

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 21
Title of case study: Influencing and inspiring customised sustainable civil service reform across the post-communist world
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Dr Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling's research has developed new conceptual frameworks for the analysis of civil service reform in the post-communist world. His work has helped international policy-makers to understand the conditions under which interventions by international organisations are successful, and has influenced the strategy and operations of the European Commission and SIGMA-OECD.</p> <p>The research has been widely disseminated and used in international collaborations across Central and Eastern European and Western Balkan states and China, and to date has had the most wide-reaching and significant effect in Lithuania, where his policy recommendations were accepted and endorsed in the amendment of civil service regulations by the Lithuanian Government and Parliament.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Professional and de-politicised civil service systems are widely seen as a precondition for the consolidation of democracy, economic development and successful integration into the European Union. One of the major objectives of post-communist transformation has been to overcome the legacy of over-politicisation by establishing professional and de-politicised civil service systems.</p> <p>Meyer-Sahling's innovative research on the establishment of meritocratic civil service systems in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans examined the effectiveness of EU interventions before and after accession. The research provides analytical tools for the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the institutional frameworks underpinning civil service management, and lays out conditions for success at both the level of recipient states and the EU level.</p> <p>At least two key innovations have resulted from Meyer-Sahling's research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New conceptual frameworks have been developed for analysis of civil service reform. For the first time, these place the outcomes of reform in the context both of regime transition and of integration into the European Administrative Space, taking into account previous characteristics of communist-type administration as well as the established patterns of public administration in Western democracies (publications #1, #3). 2. Domestic and international determinants of civil service reform and professionalization have been identified (#1, #2, #4, #5), specifically, the impact of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Formal institutional design ii. Reform design, sequences and leadership iii. Political competition and patterns of government alternation iv. The European Union, SIGMA and other international actors v. The communist and pre-communist legacy of the past <p>The findings have helped policy-makers to distinguish between those factors that may be directly influenced, as opposed to contextual determinants that need to be taken into account but cannot be controlled. As a result, the research points to the need to 'customise' domestic reform initiatives and international interventions by adapting institutional designs, reform strategies and sequences. (#1, #2, #4). It also helps to clarify the conditions under which civil service reform achievements become sustainable for the long-term, in particular, in the context of European integration (#5).</p> <p>The underpinning research was conducted by Meyer-Sahling and published in single-authored,</p>

peer-reviewed journal articles.

3. References to the research

1. 'The Institutionalization of Political Discretion in East-Central European Civil Services: The Case of Hungary'. *Public Administration* (2006) 84 (3), 693-716 [peer-reviewed journal].
2. 'The Rise of the Partisan State? Parties, Patronage and the Ministerial Bureaucracy in Hungary'. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* (2006) 22 (3), 274-294 [peer-reviewed journal].
3. 'The Changing Colours of the Post-Communist State: The Politicisation of the Senior Civil Service in Hungary'. *European Journal of Political Research* (2008) 47(1), 1-33 [peer-reviewed journal].
4. 'Varieties of Legacies: A Critical Review of Legacy Explanations of Public Administration Reform in East Central Europe'. *International Review of Administrative Science* (2009) 75 (3), 563-581 [peer-reviewed journal]. Winner of the IRAS Prize for the best article published in 2009.
5. 'The Durability of EU Civil Service Policy in Central and Eastern Europe', *Governance* (2011) 24 (2), 231-260 [peer-reviewed journal].

All are available on request.

4. Details of the impact

Meyer-Sahling has worked in close collaboration both with international organisations – in particular, the SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) programme of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) – and with national governments in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.

As a result, his work has been widely disseminated both through the publication of two SIGMA papers and their circulation, and through presentations and reports to government representatives. The research has gone on to change approaches to international civil service reform, and inspire further similar studies in other areas of public administration reform.

Dissemination

Meyer-Sahling was invited to present his research at the SIGMA headquarters in Paris. SIGMA provides advice for accession states on behalf of the European Commission. It further conducts annual assessments of public administration reform that are incorporated into the European Commission's annual monitoring reports on the progress of accession states towards EU membership. As a result of the presentation, SIGMA requested European Commission funding for a study of the sustainability of civil service reforms in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. Meyer-Sahling was appointed project leader with full responsibility over the design, coordination and implementation of the project. The project covered eight countries and had a budget of 178,000 Euros.

The research collaboration led to the **publication of SIGMA Paper Nr. 44** in May 2009.[source 2] The findings were widely disseminated, directly and indirectly, and well beyond SIGMA and DG Enlargement and DG Administration (now DG Human Resources) of the European Commission.

Meyer-Sahling **presented the research** first at the 2nd SIGMA Networking Seminar in Paris in November 2008 **to senior officials from SIGMA, the European Commission, Central and Eastern European and Western Balkan states**. After publication, the report was presented at additional events organised by DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission in November 2009, SIGMA in March 2010, the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht in May 2010, and in November 2010 at the opening ceremony of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) in Danilovgrad/Montenegro.[5]

The report was **translated into several languages** such as Romanian, Macedonian and

Slovenian.

It has been widely cited in non-academic literature, for instance, by the **UNDP, the World Bank, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Agency for Public Management of the Government of Norway**.^[6]

The work's impact on SIGMA and European Commission

- 1) **Changed approaches to public administration reform** by demonstrating and legitimizing the importance of conducting systematic, **evidence-based evaluations** that were externally driven by the EU. Bob Bonwitt, Director of the SIGMA programme from 1992-2012, writes that the report 'helped us to rethink the evidence base of what we were doing and forced us to address ideas that had been taken for granted. [...] the study produced such interesting results that similar studies were carried out in other areas of public administration reform'.^[1]
- 2) **Inspired further studies**, three of which Meyer-Sahling was directly involved in. They include a report on the political, economic, social and international determinants of civil service reform, a SIGMA Policy Brief on 'Can Civil Service Reforms Last?', and a major study on the professionalization of the civil service in the Western Balkans, which included all seven Western Balkan states and had a budget of 175,000 Euros. The project led to the **publication of SIGMA Paper Nr 48** in September 2012.^[3] The preliminary findings were presented at a SIGMA staff meeting in November 2011, at a dedicated workshop to senior officials of the Government of Montenegro and at the 2013 ReSPA Annual Conference. The conference was attended by ministers of public administration and senior policy-makers from the Western Balkans, the European Commission and other international organisations.^[8] According to Francisco Cardona, SIGMA's principal official for civil service reform since the late 1990s, 'the study on the Western Balkans is progressively acquiring importance as a reference document in training sessions, conferences and meetings on public administration reform in the concerned regions'.^[1]
- 3) **Plays a critical role in the development** of ReSPA as a regional centre for public administration reform and development, in particular, the upgrading of its Network in Human Resource Management. The Commission official responsible for the SIGMA and ReSPA file at DG Enlargement, writes 'the kind of actions that [Meyer-Sahling] has carried out [...] is very much in line with what we [i.e. DG Enlargement] are currently looking for in terms of providing evidence-based assessments, concrete and clear actions and assure a continuous monitoring of improvements under a realistic and customised approach'. Specifically with regard to the development of ReSPA as a regional centre for public administration reform, she goes on that [Meyer-Sahling] will 'play a critical role in upgrading the ReSPA Network in Human Resource Management'.^[1]
- 4) **Contributed to a change of strategy** towards a holistic, context-sensitive approach to public administration reform in accession states. Bonwitt explains that 'the findings caused a shift of our priorities [...] we changed the priorities of some of the system components and worked more on the political economy of civil service reform'. Moreover, 'we presented the result to the EC [i.e. European Commission], which then commissioned the Balkan study and accepted that their approach to reform in the Balkans needed to be reconsidered'.^[1]
- 5) **Influenced operations of SIGMA and the European Commission**. Bonwitt and Cardona write that '[t]he studies caused some changes in our [i.e. SIGMA's] assessment methodology' and 'SIGMA used the findings for annual assessments of individual countries'.^[1] The European Commission refers to the study on the professionalization of the Western Balkans in the specification and justification of project fiches that advertise EU funded aid and assistance projects in the area of good governance.

Influence in the national arena of Lithuania

Following the presentation of SIGMA Paper Nr 44, **the Government of Lithuania requested a separate study on the Modernisation of the Lithuanian Civil Service**.^[4] The study, prepared together with Prof Vitalis Nakrosis from Vilnius University, was presented in February 2010 in the Lithuanian Parliament in a session organised by the Committee for the State Administration and Local Government.^[7] **After the conference, Parliament passed a Resolution**, which has become an important reference point for civil service reform in Lithuania.^[10] The studies,

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presentations and an academic article that was published after the conference generated public debate over the course of civil service reform in the Lithuanian media.[9]

Most importantly, the Government of Lithuania followed the studies' recommendations for the **development of a new reform strategy and the amendment of civil service regulations**. According to the Deputy Head of the Civil Service, 'the study by Meyer-Sahling and Nakrosis was extremely useful for the staff of the Civil Service Department. We used the report for the analysis of the civil service systems and for making proposals for the improvement of its legal regulation. [...] For instance, we have implemented the recommendations concerning the tenure of heads of institutions, which came into force in 2011 and the centralised selection of civil servants, which will come into force on 1 July 2013. [T]he recommendation linking civil service training and competency management is being implemented in the context of a project funded by the European Social Fund'.[1]

The findings and recommendations have been incorporated in the final report of the Sunset Commission of the Lithuanian Government. Most recently, the Government used the studies in a press release in order to justify the appointment of the new Head of the Lithuanian Civil Service in February 2013.

Wider dissemination in the post-communist world and China

The Government of Lithuania used the findings in international co-collaborations across the entire post-communist world and China. The Deputy Head of the Lithuanian Civil Service writes that '[a]fter the publication of the 2009 SIGMA Report, responsible officials from the Balkan and Eastern Neighbourhood Countries (...) expressed their wish to familiarise themselves with the Lithuanian experience. The Civil Service Department was visited by Delegations from Ukraine, Serbia, Moldova, China, Albania, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina. **We always based our presentations on the conclusions of report prepared by Prof Meyer-Sahling**'. [1]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[1] Testimonials are available on file from the following: Bob Bonwitt, SIGMA; Francisco Cardona, SIGMA; Jurgita Siugzdiniene, Prime Minister's Office, Lithuania; Laima Tuleikiene, Civil Service Department, Lithuania; European Commission Official, DG Enlargement.

[2] Meyer-Sahling, J.-H., *The Sustainability of Civil Service Reform in Central and Eastern Europe Five Years after Accession* (SIGMA Paper Nr 44) (Paris: OECD Publications, 2009).

[3] Meyer-Sahling, J.-H., *Civil Service Politicisation in the Western Balkans* (SIGMA Paper Nr 48). (Paris: OECD Publications, 2012).

[4] Meyer-Sahling, J.-H. and Vitalis Nakrosis, *The Lithuanian Civil Service and Its Modernisation Guidelines* (Vilnius: Civil Service Department of the Government of Lithuania, 2010).

[5] 3rd SIGMA Networking Seminar, March 2010. Programme available at <http://www.oecd.org/site/sigma/publicationsdocuments/44702729.pdf>. List of participants available on file. Details of other presentations available on file.

[6] *Challenges for Public Sector Human Resources Management in the Recent Economic Downturn* (Bratislava: Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform of UNDP, 2010). Available at http://www.rcpar.org/contents_en.asp?id=458. Other references that cite the report are available on file.

[7] Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, February 2009. Programme and presentations available: <http://vtd.lt/index.php?1184669698> [in Lithuanian]; English translation is available on file.

[8] ReSPA Annual Conference, April 2013. Programme available at <http://www.respaweb.eu>. List of participants available on file.

[9] Assorted news coverage in Lithuania after presentation in parliament. A series of three contributions, which refer to each other and discuss the reports are available on file.

[10] Resolution passed by Parliament of Lithuania. A translated version of the document is available on file.