Plenary conclusions of the world café

“The impact of strategic planning documents (SPD) on the central public administration performance”

Preliminary remarks:

➢ SPD are vital instruments for public management nowadays
➢ They can take different forms, depending on level of activity and purpose
➢ In connection with the objective to increase organizational performance, SPD combine 2 key principles of new public management for the organization of public administrations
SPD as results of MPM principles

1) The separation between functions of strategic planning steering and control on one side, and of execution/implementation on the other side;

2) A performance oriented form of management based upon “contractualization” (linking objectives and resources to indicators and reporting obligations)
Topics addressed at the table

During the three rounds of discussion, discussion with the participants has been focused on the following issues:

(1) Are SPD useful in achieving and assessing performance? What are the main obstacles met in the process of choosing / implementing a strategic plan?
(2) The separation between functions of strategic planning steering and control on one side, and of execution/implementation on the other side;

(3) A performance oriented form of management based upon “contractualization” (linking objectives and resources to indicators and reporting obligations)
## Topic 1: SPD as mean to increase performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Usefulness</strong></th>
<th><strong>Obstacles</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ In any <em>cases for big projects but not for daily business</em> <em>(DE)</em></td>
<td>Lack of hierarchy between different strategies <em>(FIN)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ <em>Very much when lined why budgetary planning</em> <em>(CY)</em></td>
<td>Too many SPD <em>(BU)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ <em>If the objectives (what) and the means (how?) are clearly defined</em></td>
<td>No differentiation between the levels of strategy <em>(LIT)</em></td>
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<td>✓ Decision makers are bound to the content which facilitates political continuity</td>
<td>Problem of time/political decision <em>(CZ)</em></td>
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<td><strong>Difference between goal setting and strategy: what is a stake and what should change?</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty to translate SPD as operational goals <em>(PT)</em></td>
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Topic 1: SPD as mean to increase performance

**SOLUTIONS**

- Guidelines with clear objectives and explanations about the purpose/sense of the strategy and how the means should help to reach objectives
- Supervision of all SPD by one authority
- Introduce coordination mechanisms
- Communication in both directions

**Obstacles**

- Lack of hierarchy between different strategies (FIN)
- Too many SPD (BU)
- No differentiation between the levels of strategy (LIT)
- Problem of time/political decision (CZ)
- Difficulty to translate SPD as operational goals (PT)
Topic 2: How central administration can make sure that decisions will be implemented…

… as meant in the SPD (what?) … as foreseen in the SPD (how?)

Possible reasons for deficient compliance at implementation level:

- Lack of realism during the definition of objectives by pol. decision makers (IT)
- When SPD is just a tool box without vision or coherence (FR)
- Different temporalities between adm and pol time (EST)
- Lack of continuity between governments (EST)
- Political dynamic (mistrust between partners) make things complicated (FIN)
Topic 2: How central administration can make sure that decisions will be implemented…

… as meant in the SPD (what?)

… as foreseen in the SPD (how?)

No problem, because:

Objectives always a need to be interpreted! Means always need to be adapted!

What matters:
✓ Keep big picture in mind
✓ Dialog during implementation
✓ Involvement of stakeholders (civil servants and users)
✓ Consider SPD more as a framework than a rigid contract

Challenges:
Differentiation vs generalization; fulfilling the goals vs achieving results

Formalism in reports as a problem: Inaccurate information and data

**Reasons:**

- **Reporting too bureaucratic or complex (DK)**

- **Decision maker need results for communication (must be measurable (PT)**

- **Trade off/problem of measure (SW)**

Wrong expectations: Objectivity, rationality/evidence based policy making

Formalism in reports as a problem: Inaccurate information and data

Solutions

- Limited number of goals that are related to core tasks
- Bottom-up definition of goals
- Develop ownership
- Qualitative instead of quantitative indicators
- Right to experiment + learning from mistakes
- Focus on change management
- More critical thinking and taking into account social sciences
Structural problems

• **SPD**: instruments of control (sanction) or of steering (change)?

• **Segmentation of ownership**: division of labour between strategic planning and implementation

• **Managerial and administrative culture**