

## Call for Papers

# The politics of performance management and measurement in the public sector

### EGPA Study Group on Performance in the Public Sector

Conference of the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA)  
7-10 September, 2011, Bucharest, Romania

The **EGPA Study Group on Performance in the Public Sector** studies aspects of public sector performance. Public sector performance topics in the past have included the use of trust and satisfaction indicators, case studies of organisational performance, measurement issues and the utilisation of public sector performance information. After the successful meeting last year in Toulouse, we again invite papers focusing on the politics of performance management and measurement in the public sector to continue the debate at the 2011 conference in Bucharest.

Performance management and measurement are anything but neutral. Consider two familiar international examples: The PISA study assessing students' performance in OECD countries has tremendous effects on how different national systems are assessed by the media, the population and political and administrative actors. The World Bank Study Doing Business surveying the business-friendliness of the regulatory and administrative endowment of a particular country also has a substantial impact on how the countries are perceived (from outside and within). In both cases, the design of the selection and design of indicators, their detailed definition has tremendous effects on the results of the studies – and are therefore highly contested and subject to more or less visible political battles concerning the construction of performance. Many more examples from domestic contexts could be listed, ranging from the design of target systems for public services to performance related pay schemes for civil servants. The way performance is constructed matters for how favourable or unfavourable the activity of an individual public servant, an agency or a whole policy subsystem will be assessed.

The selection and design of the indicators, the organisation of the measurement process and the way measurement is embedded in modes of control and accountability matter a lot for how the affected parties react to such systems. Behavioural coping strategies such as 'gaming' and 'crowding out' effects (i.e. teaching to the test) are now widely reported and discussed (though their overall significance is contested).

Much less is known about the role of politics in the design and use of performance information and management system: political conflict and contestation at the macro and micro-level, bargains and negotiation. Following Lasswell, politics is thus broadly defined as issues of who gets what, when and how. Such political issues are at play at all levels; in government wide policy making, in policy sectors and networks, in organisational management, and in micro-management. We do not want to confine the scope to the political institutions.

Hence, some indicative questions include; How is performance information used in the politics of policy-making, i.e. in setting the agenda or evaluating public policy? What games do real actors play in the design and implementation of performance management systems

in order to deflect blame for poor results and to be rewarded for good results? How are different organizational units in government using performance information in steering, controlling and governing other organizations, i.e. in the relation between core executives and line ministries?

We invite empirical, conceptual or theoretical papers studying the politics of public performance management and measurement from different theoretical and empirical perspectives. Relevant topics include, among others:

- Framing contests in the development of performance measurement and management systems
- Turf wars in the decision-making about and the operations of performance systems
- Negotiations between principals and agents or between equal partners about the indicators to be used to measure performance, progress, compliance etc. in contracts, networks, or policies.
- Evidence about the scope and real effects of coping strategies developed in reaction to indicators systems
- Bureau-political dynamics that performance management engenders in organizations

## Practicalities

The EGPA Permanent Study Group on Performance in the Public Sector held its first meeting in 1986. Papers from recent conferences have been published in symposia and special issues of the *International Journal of Public Administration* (2003), *Public Performance and Management Review* (2005), and the *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* (2006), and the *International Review of Administrative Science* (2008). The book "Performance information in the public sector: How it is used" was published by Palgrave in October 2008.

Study Group website: <http://www.publicsectorperformance.eu>

Practical information on the EGPA 2011 conference, and the other Study Groups, can soon be found on the dedicated conference website <http://www.egpa2011.com>

Please submit a short abstract outlining (max 2p.)

- the title of the paper
- the argument and contents of the paper
- the research method of your contribution, and the empirical material to be used (if applicable)
- name, affiliation, and contact information of the author(s)

The meeting will consist of a number of highly focused, intensive sessions combining papers using similar theoretical or empirical approaches, and a number of open sessions that will be used to discuss work in progress and innovative approaches. An invited keynote will introduce key issues, and a panel will discuss prospects for a new research agenda on the politics of performance.

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011**. Papers will be selected by the chairpersons no later than **June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**. Authors whose abstracts have been accepted should dispatch their completed text to the chairpersons and to [f.maron@ias-iisa.org](mailto:f.maron@ias-iisa.org), by 31 July 2011 at the latest.

Papers will be made available on the Study Group Website. Due to time restraints, only a limited number of papers will be accepted.

Please e-mail paper proposals/abstracts in .doc or .rtf format (please do not use.pdf!) to the study group convenors:

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