

POTENTIALS FOR HORIZONTAL COOPERATION IN A CENTRALIZED SETTING: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON HUNGARIAN CIVIL SERVANTS' PERCEPTIONS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CULTURE

GELLÉN Márton

Abstract

The article describes empirical findings regarding the perceptions of the Hungarian central civil service on outsourcing and other forms of cooperation. The findings summarized in this article are part of a vast empirical research effort that took place in 2014 – shortly after the wave of a comprehensive centralization that affected the entire corpus of Hungarian public administration from the local level to the ministerial level. The complete research design consisted of qualitative and quantitative elements, the latter containing an online questionnaire sent out to 40.000 addresses within the Hungarian central civil service. According to the empirical findings of the study, outsourcing as a general concept does not have significant support among Hungarian civil servants while other forms of cooperation with external players are far from being rejected. The current study throws light on what civil servants think about internal and external forms of cooperation such as delegation, involvement in decisions or government-civil society and government-market arrangements. The article displays the research findings on the stakeholder perceptions regarding outsourcing, insourcing and PPPs in the light of corresponding theory and development path analysis applied to the case of Hungary. The article embraces stakeholder and civil service perceptions on outsourcing and offers a context in which it can be better understood.

Keywords: outsourcing, development path, reform, perceptions.

GELLÉN Márton

PhD, Assistant Professor, National University of Public Service,
Budapest, Hungary

Tel.: +36303442100

E-mail: gellenkozpolitika@gmail.com



1. Ambition and research method

The article presents a descriptive analysis of the perceptions of Hungarian civil servants regarding outsourcing and other forms of cooperation with external partners. Outsourcing in this sense is addressed as a general concept and as a particular indicator of cooperation.

An empirical survey was carried out in Hungary within the central civil service by an online questionnaire between 17 March and 4 April, 2014. 11,004 civil servants provided a full response out of the 40,000 addressees of the entire central civil service of 80,000 (central civil service encompasses ministerial and territorially deployed but centrally organized civil service). The most important institutional cohort of the research sample were the 'County Government Offices'. These public administration institutions were originally (when created in 2011) subordinated to the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice but – due to institutional rearrangements – currently they are subordinated to the Prime Minister's Office. Further details of the reform that created 'County Government Offices' are explained by Gellén (2012) and Ágh (2014). 'County Government Offices' shall be distinguished from the relatively insignificant administrative offices of the locally elected County Assemblies that are not in the scope of this research.

Responses displayed in this article were given on a 1 to 5 scale, 1 meaning definite negation or extreme negative perception while 5 meaning definite consent or extreme positive perception. Figures show the mean of answers on a 1-100 scale. Conversion to 1-100 scale was done in the following way: $\text{mean} \times 100 / (n-1)$ whereas 'n' refers to the number of categories. In the current case 5 categories were used from 1 to 5 therefore conversion was done by multiplying mean by 25. The questionnaire contained 44 questions including 7 that were multiple questions. The full analysis of all questions would exceed the limits of a single scientific article therefore the results displayed in this article are focused on one of the most interesting findings of the research, definitely the somewhat counterintuitive findings on civil servant attitudes towards outsourcing. Outsourcing in this case should be understood as a general concept without detailing its forms such as contracting out, PPPs or concessions therefore the terms used in the questions are to be understood as indicators of general sentiments of a target group that is unified by legal status. The detailed understanding of the terminology could not be clarified in a research of such magnitude but the local context of how to interpret data are described in the article.

How questions were composed?

The questions analyzed in this article reflect a balanced scorecard inspired logic as follows:

- Certain external factors: information on potential connections between civil service and society such as perceived trust of society in the central civil service and outsourcing.

- General internal factors: motivation including trust in central civil service in terms of a career, prestige and remuneration.
- Internal workflows: hierarchy, chain of command, law and internal bylaws, competition (internal) and partnership as a form of internal cooperation (colleagues as partners).

Civil servant perceptions on outsourcing can be useful to evaluate outsourcing in light of a future reform, when organizational resistance needs to be taken into consideration. On a higher, theoretical level, perception analysis on outsourcing can be used as an indicator of the current public administration culture, assuming that a pro-outsourcing sentiment indicates a more managerialistic approach (Pollitt, 2007) while a resistant attitude would indicate a Weberian core administration culture.

Sample selection

The online questionnaire was distributed among the central civil service. Central civil service as a legal category in Hungary is defined by Act CXCIX of 2011, therefore it is a new category. The research offers a first insight on the mindset of this group after the vast changes that took place from 2010 onwards. The survey conducted in central civil service offers a context analysis for further reforms as well as enables research to reflect on the impact of the reforms. The target group excludes the civil service of local (municipal) administrations such as the employees of armed forces. Public employees such as university professors or nurses are neither civil servants, nor central civil servants. Central civil servants are employed in Ministries, Central Offices and in County Government Offices.

In the following table Budapest Municipal Local Government Office (142 respondents) is neither of these. Its employees are civil servants but the percentage in the total sample is so low that it does not affect the results significantly. On the other hand, this part of the sample can be taken as a control group to detect whether there are any systemic deviations according to the legal status of the respondents. In this regard, Budapest civil servants tend to have the same opinion as central civil servants working in Budapest or Pest County while respondents in the countryside tend to have slightly different opinions.

It is important to remark that the bulk of the Hungarian central public administration lacks the characteristic of being sector-specific regarding any industry, market or service area. Previous sector specific administrative bodies (such as former Environmental Inspectorates or Labor Administration Offices, etc.) have been concentrated into County Government Offices. In the original, pre-2010 setting, certain features possibly would have been characteristic to certain sectors but after the reconfiguration of the total institutional setting such sector specific characteristics do not exist.

Table 1: Detailed breakdown of the research sample

Central Statistical Office	573
Bács-Kiskun County Government Office	596
Baranya County Government Office	367
Budapest Capital Government Office	928
Csongrád County Government Office	465
Fejér Megye County Government Office	301
Győr-Moson-Sopron County Government Office	396
Hajdú-Bihar Megyei County Government Office	481
Heves County Government Office	492
Jász_Nagykun-Szolnok County Government Office	293
Nógrád County Government Office	200
Pest County Government Office	288
Somogy County Government Office	631
Vas County Government Office	259
Veszprém County Government Office	660
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Government Office	682
Békés County Government Office	504
Szabolcs Szatmár Bereg County Government Office	839
Tolna Megyei County Government Office	396
Zala County Government Office	331
Balassi Institute	21
Central Office for Administrative and Electronic Public Services	110
Institute for Public Policy Research	24
Budapest Municipal Local Government Office	142
National Atomic Energy Agency	22
National Office of Intellectual Property	47
Ministry of Human Resources	40
Ministry of Public Administration and Justice	106
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	416
Ministry of Economy	156
Ministry of National Development	92
Ministry of Rural Development	69
Ministry of Interior	55
Office of Public Administration and Justice	75

2. Attributes of the Hungarian public administration culture:

A literature review

After the fall of the iron curtain, the first theorists on reform issues were the transition-inspired developmental economists such as János Kornai. According to his observations, Hungarian democratic transition was marked by the rule of law and public institutional development as well as by rapid economic liberalization while profound democratization of the entire society took place. The transition however could not be complete due to the lack of historically significant time. In this sense, Kornai argues that the changes were 'exceptionally speedy' (Kornai, 1996) in Hungary and in the entire region. Developmental economists share the viewpoint of progression with normative theory in political science hallmarked by Attila Ágh (2014; Pridham, 2001; Ágh, 1998). Interestingly, the first wave of reforms hardly gained in-

spiration from contemporary public administration theory. From 1990 onwards new institutional economics inspired a huge wave of international advice of donor organizations for public sector reforms since this approach generated intellectual spotlight for the importance of institutions determined by law. International donor organizations started to reform strategic settings of the target countries having their primary focus on institutionalizing the rule of law – especially regarding property rights (Prado and Trebilcock, 2009). After having the framework settings of the rule of law, other key institutions have been taken into focus such as jurisdiction and constitutional courts. The typical sequence in Central and Eastern Europe was that primarily democratic and rule of law institutions were established and stabilized while public service (and public administration) institutions were not reconstructed or at least not at the same pace. The latter suffered significant delay to the market economy institutions. In fact, public administration and public service institutions typically did not have time for Weberian type consolidation because marketization and minimalization arrived relatively early (Ayres and Braithwaite, 1992, 1995, p. 7.) Public administration theorists univocally emphasize that Hungary belongs to the ‘legalistic’ public administrative culture (Hajnal, 2003, 2008, p. 132, 2014; Hintea, Ringsmuth and Mora, 2006; Drechsler, 2005). The Hungarian public administration culture is part of a wider legacy of the Monarchy of Austria-Hungary also characterized by legalism and stiff proceduralism, according to the enculturated interpretation of the Weberian administration values. Throughout the decades of Communism an authoritarian component was added to the local interpretation of public administration (Cameron and Orenstein, 2012). Having a legalistic public administration culture after more than four decades of Communist dictatorship appears to be desirable. However, legalism in public administrations has been viewed as an obstacle of efficiency and performance in the scientific literature on PA since quite a substantial time (Chester, 1976). Putting managerialism above the rule of law values appears to be a common understanding in public management literature (Benz, 2005); such an approach reflects the understanding of public administration theorists having the experience of Western democracies. Meyer-Sahling described the process of politicization of the Hungarian civil service indicating a new tendency of gradual drifting away from the original Weberian model (2006). Summarizing public administration theory for Hungary into a historical perspective, it can be emphasized that at least three layers can be identified in the Hungarian public administration culture: the legalistic and proceduralist layer of the period of Austria-Hungary, the (post-)soviet authoritarianism of the Communist period and ‘politicization’ as a decisively democratic phenomenon in the last quarter of the century (Gál and Gellén, 2015). The development path theory accepts and uses the historical perspective of characteristic periods of the Hungarian public administration culture. According to Randma-Liiv, creating and stabilizing democratic institutions and market economy were the first priorities of public sector reforms in Hungary but these reforms did not aim to reform public administration to become more stable, democratic and professional (Randma-Liiv,

2008). György Jenei identified two development paths of Hungarian public administration after the regime changed (2009). The sustaining-preserving path with periods of modernization. According to Jenei's findings, this lasted from 1990 to 2005. From 2006 onwards the development path changed drastically first to the marketizing than to the minimalization path (Jenei, 2009). The Hungarian fiscus defaulted in 2008 and the country had to enter an IMF standby loan agreement in early 2009. This indicated that the minimalization path of the Hungarian administrative and public service capacities failed – at least in the fiscal sense. In fact, the country had to fight an uphill battle to reconstruct lost institutional capacities while paying back loans under IMF supervision.

3. Context analysis: intensive politicization of the issue of outsourcing

An important element of the marketization reforms in Hungary was the PPP-Handbook issued by the Ministry of Economics and Transport in 2004. It was not the book itself but the entire policy of the 2002-2010 governments to increase efficiency by outsourcing. The work itself is built on the premises of the EU 'Guidelines for Successful Public – Private Partnerships' (European Commission, 2003) introducing the key notions for PPPs as main instruments of national competitiveness. PPPs open access to more efficient delivery of public services through better cooperation of public and private sectors. As a book issued by a Ministry it could have been taken as an official government declaration as well. In this vision, the role of public administration is to promote economic competitiveness. The role of public administration is not to provide public services that are unavailable on the market but on the contrary it has to involve as much market players as possible to increase productivity. The reason behind the façades however, was a state accounting issue with Eurostat whether PPPs would increase state deficit or not. In 2005 ESA95 was extended with a formula to calculate PPP risks (on the occasion of road construction projects) (Kraan *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, the country was under excessive deficit procedure from 2004 until 2013 therefore there was no room for any non-compliance any more. The peak and fall of the 'state minimalization' development path took place with the referendum on the privatized health sector whereas 83% of the respondents voted against outsourced (privatized) health sector. As part of the minimalization path, the socialist-liberal coalition decided to privatize public hospitals and later on to liberalize the health insurance system. As part of the new, liberalized system, various kinds of co-payment obligations were installed that caused irritation in the public. The political opposition of that time (Fidesz Party that later stepped into power with a two-third majority in 2010) managed to channel public rejection of co-payments and health service liberalization into a referendum that was named the 'social referendum'. The 'social referendum' had profound political effects: socialist-liberal coalition broke up and forced the socialists to remove their prime minister and continue the governance with a minority support in Parliament. In fact, the referendum made the issue of 'outsourcing' of public health sector the Shibboleth of Hungarian politics. As a secondary effect negative political

connotation was attributed to notions like outsourcing, public-private partnerships, privatization, and liberalization for the decisive majority of the society.

4. Online questionnaire on public administration culture

4.1. Motivation for public sector jobs: research on the central civil service

The following group of questions throws light on the basic motivational elements of public administrators choosing public sector occupation as a job. According to the results of the research neither prestige, salary nor job stability could serve as motivational factors. The element however that was able to attract the interest of public administrators was devotion to public service. Serving the public (without any detailed definition) can be evaluated as a vivid example of Weberian cultural heritage in a public administration reality where virtually no other factors can be taken as positive motivators.

Table 2 contains responses that reflect an overall average figure generated on a 1-100 scale from responses on a 1-5 scale. Responses are displayed in detail regarding major sociological and administration-specific factors whereas responses are characteristically different according to such parameters. Sensed trust, trust in career, remuneration and prestige are the basic motivational questions. Despite the strong Weberian legacy, most of these parameters are scored relatively low.

Table 2: Questions on trust and prestige

Category	Question	Result (average of 1-5 on a 1-100 scale)
Trust (external)	What is your sentiment, to what extent do Hungarians trust public administration and its operation?	58
Trust (in career)	To what extent do you feel your colleagues believe in a civil service career path?	48
Remuneration	To what extent are you contented with your remuneration?	38
Remuneration (salary outlook)	To what extent are you content with the potential of your salary increase?	31
Prestige (recent change in prestige)	Have you felt any change in the moral appreciation of public administrators in the last three years? If so, what kind of change have you sensed? (Positive: higher scores, negative: lower scores.)	40
Prestige	According to your everyday experience, what prestige does public administration have as a place to work?	45

The most important findings on trust as a decisive contextual element are visualized by Figure 1.

According to the responses given to questions on trust, sentiment on sensed social trust in PA appears to be positive but all other factors are scored relatively or definitely low. Speculatively this can be reasoned by a widespread reform fatigue in the examined sample.

The following group of motivational questions delve even deeper into the motivational system of Hungarian civil servants. The results on question on devotion (see Table 3) is in interesting contrast with the following couple of questions suggesting that in the value system of Hungarian civil servants, elements of immaterial motiva-

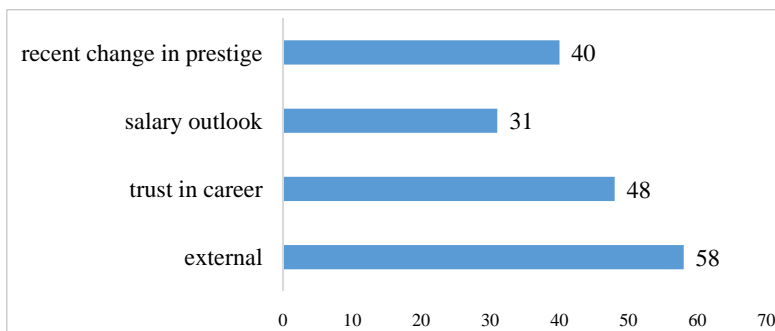


Figure 1: Questions on trust

tions are much more valued than material ones. It appears that deeply enculturated Weberian values still exist and have their effect despite all odds. Even if the classical Weberian, material stability – such as existential security – do not exist anymore, still the majority feel an intrinsic obligation that they ought to behave as if these elements existed.

Table 3: Questions on motivation

Category	Question	Result (average of 1-5 on a 1-100 scale)
Devotion	According to your opinion to what extent is devotion characteristic to civil servants?	69
Motivation: existential factors	'For what primary reason is it worth working in the civil service now?' – Existential security	42
	Potential for professional development	33
	Potential of career path	30
	Social prestige	19
	Potential to improve individual skills	19
	Remuneration and benefits	13
	Good salary	4

It can be seen that average scores on devotion are categorically higher than any other existential factors of motivation (Figure 2). This highlights that the self-image of Hungarian central civil service has an extensive altruistic attitude while feeling unrewarded existentially.

The latter group of questions can be used for controlling whether personal, existential factors serve as parameters of increasing the motivation of civil servants. It appears that material rewards or even the feeling for security are far less attractive than devotion to the public. It can be seen that the image of self-sacrificing devotion to the public good overwhelmingly dominates what the public thinks about civil service careers. Similarly, public administrators see themselves as very devoted employees who are otherwise underpaid and not sufficiently rewarded in any material or immaterial ways.

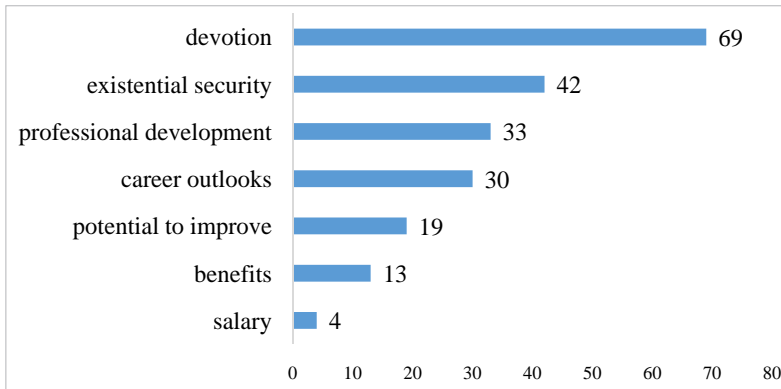


Figure 2: Questions on motivation

4.2. Questions on cooperation

In the following set of questions examined, I looked at issues regarding cooperation. These are listed in Table 4. Cooperation in this research was examined in vertical and in horizontal dimensions as well. Vertical cooperation was analyzed in terms of ‘upwards’ connections: hierarchy, and ‘downwards’ connections: delegation. Hierarchy and the importance of formalized internal procedures characterize the Hungarian public administration but civil servants tend to long for delegation. Thus it is logical to conclude that delegation of tasks is preferred within hierarchical structures. Public administrators long for the trust of their superiors and have intention to reward such trust with higher performance. Ad-hoc relations with civic organizations and with private companies are unwillingly accepted and tolerated by the respondents while outsourcing of tasks as well as the idea of increasing competition among civil servants are definitely rejected by the majority. It appears that the respondents are not in favor of de-constructing hierarchical structures. Still, there is a strong sympathy to delegate competences from higher layers of hierarchy to lower echelons of hierarchy. In the following set of questions, factual questions were asked regarding the experience of the respondent while questions on the respondent’s preferences (desires) were also asked.

The responses on competition differed slightly according to the respondents’ leadership position. Leaders would be slightly more supportive of competition (49) than the average. Also public administrators working at Ministries are generally more supportive of the idea of competition (49) than the average; still, the concept of potential competition is slightly rejected.

The responses to questions on internal operations (Figure 3) reflect a strong Weberian attitude whereas the image of the expert (specialist) public administrator joins the strong factual and desired support for strong internal regulations and hierarchy. Competition (competition among civil servants) as a potential internal coordination method appears to be generally rejected by public administrators.

Table 4: Questions on Weberian values and on competition

Category	Question	Result (average of 1-5 on a 1-100 scale)
Hierarchy: factual	To what extent are hierarchy and chain of command characteristic at your place of work?	83
Hierarchy: desire	To what extent do you think hierarchy and chain of command should be important at your place of work?	75
Internal bylaws: factual	To what extent are internal bylaws and internal instructions characteristic at your place of work?	84
Internal bylaws: desire	To what extent do you think internal bylaws and internal instructions should be important at your place of work?	87
Expertise: factual	To what extent is it characteristic to exploit the expertise of public administrators at your place of work?	70
Expertise: desire	To what extent do you think it would be important to exploit the expertise of public administrators at your place of work?	92
Impartiality: factual	To what extent is it characteristic to be impartial at your place of work?	77
Impartiality: desire	To what extent would you support the idea of impartiality at your place of work?	95
Competition: factual	To what extent is it characteristic to create competition among public administrators at your place of work?	43
Competition: desire	To what extent would you support the idea of creating competition among public administrators at your place of work?	44

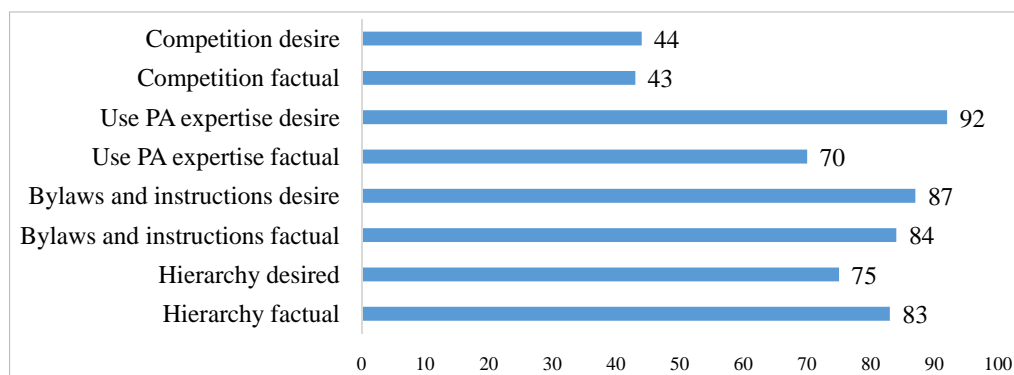


Figure 3: Questions on internal operations (average of 1-5 scores on a 1-100 scale)

4.3. Horizontal forms of cooperation

4.3.1. Diverse perceptions on outsourcing

In the following section the research examined the sentiment on preferred horizontal connections in terms of various forms of external (external to public administration structures) and internal (within the body of public administration) cooperation. Regarding the main argument of this article, the following two questions are central:

Factual question: To what extent is it characteristic to outsource tasks at your place of work? – 47

Desire: To what extent would you support outsourcing tasks at your place of work? – 47

In this sense, outsourcing should be understood as a general concept relying on the experience of civil servants displayed at the beginning of the article. Outsourcing was mostly represented by PPPs and contracting out projects. Concessions played a marginal role in Hungary throughout the 2000s and any dysfunctions of concession projects hardly reached the surface.

In both cases the overall average of responses is slightly rejecting: 47. The composition of responses however, entirely differ from the previous ones that are relatively homogeneous in the main sociological parameters. Regarding the perceptions on outsourcing, the picture is much more diverse. Male respondents tend to dislike outsourcing (37) more than females (52) who are basically neutral to the idea (Figure 4).

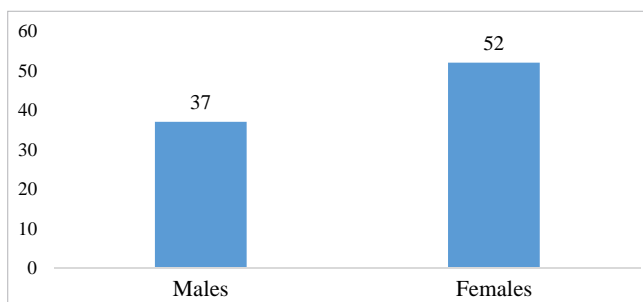


Figure 4: Perceptions on outsourcing by gender

Administrators in leadership positions are more against (35) than non-leaders (50) who are rather neutral. Similarly to this pattern, the Ministerial civil service is against outsourcing (36), the regional government offices are neutral (varying between 46-51), while central government offices are rather against (35) outsourcing (Figure 5).

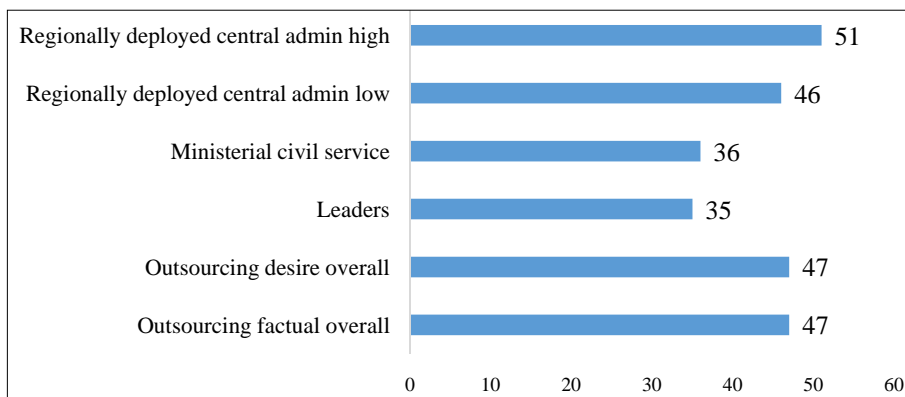


Figure 5: Perceptions on outsourcing by position in administration

If we look at the parameters of years spent in the civil service, (Figure 6) an interesting observation can be made: the more experienced the civil servant's, the less sympathetic he or she tends to be towards outsourcing. Civil servants employed less than one year ago support the idea of outsourcing by 60. Civil servants having 1-2

years of experience demonstrate slightly less support: 56; 3-5 years: 49, 6-10 years: 46, 11-20 years: 43, more than 20 years of experience: 43 (all scores are 1-5 scores on a 1-100 scale).

Interestingly, perceptions on outsourcing differ not only by position in the administration but also by sociological parameters such as age, education, years of experience and even gender.

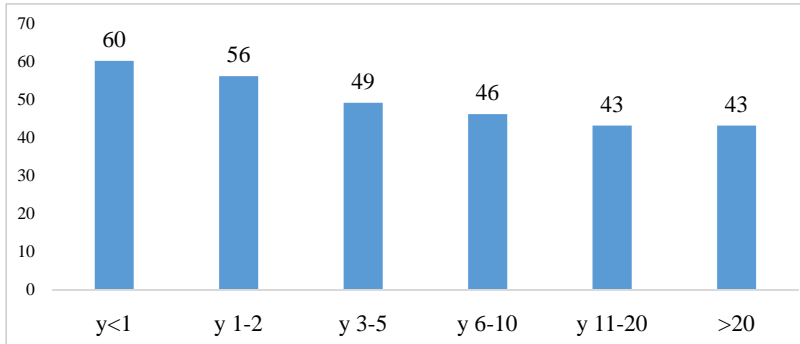


Figure 6: Perceptions on outsourcing by years of employment

If the respondents are divided according to age (Figure 7), the pattern of civil service sentiment on the idea of outsourcing is similar. In fact, perceptions on outsourcing appear to be even more related to age than to years of work experience.

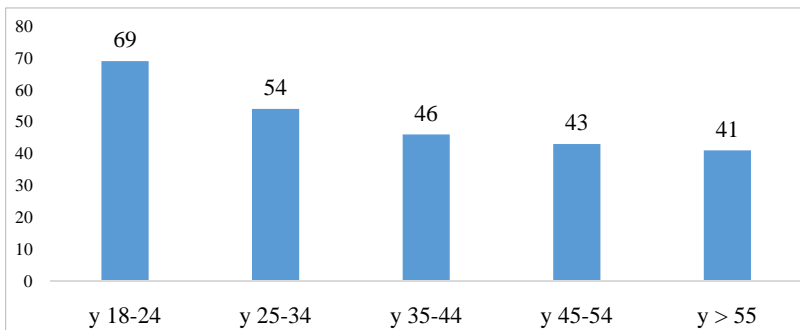


Figure 7: Perceptions on outsourcing by age

High support in the young age cluster however has to be understood while taking the special training requirements of civil service into account. Respondents with only secondary school training support outsourcing (63), respondents having academy degree (by German terminology: Hochschule, Fachhochschule) support outsourcing much less: 47, while civil servants having university degrees tend to reject outsourcing being in favor only by 39, such as PhDs (39) (Figure 8).

In terms of outsourcing, the divergence of groups by sociological and public administration specific parameters add up to a unique pattern. Surprisingly, it can be observed that the relatively 'underprivileged' groups within central public admin-

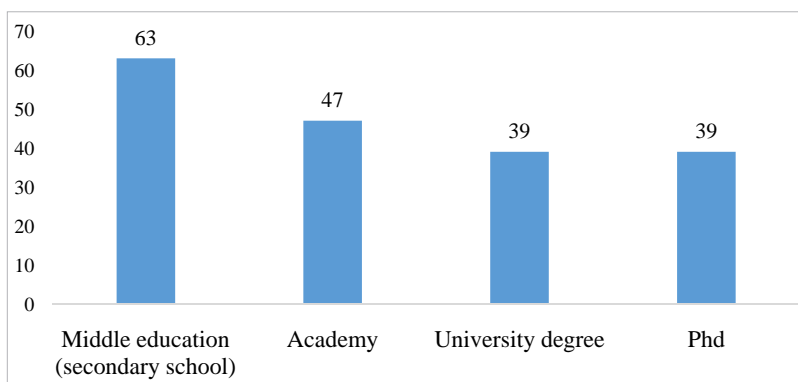


Figure 8: Perceptions on outsourcing by level of education

istration are pro-outsourcing (young, unexperienced, uneducated, territorially deployed and female public administrators) while the usual beneficiaries (male, senior, experienced, leader, educated, public administrators working in Ministries) are rather against outsourcing. In the overall perspective, horizontal relocation of public duties in the form of outsourcing is rather rejected than supported by civil servants *en bloc*, especially by the holders of leadership positions, the ones who have professional experience.

4.3.2. Willingness of horizontal cooperation apart from outsourcing

Do Hungarian civil servants dislike all kinds of re-configurations of task allocation or their discontent is targeted only to market players? The next question might throw some light on further civil service preferences regarding cooperation potentials. Answers to questions on other kinds of horizontal cooperation can highlight whether Hungarian public administrators are generally unwilling to cooperate with external players in a horizontal position or they have specific reservations or doubts about outsourcing. The following question attempts to map whether Hungarian administrators' reservations on forms of horizontal cooperation are specific or general.

'To what extent would you consider important the following: Cooperation with external professional organizations and social partners?' To this question, the average of 81 support shows that the Hungarian civil service is very much for cooperation with external players in the case the partners belong to either the 'professional' or the 'social' categories. The online research did not have the opportunity to define the content of these categories but what can be seen is that these words have positive connotations in connection with the notions of 'external' and 'cooperation'. On the other hand, the average score of 69 of the respondents sense such cooperation in real terms. Still at this point one does not know for sure whether 'professional' partners would be market players or not, according to the Hungarian public administrators' opinion. It requires further clarification whether welcoming the idea of external professional cooperation embraces for profit external professional cooperation or market

players ought to be rather excluded from this group. The next question might add a certain aspect to this. 'To what extent would you consider important the following: Establishing occasional work relationships with external organizations such as market players?' The overall response score was 69, significantly lower than the support to the previous question on cooperation with professional and social partners while real sensing of occasional cooperation with external market players was 62. Thus it can be concluded that even in a non-institutionalized, occasional basis the Hungarian public administrators have a definitely lower sympathy to cooperation with market players than to other forms of cooperation either within the corpus of public administration or external to it.

4.4. Vertical cooperation

Vertical relocation of competencies in the form of delegation is also a possibility to increase efficiency of public institutions. Delegation in this sense should be understood as a general concept of allocating administrative tasks and decisions to the lower echelons of the public administration system. The overall figure is highly supportive to the idea of delegation within public sector. Leaders, Ministry civil servants above 55 years are somewhat above the average that is undoubtedly high (75). In contrast to this the factual question on delegation received 67. This signifies that the sentiment regarding the level of delegation is relatively high but the desired weight of delegation would be even higher. The question on delegation can be used as a control question to the one on outsourcing in the sense that the general discontent concerning outsourcing does not appear to be because of an instinctive pursuit for centralization.

The characteristics of the Hungarian public administrative culture regarding the enculturated nature of hierarchy are even more explicit when the following question is examined: 'To what extent would you support the idea of involving government civil servants into decisions?' This question allows the respondent to think about delegating competences to him/her by involving him/her into decisions. 'Decisions' in this sense does not mean any administrative procedural decisions but policy decisions taken at the policy-making level. So, implicitly the question reflects on what public administrators have in mind of being part of decision-making at the policy level. The average support of respondents was 80 (factual question: 57) with a really homogenous composition in all respondent clusters. If the same was asked in a similar wording whether public administrators would support the idea of being involved as partners into the flow of work, they virtually totally agree (90) while the factual question received only 69. The strong divergence between desires and reality regarding civil servants' involvement in decisions and operations throw light on the hierarchic culture based on the isolation of the well-informed on the top echelons of the system. Civil service involvement in decision-making is supported but civil service involvement in implementation is even more supported by the respondents.

'To what extent do you think the following should be important: involving civil servants in decision-making?' The answer to this question was 80% on average. Deci-

sion-making in this sense reflects any decision-making taking place at a given public administration body. The figure (80 on average of 1-5 scores on a 1-100 scale) has a meaning of politics-administration relationship. It appears that central civil service is longing for acknowledgement by its leaders that mostly means political leadership. If the question was slightly modified, the responses would have been significantly different. 'To what extent do you think it would be important to involve administrators as partners into internal operations?' Response score: 90. In this case the question was modified from involvement in decisions to involvement in implementation processes. In practical terms, naturally public administrators are involved in policy implementation, but not necessarily as 'partners'. Being a 'partner' appears to have such a positive connotation for the Hungarian public administrators that they almost univocally supported such an idea. 'Partner' relationship in this sense reflects the recognition of a non-hierarchical but collegial manner and cohesion within the Hungarian central public administration.

Conclusions

The current paper is built on a research that pursues evidence on the latent assumptions of cultural elements influencing the national public administration characteristics. A similar approach appears in such works as House *et al.*, *The Globe Study* (2004), as well as Wan Wart *et al.*, *Leadership and Culture* (2015). The Hungarian case study offers empirical evidence on the educated assumptions regarding outsourcing, internal and external cooperation and hierarchy in a legalistic-Weberian setting. According to the findings of the research, Hungary can be characterized by strong devotion to public service without job stability or significant remuneration let alone social prestige. Public administrators tend to believe in the power of hierarchy and strictly regulated chain of command although they think that public administrators should be treated as diligent implementers of government policies. When implementation was targeted by our question, respondents primarily recognized the importance of cooperation within public administration itself. Afterwards, as a secondary option they considered cooperation with social partners and external professional institutions. Occasional cooperation with market players appeared to be slightly supported but outsourcing is definitely rejected. The reasons of such sentiment can be rationalized by cultural elements inherited from the past and described by outstanding pieces of research; the Hungarian experience on a series of failed attempts of state minimalization through outsourcing projects between 2002 and 2010 still have a vivid memory in most public administrators except for the young and inexperienced cluster. Cultural and contextual elements together have a robust rationale. Concerning data collection biases one can argue that if data collection is done as part of a government project than this might distort responses through self-censorship. To such concerns the total research design could be unwrapped briefly. The total research was composed by a triangular design consisting of 40 stakeholder interviews, an online questionnaire (cited in this paper) and a sample of 1000 representative to the entire population.

Nonetheless, certain biases might not have been avoided, however in many questions extreme low points were also detected, such as the attractiveness of payment that was 4 on a 1-100 scale

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