated in a smaller number of countries. Furthermore, less than 50% of the countries keep registers of complaints against unethical behaviour in the civil service. It means that over 50% of countries cannot track the effects of ethics infrastructure and introduction of innovative tools either on changes in ethical behaviour or on the level of citizens' trust in the civil service. The results show that the new EU member states and candidate countries are faced with additional weaknesses. Respondents from those countries, on average, do not agree that the frequency of unethical behaviour and complaints decreased in the last five years. They also see

the strengthening of disciplinary measures (sanctions and disciplinary bodies) for civil servants and politicians breaching ethical standards as necessary in their countries. This indicates that *soft* measures, which represent new tools in the ethics infrastructure of old EU member states, are still considered insufficient for the improvement of ethical behaviour and culture in new EU member states.

Since the countries analysed in the survey are all members of the EUPAN and are in various relations with the EU, the greatest *opportunities* arise from cooperation with and within those organizations. The countries could capitalize on the financial support within projects particularly intended to improve ethics in the civil service (as in the case mentioned by the Turkish respondent), but also on cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience. Moreover, other influential international organizations can continue to help countries cope with the problem of corruption and ethics in their civil service.

It seems that the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences currently represent the greatest *threat* in the field. The economic crisis might reflect on the reduction of salaries in the civil service. Consequently, the chances of an increase in unethical and even corruptive behaviour are higher. During the quarantine, the vulnerability of democratic institutions became apparent, especially in view of the restriction of some basic human rights for the purpose of health protection. Besides, citizens' trust in the civil service can be destabilized by every scandal or affair in politics or public administration, which continue to occur. There is a noticeable decline in ethical values on global level, and citizens' trust in national parliaments, governments and public administration is very low. One can say that a crisis of democracy is visible.

Table 25: SWOT analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS	
S - Strengths	W - Weaknesses
- Well-developed ethics infrastructure - High acceptance of codes of conduct/ ethics by civil servants - Emphasis on education and training - Emphasis on cooperation and networking - Possibility of tracking changes in ethical behaviour and experience-based learningGeneral orientation toward *soft* mechanisms, intended to change the civil service culture.	- Weak regulation of issues related to top management - A small number of countries keeping registers of complaints about unethical behaviour - Lack of positive changes in ethical behaviour in the new EU member states and candidate countries - Administrative culture based on a high level of ethical standards underdeveloped in some countries - Need for disciplinary mechanisms expressed in the new EU member states and candidate countries.
O- Opportunities	T - Threats
- Cooperation and networking, exchange of knowledge and experience within EUPAN and other EU networks - Running projects financed by the EU and other international organizations	- Upcoming economic crisis and restriction of some basic human rights (COVID-19) - Risk of scandals and affairs in politics and public administration - Decreased trust in parliaments, governments and public administration on global level.

6.7. Conclusion

As far back as two decades ago, scholars were pointing out the harmful effects of globalization and the New Public Management (NPM) doctrine on the system of ethical values and a global crisis in PA. They emphasized that globalization and privatization had caused unrestrained corruption, secrecy, conflicts of interest, unethical conduct and loss of responsibility (especially in high-ranking and political positions), as well as great damage to the institutional capacity, quality and image of the public service (Farazmand, 1999, Haque, 1999, Eklund & Wimelius, 2008, in Marčetić, 2016, pp. 17-18). The NPM downgraded legal regulation, which is the basis for a responsible public administration, and questioned the accountability of PA to citizens, resulting in a clash of professional administrative values (Marčetić, 2016, p. 19). In search of a solution to these problems, a discussion of global or universal ethics has appeared. Some scholars have stated that without universality there is no basis for solving today's ethical problems in PA and politics. On the other hand, ideological, instrumental, cultural and other considerations obstruct progress toward intelligent and moral global policy-making, leading to the

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Public
Administration

EU2020HR
Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

opinion that morality has no place in politics. The issue is whether to look for solutions on the level of a country, group or individual, or it is possible to build a common framework of values that will be equally applicable everywhere in the world. Despite all the differences among European countries, exchanging knowledge and learning from the experience of others may lead to the acceptance of valuable universal principles and practices. Convergence towards the European administrative space does not mean the unification of administrative systems, but raising common standards and harmonization of PA in relation to public service users (Koprić & Kovač, 2017). Cooperation within EUPAN and networking within many other institutions are the most appropriate mechanisms for European countries to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and to learn and make improvements based on other countries' experiences.

Furthermore, the important question is how to restore or gain public trust in politics and PA. As this study has showed, many countries are trying to find the solution on several levels, i.e. by using different elements of ethics infrastructure. However, despite visible efforts, it seems this is not enough. When analysing a hard normative approach (numerous laws and strategies), it should be noted that coercive methods are not quite appropriate in the field of ethics because the law is based on external sanctions (coercion) while ethics has internal sanctions (voice of conscience). So, where is the link between ethics and the law? It can be found if we look at the law and ethics as two opposite poles. Somewhere in the middle between the two, there are soft laws. Soft laws, especially a code of ethics, are considered to be among the most important mechanisms for developing professional identity, shared standards and commitment to ethical practices. It seems to be a more appropriate tool than coercive regulation, but only in administrative systems in which civil servants and managers have internalized ethical principles and professional standards. Otherwise, it will not be effective in practice. As this study has showed, most EU countries have special code(s) of ethics or code(s) of conduct in PA, but they do not produce the same effects. Moreover, countries without a CoE or a CoC are among those with the best scores for the perception of corruption, and that is because ethical behaviour is deeply rooted and internalized in the civil service of those countries.

The data presented in the study shows that, on the organizational level, 50% of the countries have ethics commissioners, a collective body responsible for ethical issues and/or similar authorities. In most countries, the role of the ethics commissioner is to provide civil servants and citizens with information and recommendations on ethical issues, to promote ethical behaviour in the civil service, and to monitor the application of the code of ethics/conduct and other provisions related to ethical issues. Independent bodies and "institutions of integrity" are set up to promote ethical and legal behaviour in politics and PA. Institutions of integrity are guided by the principle of transparency, providing citizens with information about the results of their work and thus indirectly controlling PA. However, it is questionable whether transparency can strengthen public trust in the PA. The relationship between transparency and trust is not necessarily unambiguous or positive. Certainly, transparency is a necessary precondition for trust, but it is not sufficient as the only mechanism for increasing trust. Despite an increase in transparency and citizen participation, contemporary research shows that trust in political and administrative institutions has declined. Why? As Musa (2017, p. 49-

66) states, the first reason is that the information provided often refers to illegality, corruption and irregularities. If there is no legality, efficiency and quality of work, transparency will lead to a drop in trust in institutions. Hence, transparency must represent preventive action by raising the standards of the institution. A further problem is the question of relationship between quantity and quality of information. A multitude of inaccurate, distorted or incomprehensible information leads to a negative perception by citizens. Hence, the quality and relevance of information are crucial.

Therefore, future activities of EUPAN member states in the field of ethics in the civil service should be oriented toward the development of an administrative culture based on high respect for ethical principles. This kind of approach requests strong commitment and implementation of the *soft* mechanisms of ethics infrastructure, which take more effort and time than disciplinary measures. However, it seems that, in the end, it is the only sustainable direction, and the one that could increase the level of citizens' trust in the civil service, public administration and government in general. That has already been proved by the states which do not have well developed formal elements of ethics infrastructure, but have deeply rooted ethical principles in the civil service.

The results of the research showed that only 44% of the countries keep a register of complaints against unethical behaviour of civil servants. To track and evaluate changes in the ethical behaviour of civil servants and in citizens' attitudes towards the civil service, it is recommended to keep registers of complaints against unethical behaviour filed by citizens and measures taken to prevent and sanction breaches of ethical principles. On the one hand, this data can be useful when considering activities for improvements in the field. On the other hand, opening the registers to the public makes public administration transparent and trustworthy.

This study has also showed that the need for and appropriateness of education and cooperation for strengthening ethics in the civil service has already been recognized by the countries included in EUPAN. According to the opinion of the majority of respondents, education in ethics for civil servants and political commitment to combat unethical behaviour are the changes that could most positively affect citizens' level of trust in the civil service. Education, however, must not be limited only to civil servants. It is a much broader process, and we must think of broader "civil education", which should start from a young age and in various ways include all citizens of a particular country.

In conclusion, to raise the level of ethics in the civil service and citizens' trust, European countries and their PA bodies should especially work on continuous education and application of soft law mechanisms in the field of ethics, networking and cooperation with other countries, development of an administrative culture based on a high level of ethical standards, learning from their own and other countries' experience, and maintaining good communication with citizens.

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7. Development of complex digital services for citizens and business Research Findings

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7.1. Going digital

A Europe fit for the digital age[31] is one of the six Commission priorities for 2019-24. Empowering people with a new generation of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data aims to encourage businesses to work with these new technologies, to help them achieve the target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

Making a transition from traditional to digital services in Europe started in the '90s when the general public began using the Internet on a larger scale. For instance, the e-Commerce Directive, adopted in 2000, aimed to achieve the objective of freedom to provide online services across the Single Market by offering a flexible, technology-neutral and balanced legal framework. It is a long, never-ending journey, because the European approach to digital transformation means empowering and including every citizen, strengthening the potential of every business and meeting global challenges with European core values.[32]

The dedication and commitment of the Commission are visible in the implementation of regular monitoring and the encouragement of the progress/evolution of every single EU Member State in digital competitiveness through Europe's Digital Progress Report (EDPR), since 2018 transformed to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), a composite index summarizing five relevant progress indicators:

| 1 Connectivity	Fixed broadband take-up, fixed broadband coverage, mobile broadband, and broadband prices
2 Human capital	Internet user skills and advanced skills
3 Use of internet	Citizens' use of Internet services and online transactions
4 Integration of digital technology	Business digitization and e-commerce
5 Digital public services	e-Government

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[31] European Commission. Commission priorities for 2019-24. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024_en [06 12 2020].
[32] European Commission. Strategy, Shaping Europe's digital future. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market [06 12 2020].

Leaders and laggards

Regarding the DESI 2020[33] report, in the context of the workshop agenda, the comparison of indexes for indicators (4) Integration of Digital Technologies by Enterprises and (5) Digital Public Services is quite revealing, as shown in the following two diagrams.
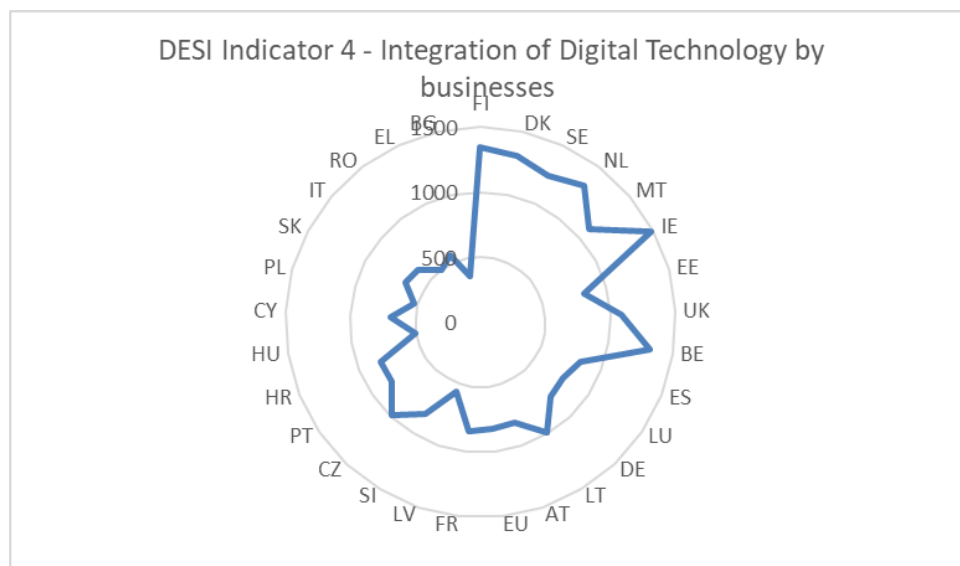
DESI Indicator 4 - Integration of Digital Technology by businesses

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[33] European Commission. The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi [06 12 2020].

DESI Indicator 5 - Digital Public Services
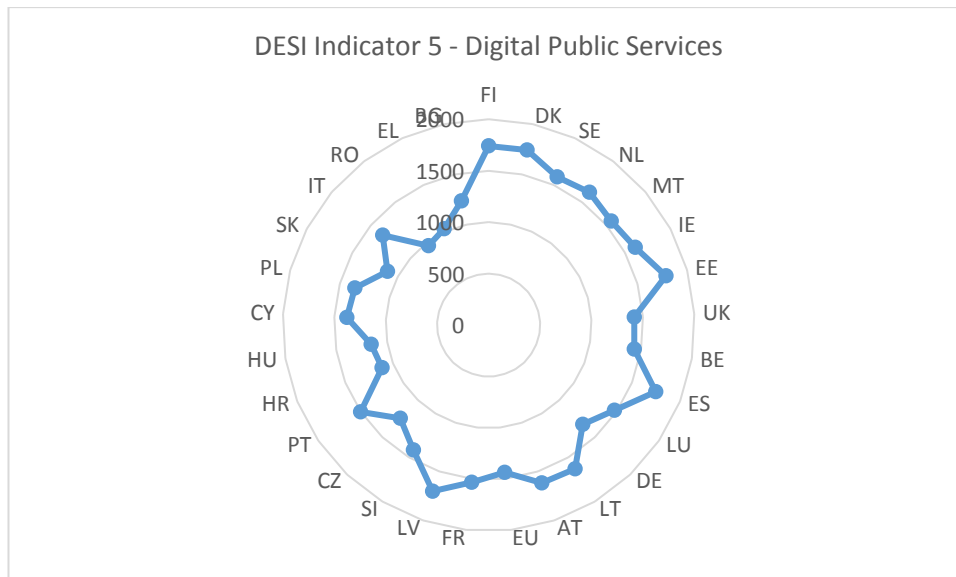
A comparison of these radar diagrams shows that the EU countries on the right side of the diagram scored better than the countries on the left side. However, it is interesting to see that, among the top-performing countries, the individual scores for the above indicators (4 and 5) are different. In the field of Digital Public Services, Estonia, Finland, Denmark and Spain have the best scores, while in the field of Integration of Digital Technologies by Enterprises, Ireland, Finland, Belgium and the Netherlands have the top scores.

As we can see from the report[34], "the data on the integration of digital technologies by businesses shows large variations depending on company size, sector and Member State". Large enterprises have become more digitized ("8.5% of large companies already relies on advanced cloud services and 32.7% are using big data analytics") than SMEs, with only 17% of them using cloud services and only 12% using big data analytics.

7.2. Digital Paradigm Shift

On a strategic level, according to the Gartner Group, world's leading research and advisory company, digital business leaders must account for three crucial factors when trying to estimate the timing of

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[34] European Commission. Integration of Digital Technology by Enterprises. Retrieved from
https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/integration-digital-technology [06 12 2020].

markets and digital changes: technology progress, cultural evolution, and regulatory developments (Raskino, & Waller, 2016:41).

With the business aspect of market creation/growth in mind, they prescribe: "When all three come into alignment, new markets are created, and they often grow suddenly and very rapidly. The leader's task is to estimate when that will happen and to be ready to take advantage when it does … It will be important to identify and work on all three tipping points: In technology, take care not to underestimate or get caught out by the nonlinear pace of change. In culture, evaluate social acceptability and keep testing its boundaries without crossing the "creepy line". With regulation, innovate because of it or in spite of it, treating it as a potential source of opportunity, not just an obstacle." The recent COVID-19 pandemic fully confirmed their advice: "The best digital leaders work to nudge one or more of the three tipping points in their favor" (Raskino, & Waller, 2016:41).

7.3. Response to Covid-19 pandemic

On 19 February 2020, in the face of the coronavirus crisis, the European Commission quickly adopted its Digital Strategy. "The strategy gains renewed importance as the Commission deploys digital tools to monitor the spread of the virus, research and develop vaccines and treatments, and ensure that European citizens can stay connected and safe online to keep on learning, socializing, and working. Trusted services, such as eSignatures, eSeals and electronic authentication services for businesses, eGovernment and eHealth ensure continuity and availability of public services while trusted security systems protect our identities online and make sure that our activities remain private".[35]

Most governments' solutions needed quick regulatory interventions in order to transfer life online. For instance, education adopted the e-learning paradigm in most of Europe. The same occurred with most administrative tasks, where temporary regulatory changes due to the circumstances of the pandemic enabled most of digital communication to become legitimate. A lot of administrative tasks were fully digitized, such as travel permits (*e-passes)* in Croatia, thus reducing the burden on administrative personnel, allowing them to work on containing the epidemic, e.g. by talking to infected citizens to isolate their contacts. Therefore, adopting a regulation on the use of digital communication and existing services was one of the quickest and most effective solutions that governments could find.

In fighting the epidemic, some more complex digital solutions were needed. In order to respect data security and EU fundamental rights such as privacy and data protection, on April 8, the Commission adopted a recommendation to support coronavirus containment measures through mobile data and

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[35] European Commission. Live, work, travel in the EU, Digital technologies – innovative solutions during the coronavirus crisis. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/digital_en [06 12 2020].

apps. Based on this recommendation, the Member States, supported by the Commission, developed an EU toolbox for the use of mobile applications, which reflects the best practices in the use of mobile contact tracing and warning apps for tackling the crisis.[36] With this example of respecting and counting on existing cultural standards and differences, the EC proved the importance of Gartner's cultural strategic pillar in practice. To successfully deploy massive digital solutions, governments needed to take into consideration established cultural norms. In Europe or the USA, no effective solutions used in some other countries with lower individual privacy rights could be successfully applied. South Korea, for instance, implemented a full tracking system for all quarantined people, and China deployed individual QR codes that share information about the personal health status and travel history of each citizen. These codes need to be scanned before boarding buses and trains or entering airports or offices, controlling access even to their own housing complexes.[37]

7.4. Croatian Examples and Challenges

During the period of the COVID-19 outbreak, Croatia prepared two services successfully deployed in Croatia, together with a set of criteria that can be used to describe and highlight the success factors for each service.

For each service, criterions for discussion may vary, but there are always cornerstone elements to explain and evaluate. The first criterion of success is the customer value of a service. In the Croatian case, it is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a high value not only for individuals but also for the state and the international community. In a regular situation, "standard" benefits are: enhanced quality of life of citizens resulting from efficient public administration, improved business productivity of public administration, enhanced communication between citizens and state administration, and transparency of public administration.[38] From the user perspective, there are also aspects of the width of the target audience – entire population or just target groups like some categories of citizens, giving special consideration to fostering digital inclusion.[39] Finally, the most challenging aspects are those

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[36] European Commission. Press corner, An EU approach for efficient contact tracing apps to support gradual lifting of confinement measures, April 20th 2020. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_670 [06 12 2020].

[37] Deutsche Welle, Coronavirus tracking apps: How are countries monitoring infections?, DW News, April 27th 2020. Retrieved from https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-tracking-apps-how-are-countries-monitoring-infections/a-53254234 [06 12 2020].

[38] Ministry of Public Administration. e-Croatia 2020 Strategy. Retrieved from https://uprava.gov.hr/strategija-e-hrvatska-2020/14630 [06 12 2020].

[39] European Commission. Shaping Europe's digital future, Policy, Digital inclusion for a better EU society. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-inclusion-better-eu-society, [06 12 2020].

unexposed to citizens' view, such as legislation, policies, various internal organizational and technical challenges – a lot of very specific aspects worth sharing, such as systems architecture, the technology used, deployment issues, interoperability, availability, reliability, security, privacy, etc., just to mention the most important ones.

In cooperation with the Croatian Institute of Public Health and private entrepreneurs, on April 14, the first COVID-19 Digital Assistant *Andrija*[40] was launched. It is a virtual assistant (chatbot), based on AI, that can advise people on how to diagnose and manage suspected COVID-19 infections, thus freeing congested COVID hotlines and providing citizens with information valuable for controlling possible outbreaks.

In relation to citizens and public administration, another solution, '*e-Propusnica'* (e-Pass) is a typical example of a simple, intuitive and effective e-government solution for issuing and tracking travel permits. The solution was created and deployed within just a week from the Government's Decision on the prohibition of leaving the place of residence.[41] The solution was integrated in the existing *e-Građani* (e-Citizens) services infrastructure, so the existing public service infrastructure was utilized by connecting data from all the involved stakeholders: the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance – Tax Administration, the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Health. Thus, the Civil Protection Headquarters of the Republic of Croatia was able to manage the criteria for travel permissions depending on the state of the pandemic practically on a daily bases. Citizens would just submit a request, and it would be resolved in a matter of minutes, whether it was work or health related, or private travel. Moreover, road policing units were informed instantly as well, so there was no need for any manual administrative procedure and there were no traffic congestions, which saved businesses and citizens many productive hours. In a period of only six weeks of its usage, it become the sixth most used e-government application, with almost half of all registered users using it. A total of 2.576.719 individual permits were issued through the system.

A simple analysis using the framework prepared for workshop discussion clearly points out the differences between the fully integrated, efficient e-Pass and AI-based solution *Andrija*. Both services were quickly deployed and very valuable for all citizens during the coronavirus pandemic, serving different people's needs. The former provides a digital travel permission instead of a paper one, reducing the administrative burden, saving everyone time and, most importantly, possible exposure to the virus. The latter is a typical next generation service, based on AI, with a WhatsApp interface with

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[40] Total Croatia news. Croatia Launches Andrija, First COVID-19 Digital Assistant, April 14th 2020. Retrieved from https://www.total-croatia-news.com/lifestyle/42877-digital-assistant [06 12 2020].

[41] Deloitte. Decision about prohibition to leave the place of residence and permanent residence in Croatia, March 2020. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/hr/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/odluka-zabrani-napustanja-mjesta-prebivalista-stalnog-boravista.html [06 12 2020].

medical (virtual) expertise. Its primary purpose is to provide a personalized expert opinion about one's possible medical status, and give suggestions for steps to take. From the internal point of view, the complexity of the e-Pass service is hidden in the workflow connecting five internal government entities using the existing government infrastructure of e-Citizens, including the National Identification and Authentication System (NIAS) for authentication and authorization and most of its security, availability and privacy mechanisms. On the other hand, *Andrija* raises a number of security and especially privacy issues, which often arise when a new technology such as AI and a proprietary interface such as WhatsApp are used. There are plenty of open questions, and the most important one is whether the benefit of the solution outweighs the obvious risks (going live into uncharted technology solutions)? In this particular case, partnering with the Ministry of Public Administration helped establish citizens' trust in the service.

7.5. Complex Digital Services Architecture

At the architectural level of building complex digital services, many business/technical advisors can be considered, but one of the esteemed experts is Jeanne W. Ross.[42] In times of increased confrontation with the digital disruption of businesses and in view of the digital transformation wave, she published a study *Designing digital organizations*, which includes case studies of over 40 companies from many industries, discussing the challenges and recommendations of digital transformation. She repentantly insists that digital transformation is never about technology (Ross, et al., 2016:2). It is about redesigning a company through these postulates:

(i) An effective digital strategy – focuses on one of the two opportunities associated with digital disruption – customer engagement and/or digitized solutions.

(ii) Operational excellence is essential for digital strategy execution and sustained success. Successful companies will rely on capabilities that have been built into a powerful operational backbone.

(iii) Rapid innovation and responsiveness to new market opportunities are equally essential. To facilitate this kind of agility, successful companies will rely on the capabilities of a powerful digital services backbone.

(iv) Existing organizational designs are not well suited to building and leveraging both an operational and a digital services backbone. An ongoing organizational redesign that includes structures, processes, roles, partnerships, and skills is essential to execute a digital strategy.

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[42] Jeanne W. Ross is a principal research scientist at the MIT Sloan School of Management, Center for Information Systems Research (CISR) and the lead author of a cornerstone book on enterprise architecture *Enterprise Architecture as Strategy: Creating a Foundation for Business Execution*.

Digital services backbone and Millennials

What needs to be pointed out is the need to design and develop a second, digital services backbone. While the operational backbone provides seamless end-to-end standard business processes optimized for "regular" business activities, the digital services backbone should be Lego brick style, innovation-driven; providing infrastructure services, data access, identity management, analytics engines and powerful 24x7 processing which enables a constant stream of loosely connected digital innovations to be quickly delivered and easily replaced or discarded. Because of the nature of new customer engagement scenarios and the need for rapid solutions, a very important recommendation is also that a company would need a completely different type of people to design, run and operate this new digital services backbone, most preferably from the millennial generation, who truly understand the nature of the digital world and services (Ross, et al., 2016:10).

Connecting Europe Facility Building Blocks and Digital Service Infrastructures

In the area of digital government services, there is a set of common building blocks underlying the existing operational backbone of e-government in all EU Member States. At the EU level, the Commission has set up initiatives, programmes and priorities such as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)[43] to facilitate the development of high-quality digital services by creating reusable digital building blocks to facilitate the delivery of digital public services across borders and sectors. They are basically underlying Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs) composed of core service platforms and generic services. Core Service Platforms (CSP) are central hubs that enable trans-European connectivity, which are managed, implemented, and operated by the Commission, and Generic Services (GS) are the link between national infrastructures and core service platforms, and are managed, implemented and operated by the Member States. Currently, there are eight building blocks available: **Big Data Test Infrastructure, Context Broker, eArchiving, eDelivery, eID, eInvoicing, eSignature, and eTranslation**.

7.6. Conclusion

As life-threatening as it is for people and businesses, the Covid-19 pandemic has, with a timely and professional response, in a way served as a catalyst for the digital transformation of e-government solutions designed primarily for citizens. And as the solutions brought new, real value to citizens, it "pushed" them to everyday use, thus increasing the digitally literate population and removing obstacles to further massive deployment of e-government services.

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[43] European Commision. CEF Digital, Connecting Europe. Retrieved from
https://ec.europa.eu/cefdigital/wiki/display/CEFDIGITAL/CEF+Digital+Home [06 12 2020].

Each Member State, according to its digital readiness and infrastructure responded quickly and efficiently, with a very concrete support of the Commission, including an EU toolbox for mobile solutions, and many more initiatives, recommendations and knowledge sharing by more advanced Member States. There has been a rapid increase in very important initiatives for a further development of joint digital infrastructure and reusable components, making the digital transformation adoption curve more exponential, similar to the one for Covid-19 that we were constantly bombarded with. As an example, on May 14, the EU announced an investment of €26.6 million to connect Europe digitally through 55 projects in the areas of Cybersecurity, eHealth, eProcurement, European e-Justice, Public Open Data and European Platform for Digital Skills and Jobs.[44]

On the other hand, rapid adoption of digital services should never compromise citizens' right to control their personal data and anonymity, so this is an especially important continuation of work on **the European digital sovereignty initiative**. Bearing in mind the EU's unique, leading position in the world, this initiative is a true step towards a new system of Internet governance.[45]
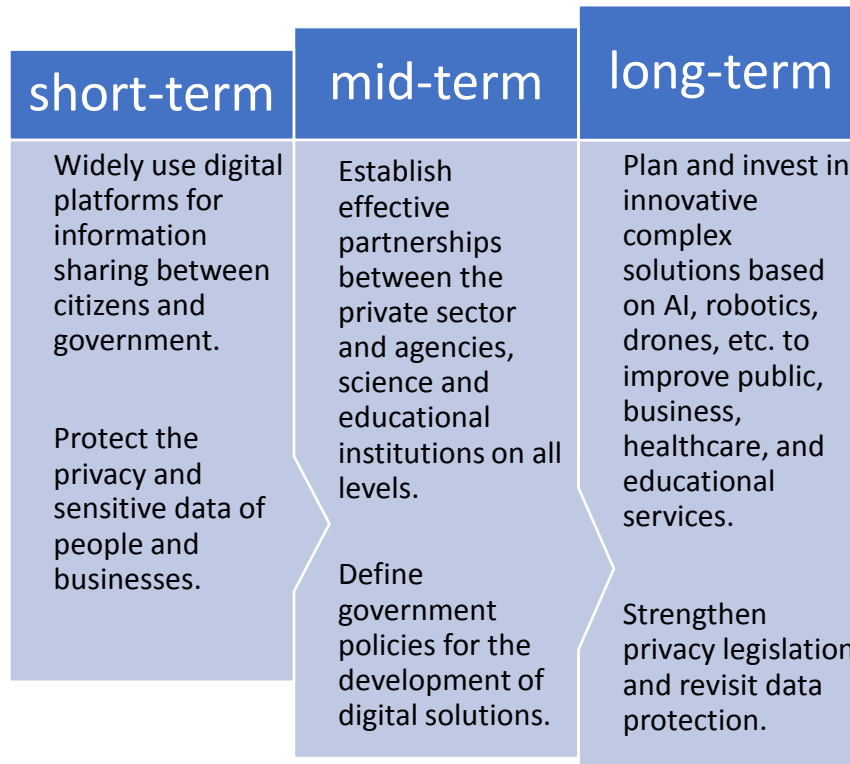
In this very turbulent year, with a myriad of digital government experiences and even more open questions, there is a strong urge for knowledge sharing opportunities such as EUPAN meetings, briefings, online meetings, any knowledge sharing platforms we can use to grow individually and collectively.

Instead of a formal conclusion, it is necessary to accelerate the development of innovative complex digital services in all major areas like e-Citizens, e-Business, e-Education and e-Health. Based on recent positive experiences, all EU members should redefine their priorities through short-term, mid-term and long-term activities as follows:[46]

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[44] European Commision. Newsroom, Over €26.6 million EU investment to connect Europe digitally, May 14th 2020. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/news-events/newsroom/over-%E2%82%AC26.6-million-eu-investment-to-connect-europe-digitally [06 12 2020].

[45] European Institute of Innovation & Technology, New report on European digital infrastructure and data sovereignty, Jun 9th 2020. Retrieved from https://eit.europa.eu/news-events/news/new-report-european-digital-infrastructure-and-data-sovereignty [06 12 2020].

[46] United Nations, UN/DESA Policy Brief #61: COVID-19: Embracing digital government during the pandemic and beyond, April 14th 2020. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-61-covid-19-embracing-digital-government-during-the-pandemic-and-beyond [06 12 2020].

short-term	mid-term	long-term
Widely use digital platforms for information sharing between citizens and government. Protect the privacy and sensitive data of people and businesses.	Establish effective partnerships between the private sector and agencies, science and educational institutions on all levels. Define government policies for the development of digital solutions.	Plan and invest in innovative complex solutions based on AI, robotics, drones, etc. to improve public, business, healthcare, and educational services. Strengthen privacy legislation and revisit data protection.

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European Commission. Press corner, An EU approach for efficient contact tracing apps to support gradual lifting of confinement measures, April 20th 2020. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_670 [06 12 2020].

European Commission. Strategy, Shaping Europe's digital future. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market [06 12 2020].

European Commission. Shaping Europe's digital future, Policy, Digital Inclusion for a better EU society. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-inclusion-better-eu-society, [06 12 2020].

European Commission. The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi [06 12 2020].

European Institute of Innovation & Technology, New report on European digital infrastructure and data sovereignty, Jun 9th 2020. Retrieved from https://eit.europa.eu/news-events/news/new-report-european-digital-infrastructure-and-data-sovereignty [06 12 2020].

Ministry of Public Administration. e-Croatia 2020 Strategy. Retrieved from https://uprava.gov.hr/strategija-e-hrvatska-2020/14630 [06 12 2020].

Raskino, M.; Waller, G. Digital to the core: remastering leadership for your industry, your enterprise, and yourself. Routledge, 2016.

Ross, J. W. et al. Designing digital organizations. MIT Center for IS Research, CISR Working Paper, 46 (2016).

Total Croatia news. Croatia Launches Andrija, First COVID-19 Digital Assistant, April 14th 2020. Retrieved from https://www.total-croatia-news.com/lifestyle/42877-digital-assistant [06 12 2020].

United Nations, UN/DESA Policy Brief #61: COVID-19: Embracing digital government during the pandemic and beyond, April 14th 2020. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-61-covid-19-embracing-digital-government-during-the-pandemic-and-beyond [06 12 2020].

8. Blockchain technology in public services
Research findings

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8.1 Summary

Blockchain technology has transformed many systems and processes into decentralized and transparent services to the benefit of their many users. It may be especially suitable for application in public administration and eGovernment services, in which security, transparency and efficiency are of crucial importance. This report presents the principles of blockchain technology, with a focus on potential applications in public services. In order to explore the opportunities and potential hazards, four case studies are discussed. An analysis of the benefits and challenges in the application of blockchain technology in public services is given, together with opportunities which blockchain technology applications in public administration can bring for modern eGovernment services.

8.2. Introduction

In the past decade, blockchain and distributed ledger technologies have received a significant amount of attention from industry, academia and governments, primarily due to the popularity of various cryptocurrencies. However, the advancements in distributed ledger technologies reach beyond cryptocurrencies and payment protocols, and have found their application in many other services, such as data storage, certificate verification, personal identification, Internet-of-Things etc. In most of these, blockchains are primarily used to store data records without the need to trust a third party, while maintaining strong guarantees on integrity, immutability and authenticity – data records cannot be easily modified or erased even by the entities running the system. Due to these properties, blockchain technology is of particular interest in applications to public and e-government services [1], with the potential to improve efficiency and security, while increasing transparency [2]. These improvements may be of critical value in certain aspects of public administration, especially for countries experiencing crises of trust in public services, including some members of the EU. According to the eGovernment Benchmark Insight Report 2019 [3], *an advancing digital economy and society impacts the routines of people, and this can only work if people trust the organization that is accountable for that change*. Moreover, the Tallinn Declaration [4] lists the following key principles for eGovernment services:

- Digital by default, inclusiveness and accessibility,
- Once only,
- Trustworthiness and security,
- Openness and transparency,
- Interoperability by default.

These principles are built in the features of blockchain systems, which allow users to store data records in a decentralized way, promoting openness and transparency, while preserving and improving security. By design, blockchain technology may provide some solutions to the issues of trust in organizations and public services, putting forward some relevant questions. Can citizens trust technology instead of trusting institutions? How can technology increase citizens' trust in institutions?

QA6a.6 I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.
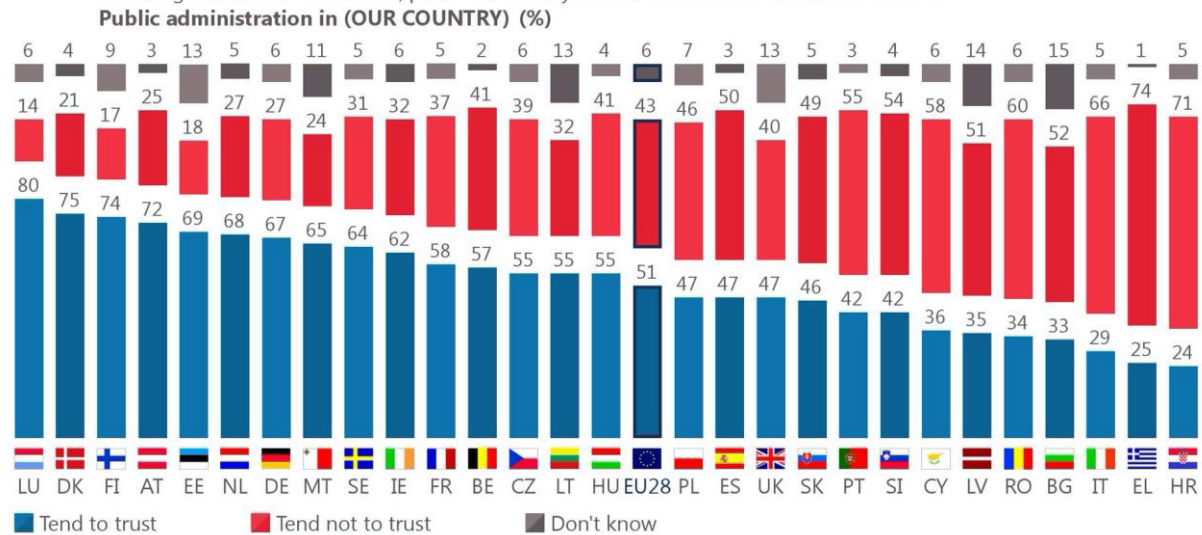**Public administration in (OUR COUNTRY) (%)**

Figure 1: Trust in public administration across the countries of the EU. Source: Standard Eurobarometer 91, Public opinion in the European Union, Spring 2019.

This report presents some design principles of blockchain technology, with an emphasis on its potential for application in the area of eGovernment services. Several case studies are explored and analyzed, with the goal of providing some answers to whether blockchain technology can be used to increase transparency and trust in public services.

8.3. Blockchain technology

Most of the basic principles used in blockchain technology were already known before an unknown author under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto shared a whitepaper [5] on his model for a blockchain.[47] Those basic principles (also referred to as cryptographic primitives), such as *cryptographic hash functions* or *digital signatures*, are the important building blocks of any secure

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[47] Note that Nakamoto's paper only proposes the name "Bitcoin", and never mentions the term "blockchain" - this term was coined and popularized by 2016 from the terms *block* and *chain* commonly mentioned in Nakamoto's Bitcoin paper.

digital system, and some of them are already in use in certain eGovernment services in various countries.

A cryptographic hash function is a way to generate small digests of arbitrary data, with the following properties: (i) the same message always generates the same digest; (ii) it is quick to generate/compute for any given message; (iii) it is infeasible to find two different messages with the same digest; (iv) small changes in the message lead to large changes in the digest. A very important consequence of these properties is that anybody can easily generate and verify digests by knowing the original message, but the reverse is infeasible – generating the message from the digest can only be done by guessing. Another important feature due to property (iv) is that it is very easy to detect any changes in documents just by comparing their digests (also known as hash values) – this is a key method for ensuring the *integrity* (confidence that the message has not been altered) of digital assets, such as data, documents or messages.
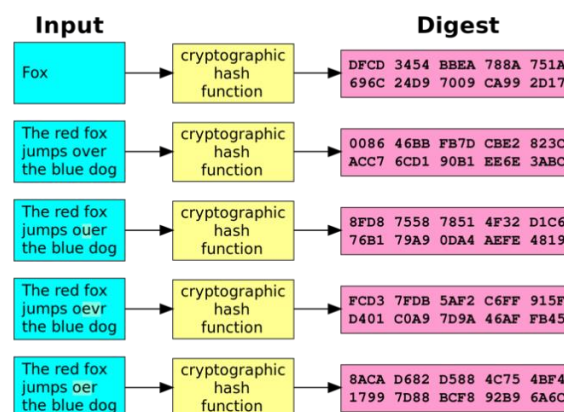

Figure 2: Cryptographic hash function and digests of different messages. Source: wikipedia.org.

A digital signature is a way to verify the authenticity of digital assets. In order to digitally sign a document, an entity needs to possess a *private key* (shared with nobody) and a *public key* (shared with any other entity). The signature can be generated only by the entity holding the private key (thus facilitating the *authenticity* of the signature), in combination with the digest of the signed document. However, anybody can use the corresponding public key to verify that the signature was generated by the original entity and the original document. Due to these properties, digital signatures are used to ensure *authenticity* (confidence that the signature is generated by the corresponding entity), *integrity* (confidence that the document has not been altered) and *non-repudiation* (the entity that has signed a digital asset cannot deny this later). Digital signatures are already in use in certain eGovernment services – for instance, digitally signed e-documents (such as birth certificates, tax records, or COVID-19 intercity travel permits) can be obtained from the eGovernment system in Croatia [6].

While these cryptographic primitives present valuable methods for ensuring certain security aspects of data records, they cannot verify the time or the order of their creation, or whether they were added

to the database by misbehaving entities or individuals within the system. Moreover, centralized systems are vulnerable to attacks, and digital signatures can be generated by inside entities while creating fraudulent data entries – there is no way for other entities within or outside the system to detect such changes.

Figure 3: Cryptographic hash functions and digital signatures can be used to verify that documents were signed by the right entities, but cannot detect if the documents were fraudulently created and added by misbehaving insiders within the system.

Blockchains come as an extension of these cryptographic primitives – they rely primarily on the blocks of data which are linked in such a way that each block contains the hash of the previous one. This ensures that records, once added, cannot be changed without changing the hash values of all the blocks above, all the way to the top hash (root hash). Thus, the root hash guarantees the integrity of the entire chain. This facilitates the immutability of data records in the blockchain – or, more precisely, data cannot be changed without detection. Data of any type and arbitrary semantics can be added in the blocks (for instance: adding a student's diploma is only valid if there is an active enrollment record in the chain).
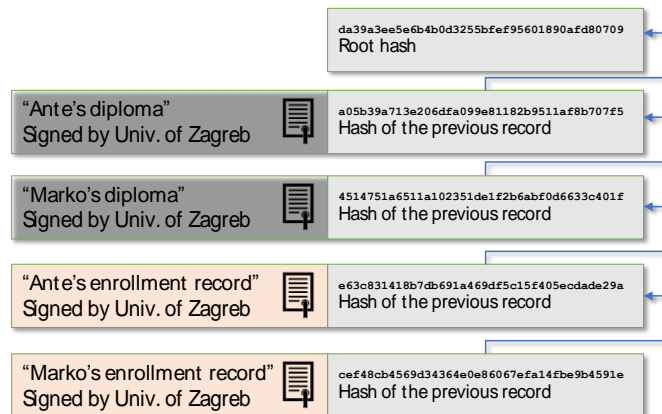
Figure 4: Blockchains enable storage of any type of data and facilitate the usage of arbitrary semantics for the validity of entries.

The data structure of blockchains is maintained and updated by a set of independent entities (nodes), all of which have their own copy of the entire blockchain. They validate the authenticity and correctness of new data records before adding them to the blockchain and agree on the current version of the blockchain by following a consensus protocol. The properties and guarantees of blockchain data structures are maintained even in the presence of malicious or malfunctioning nodes, as long as the majority of the nodes are running properly. For instance, if a node tries to add a fraudulent or incorrect data record, other nodes will detect this and will not accept it – they will agree on a version of the blockchain without this record. This facilitates two additional important features of the blockchain system: *redundancy* (multiple nodes all have their copies of the agreed state of the blockchain – if any node malfunctions or is attacked, others will not be affected) and *transparency* (any data records or changes are visible to everybody with access to the blockchain).

8.4. Case studies

Land title registry in Georgia

In Georgia the land registry system was originally managed by two agencies with overlapping functions. The system was non-transparent and inefficient, allowing government officials to illegally change land records, which, together with other inefficiencies, lead to a public trust crisis. First, a single agency called the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR) was founded in 2004, which introduced NAPReg – a digitized database with land registry information. However, although digitalization was a vital step, a centralized database could not solve the public trust crisis – entries could still be changed by officials, and centralized systems are generally more vulnerable to attacks.

Faced with the challenges of ensuring data integrity and protecting the system from internal manipulation, NAPR partnered with the Bitfury Group in April 2016, with the goal of developing a solution for land title registration and verification [7]. They developed a blockchain-based timestamping layer on top of the NAPR system. Land titles are registered via the NAPR system, the data is stored on a private Exonum blockchain, and the state of the system is hashed and published on the public Bitcoin blockchain. This solution added immutability and a level of transparency to the system, allowing users to verify that a receipt exists at the time of timestamping and that it was authorized by the NAPR.

As of 2018, a total of 1.5 million land titles were registered using the system, with reduced land title registration and verification time (from days to minutes), while improving transparency and reliability for citizens. The World Bank ranks Georgia as the fourth easiest country to register property, and the Corruption Perception Index shows improvement in the fight against corruption in Georgia [8].

Property transactions in Sweden

Whereas the Georgia case was primarily motivated by the need to ensure data integrity and increase transparency, the main motivation in Sweden was the inefficiency of the existing land transfer process. The period from contract signing to title transfer ranged between 3 and 6 months. Even though the land registry database was digitized, the entire land transfer process was not. The Lantmäteriet (Swedish land registry) was the most trusted party in the process but was involved only in the final stages. The entire property transaction process involved paper documents and scans exchanged via email, physical signatures and manual verification of documents. The documents themselves could contain missing, incomplete or wrong entries (it is estimated that 4% – 7% applications needed to be resubmitted because of error) [9].

A consortium of public and private companies was founded in 2016, including the telecom Telia, a blockchain startup ChromaWay and the Lantmäteriet strategy consultancy Kairos Future. The consortium developed a prototype in which transactions are put on the blockchain at the moment an agreement to sell is reached and remain active until the title is transferred. The prototype uses a digital ID system provided by Telia and allows for different levels of users (buyers/sellers, banks, government agencies). Parties to a transaction can access a private blockchain which stores records of documents (held by each party), and a summarized verification record is published on an external public blockchain (such as Bitcoin).

The developed prototype has enabled end-to-end digitization of the land transfer process using the blockchain, and has reduced the time between contract signing and property registration from months to days. The primary benefits of bringing the process to a common digital system are the elimination of steps and reduction in the delays caused by email and manual verification. In addition, due to the data redundancy of the blockchain, the process is less vulnerable to error and fraud, while improving transparency. The increased efficiency yields estimated savings of more than 100 million € in the public system [10].

Academic credentials management in Malta

Academic certificates, such as diplomas and transcripts, are a key component in job seeking and matching employers with employees. The verification of credentials is typically done manually by verifying diplomas individually, which can be time-consuming, inefficient, and prone to error and fraud. Motivated by the need for quick and efficient verification of workers' skills and with the goal of facilitating opportunities for qualified workers, the Maltese Ministry for Education and Employment partnered with the Learning Machine group to develop a digital solution for academic credentials management [11].

A solution based on the Blockcerts [12] open standard (developed by the MIT Media Lab and Learning Machine) was developed, enabling issuance, creation, viewing and verification of blockchain-based certificates. The recipient of a certificate can download a free mobile application (Blockcerts Wallet) in order to manage their own blockchain-based records. After the receipt of credentials, ownership is independent of the issuer, and the credentials are verifiable by any third party – each certificate is signed by the issuing institution and its hash is published on the Bitcoin blockchain. Moreover, although blockchain-based credentials are permanent records, the issuer may revoke the credential. This solution facilitates the integrity of the issued certificates and the authenticity of issuers, while preserving personal information of the owners of credentials (only hashes are published on the public blockchain).

Educational institutions in Malta have started issuing certificates via the Blockcerts standards, and the collaboration between the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Learning Machine is an ongoing partnership for evolving the prototype into a trusted digital solution which can help identify areas where skill gaps exist, which can then be closed by implementing policies at the macro level. The ultimate goal is the efficient management of human resources and skills as one of the primary drivers of economic success of a country.

Decentralized citizen identity in Switzerland

Due to the growing percentage of population living in urban areas, many cities are striving towards becoming "smart cities" – in this process, facilitating access to digital government services is a key step. In Switzerland, a very direct form of democracy is maintained – many referendums and other votes are often held at local levels. These aspects put additional pressure on the efficiency of democratic processes and trust in public services.

The city of Zug created a decentralized identity platform - uPort [13]. It is basically a self-sovereign government-issued identity based on the Ethereum blockchain [14]. Users register with their identification documents, and requests are verified by the civil registration office. After registration, all interactions between users and the City of Zug are carried out via smart contract on the Ethereum network. Users are in control of their digital identities – they can back up their private keys, allowing them to recover their digital identities should they lose access to their phone. Moreover, since the

platform relies on the public Ethereum network, no maintenance of servers or nodes is necessary, which reduces the cost of such digital services. This distributed system is less susceptible to cyber-attacks and theft than a centralized database. In addition, since the service providers only save the data they use, and cryptographic verification of identity does not reveal personal information, the system is GDPR compliant.

The project is still in its early phases, but several hundred citizens of Zug are already registered, and the platform has been used to hold a local vote, where a number of citizens cast their votes using the system.

8.5. SWOT

In the considered case studies, certain common benefits emerge, leading to improved transparency and trust in public services. However, some common issues also exist – all of them are listed in the table below.

Strengths	o Ensuring data integrity, immutability and authenticity, o Ability to detect fraud and internal manipulations, o Eliminating frictions in public systems through efficient management of services and records, o Minimal probability of procedural errors through cryptographic verification of documents and records, o Improved resilience to cyber-attacks through decentralization and data redundancy.
Weaknesses	o Blockchain systems do not prevent fraudulent insiders from altering data records, they just prevent them from doing so undetected, o The transparency of blockchain systems may in certain situations be in discord with the requirements on confidentiality or privacy, o The right to be forgotten vs. immutability of records – how to manage records which need to be removed or should not have been added in the first place?
Opportunities	o Public-private partnerships with experts from the industry delivering transfer of knowledge and technology from the industry to the public sector, o New use cases for improved public services, inspired through education of stakeholders (public agencies and decision-makers), o Improved digital public services, prototyped by funding pilot projects on the applications of blockchain technology in public services, o Reduced public costs due to reduced inefficiencies, o Improved trust in public services through adoption of blockchain technology and raised level of transparency.

Threats	o	Lack of awareness about the benefits of blockchain technology may hinder its adoption in public services,
	o	Development of blockchain-based solutions requires specialized knowledge and specific technological expertise which are not easy to find,
	o	Existing and future regulatory frameworks (such as AMLD or GDPR), if not made with blockchain technology in mind, may inhibit the usage of certain aspects of blockchain technology in public services.

8.6. Conclusion

Blockchain technology is starting to find its way into public services, primarily owing to the benefits brought by improved transparency and quality of data records management. The four case studies discussed in this report demonstrate the ability of blockchain technology to transform inefficient or non-transparent processes into transparent and trusted eGovernment services. Through education of relevant stakeholders, increased awareness about the quality of data in public services and encouragement of public-private partnerships, the pitfalls in adopting blockchain technology can be avoided, and new and improved public services can be developed, ultimately reducing frictions and costs, and improving public trust.

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