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Public Opinion Surveys as Input to Administrative Reform

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**PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AS INPUT
TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM**

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THE SIGMA PROGRAMME

SIGMA — Support for Improvement in Governance and Management in Central and Eastern European Countries — is a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union. The initiative supports public administration reform efforts in thirteen countries in transition, and is principally financed by the European Union's Phare Programme.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an intergovernmental organisation of 29 democracies with advanced market economies. Its Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members channels the Organisation's advice and assistance over a wide range of economic issues to reforming countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Phare provides grant financing to support its partner countries in Central and Eastern Europe to the stage where they are ready to assume the obligations of membership of the European Union.

Phare and SIGMA serve the same countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Established in 1992, SIGMA works within the OECD's Public Management Service, which provides information and expert analysis on public management to policy-makers and facilitates contact and exchange of experience amongst public sector managers. SIGMA offers beneficiary countries access to a network of experienced public administrators, comparative information, and technical knowledge connected with the Public Management Service.

SIGMA aims to:

- assist beneficiary countries in their search for good governance to improve administrative efficiency and promote adherence of public sector staff to democratic values, ethics and respect of the rule of law;
- help build up indigenous capacities at the central governmental level to face the challenges of internationalisation and of European Union integration plans; and
- support initiatives of the European Union and other donors to assist beneficiary countries in public administration reform and contribute to co-ordination of donor activities.

Throughout its work, the initiative places a high priority on facilitating co-operation among governments. This practice includes providing logistical support to the formation of networks of public administration practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe, and between these practitioners and their counterparts in other democracies.

SIGMA works in five technical areas: Public Administration Development Strategies; Policy-making, Co-ordination and Regulation; Budgeting and Resource Allocation; Public Service Management; and Administrative Oversight, Financial Control and Audit. In addition, an Information Services Unit disseminates published and on-line materials on public management topics.

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FOREWORD

This report examines the use of public opinion surveys as tools to advance administrative reforms in western European countries and central and eastern European countries. The aim is to demonstrate to central and eastern European governments and civil servants the utility of public opinion surveys before, during and after reforms in their countries and to encourage their systematic use.

Up to now, public opinion surveys have received a great deal of scientific attention with regard to methodological problems of data gathering, data analysis and interpretation of data. There is also much literature on administrative reforms in both OECD countries and central and eastern European countries. Although this literature is widely used, there is very little information on the use of public opinion surveys in the context of administrative reforms. By providing an overview of surveys in western countries, as well as country studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania, and by using examples from different administrative settings, this publication can contribute to a broad understanding of how surveys can provide useful inputs to administrative reforms.

The report was based on a common outline developed by the authors of the four papers in collaboration with four experts, and under the direction of Jak Jabes, Senior Counsellor, Public Administration Development Strategies, SIGMA. The authors are Elke Löffler, Public Management Service (PUMA), OECD; Michal Illner, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; Julia Szalai, Academy of Sciences of Hungary; and Rasa Alisauskiene, Baltic Surveys, Lithuania. The experts are David Zussman, President of the Public Policy Forum and Professor at the University of Ottawa, Canada; Jon Eivind Kolberg, Research Director at the Institute for Applied Social Research, Oslo, Norway; Juan Diez-Nicolas, Professor, Complutense University, Madrid, Spain; and Christian Haerpfer, Research Director of the Paul Lazarsfeld Gesellschaft, Vienna, Austria. Administrative assistance was provided at SIGMA by Jane Delarue. The country reviews reflect the situation as at the end of 1997.

For further information, please contact Jak Jabes at the address below.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Opinion Surveys Are Information Tools for Governments in Designing and Implementing Reforms

Responsive governments act on the basis of information they receive. Information about internal functioning and external environment is collected and processed by all of the different organisations (e.g. ministries, commissions, agencies etc.) that make up a public administration. Information influences how people and organisations behave. Therefore, information can constitute a powerful tool to change behavioural patterns and reform public administration.

Development and modernisation in OECD Member countries has led to a more demanding public which wants better service and a greater say in what services are provided and how. The public's wish to be involved in how decisions are made is on the increase as well. In Central and Eastern Europe, it is increasingly recognised that an efficient and responsive public sector will enhance economic performance. Meeting these goals requires good information and citizen inputs. Public opinion surveys are among the most important means to reach these goals.

Example: Decentralisation has been a significant administrative reform which many transition countries attempted or undertook. In the Czech Republic, opinion surveys commissioned by the Parliament as early as 1991 showed an interesting inconsistency. The public preferred a more deconcentrated form of state but did not wish to see a multiplicity of different state organs which a loose form of state would imply, fearing especially the financial costs. Given that other surveys found a similar pattern of attitudes, it is no surprise that the successive Czech governments have been cautious about territorial reforms.

When launching new policies or pursuing old ones, in attempting to reform institutions and governmental delivery mechanisms, in transforming public services and programmes, and abolishing or creating agencies, governments of Central and Eastern Europe can benefit from information provided by citizens. While certain reforms touch all citizens, many of the changes proposed by governments have effects only on certain groups, which willingly or unwillingly become targeted by changes. Feedback from such interest groups is very important to government in designing or reframing administrative reforms. Just as important, however, is the client focus that distinguishes a responsive public administration. Responsiveness challenges established organisational and personnel practices as well as the culture of the public administration. When designing and implementing substantive policy from the perspective of increasing responsiveness, government organisations can benefit from client feedback..

As transition progresses through the establishment of market economies and democratic systems of government, the citizens of central and eastern European countries are raising their expectations of elected governments. Citizens as consumers are interested in service attributes such as quality, access, price, suitability, safety, and so on. Citizens as taxpayers want a say in policy development and implementation. Part of the reform of public sector service organisations is to render them more sensitive to citizen interests. Opinion surveys provide the data to measure the degree to which responsiveness needs are being met.

To Advance Administrative Reforms Surveys Must Be Well Targeted

Government reforms often fall short of targets because strategies designed to advance administrative reforms fail to incorporate a sound implementation plan. Implementation rests on a solid understanding of the readiness of the system's components (e.g. organisational structures, senior staff, and so on) to change. Opinion surveys constitute an important link, providing data not only about the degree of acceptance that a reform strategy will have, but also about the degree to which those needed to implement it are ready for change.

Administrative reform is not a policy field that captures the interest of the larger public. This means that public opinion surveys dealing with administrative reforms have to make sure that they find their "recipients". One very obvious group of recipients are administrative employees and elites who are directly concerned by such reforms. As the failure of most top-down reforms shows, it is very important for political and administrative change agents to consider administrative reforms as a process and to seek the opinions of those affected by them. In other words, staff surveys that are carried out before, during and after government interventions are an essential factor for the success of structural and cultural administrative reforms.

Example: Faced with data from two consecutive polls testifying to the dissatisfaction of senior officials, the Canadian government launched a major reform process called Public Service 2000 with the objective of changing organisational practices and personnel policies in order to improve the perceived situation. Survey data motivated the reform, which was further fine tuned by follow-up focus group data from senior officials.

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient simply to know about the attitudes and opinions of public administration personnel. Since public organisations are exposed to various political, economic and societal factors, opinion surveys also have to extend to the various "clients" of public administration. Clients of public administration include the direct clients of public service agencies (for example, people receiving social welfare and economic actors), the citizens financing public services (the taxpayers), the voting electorate and the public at large.

Example: The State Youth Issues Council commissioned a poll to find out what young people in Lithuania perceived as their most important problems. Respondents pointed out that a low standard of living, crime and unemployment were the most pressing problems. The results were used to prepare projects for the reform of vocational and professional education and a state programme for a policy on young people.

Administrations Can Use Other Feedback Mechanisms to Complement Survey Data

Of course, there are many ways of obtaining feedback and information. Several different approaches to citizen participation in decision making exist, and governments may use such participatory decision making mechanisms as formal consultations, public hearings, town meetings, user panels, and focus groups. If consultation and information gathering is conducted in the interests of improving public services to consumers, then key informer surveys, consumer complaint procedures, and user advisory boards are other available feedback mechanisms. However, opinion surveys have the advantage of being a rapid, often less costly, means of gathering information where a broad population can be reached. While not as direct as other means by which citizens may influence decision making, surveys still provide for a

sense of participatory democracy, especially if citizens are aware that their attitudes and beliefs are being actively sought by government.

The value of the exercise as participatory democracy increases further still when citizens realise not only that their views are solicited, but that they have an impact on the final choice between policy alternatives. Governments, in their need for effective information, ought to use different feedback mechanisms, especially complementing surveys with some of the other data-based methods mentioned above that increase the public administration's capacity to diagnose problems and intervene effectively. In asking for their opinion, the government consults the citizens but retains the right to make decisions. In the end, governments have to balance and make judgements among competing reform priorities and opinion surveys become one of the useful inputs to this process. Governments must also ensure that undue expectations are not created during the survey process.

Example: Since 1989, Sweden has used an opinion survey instrument called the Swedish National Satisfaction Barometer to contact citizens who are customers of the largest public enterprises to measure their satisfaction with services provided. The possibility to measure satisfaction longitudinally provides cogent information on the success of service reforms that public enterprises make. Such data provides public enterprises with information that would allow them to enhance service delivery, and over time make needed marginal changes to improve services further.

Effective Use of Survey Information Requires Government Safeguards

Whether a government commissions its own poll, or takes note of a poll published in the media, it needs safeguards to ensure that sound polling practices have been used. Some governments put in place central units, often staffed by social science advisors, who can comment on the accuracy of a poll and hence on the validity of the information. The establishment of units in the office of the prime minister or another central agency, are not very costly investments when compared to the advantages they bring. For example, in Poland, such a unit exists in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. It analyses poll results, comments on accuracy and provides the government with updated opinion poll information. In some countries, ministries may have small units responsible for polling. In Canada, the Government Services Ministry has a unit that evaluates all opinion polling contracts before they are tendered.

Reliable Public Opinion Data Helps to Orient Reforms

Governments may establish special units to ensure that data is well collected, or to assess the degree to which independently collected data is useful. This is all the more important when using surveys to help in the administrative reform process. Surveys can and should be used at all phases of reform. Before undertaking reforms, surveys can provide views on the degree of acceptance of proposed changes by citizens. During implementation, the opinions of those for whom changes are designed can tell the public administration how (dis)satisfied they are. Once a reform is accomplished, opinion data serves as the basis for evaluating success and allows the government to plan further changes. Given the difficulties involved in attempting to reform complex systems, it is always important to assess the views of clients (whether they are citizens, public servants, or enterprises) as the information can help to improve on delivery and reduce costs associated with reform. Well collected data helps to orient reforms before start-up, and facilitates the management of progress both during and after the reform process.

Established Social Science Methodology Should Guide the Conduct of Surveys

Public opinion surveys include surveys which address the public in general, employees of public organisations and the higher echelons or “elite” level within public administration. They can also be designed to address specific publics, e.g. clients of particular services. These surveys may be administered by policy-makers and by managers of public organisations. Public opinion surveys are a flexible instrument which can be used for various purposes. But their use and design should be guided by following established social science methodology.

Even though public opinion surveys are used extensively, they are not the answer to every political and organisational problem. The following factors should be considered before initiating the survey process:

- First, the cost of carrying out the survey must be considered;
- Second, it should be kept in mind that specialised skills may be needed to conduct an efficient and effective survey;
- Third, other data-gathering methods should be examined to determine whether they can deliver comparable data more quickly, less expensively, or with less social and organisational disruption;
- Fourth, the government should consider whether there is a willingness and capacity to act on the results;
- Finally, consideration must be given to “survey fatigue”, i.e. to the fact that the overuse of surveys may have long-term negative effects.

Surveys must be methodologically sound in order to produce reliable results. When creating a survey, the item format and contents as well as the survey respondents have to be selected carefully. Mistakes which derive from a wrong study or sample design, as well as those made at the stage of data analysis and interpretation, should be avoided. It is also important that the knowledge obtained by a survey is used appropriately in the decision-making and change management process of administrative reforms.

Polls provide a sort of snapshot of people’s opinions and beliefs concerning a certain public policy issue, but they do not study the structural components of socio-political consciousness to which opinions and beliefs are linked. A widely acknowledged problem, and — depending on the outcome of a policy poll — sometimes an even welcome fact, is the instability of results. Depending on the pollsters and the questions, the results may vary. The analytical power derived from repeated surveys is much greater than that of one-time surveys. Repetitive surveys allow for longitudinal studies that provide additional information on how the results of public opinion surveys change over time.

In the end, the value of the information obtained increases when it is well communicated and easily understood. To maximise the potential input of opinion surveys to the administrative reform process, survey data has to be presented in a way that is understandable to politicians and administrators.

Institution Building Can Benefit From the Use of Opinion Surveys

Surveys are useful because they provide those in charge of administrative reforms with feedback on the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction expressed by different segments of society. As the EU accession process grows in importance, the reactions of the public towards integration into the EU will be constantly measured. Governments will be in a position to use these results to assess not only the readiness of the public but also of their own preparations. As Institution Building progresses in the candidate countries, the

need to gauge readiness to apply the *acquis communautaire* will increase, and surveys constitute an important method of data collection. More importantly, in this domain, opinion surveys could be used to measure and monitor the real and perceived advantages and burdens that accompany the accession process. Polls will allow different strata of the population in a given candidate country to be surveyed, and information with multiple aims to be collected.

Example: In 1996, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary commissioned opinion surveys to measure general knowledge about and attitudes towards European Integration. Results showed most Hungarians to have a positive attitude toward future membership and to be relatively knowledgeable about effects of membership. As a result of the survey, a communication programme was launched by the government aiming to raise awareness of specific aspects of certain policy areas in the EU.

Effective Use of Surveys

Surveys will be used more effectively in Central and Eastern Europe when:

- pollsters and social researchers are trained in communicating their results to politicians and civil servants;
- the proliferation of professional survey agencies creates a market for valid and reliable data;
- democratisation raises the need for feedback;
- results are disclosed by governments which commission polls;
- surveys are used for learning purposes.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

Jak Jabes*

This introductory paper emphasises the utility of public opinion surveys in providing information for administrative reforms, calls for attention to certain methodological issues in their use, and introduces four reports that look at how public opinion surveys have been used by governments. Three country reports from the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Hungary were commissioned along with a paper which brings together examples from OECD Member countries. While the situation characterised in this paper is more or less common to all countries in central and eastern Europe, the general conclusions must be construed as referring to the country reports which follow.

1. Introduction

People have opinions not only on what governments do but also on what governments *should* do. Not only do people express their views periodically in the voting booth, but they are willing to provide them to pollsters when asked. Citizens have developed views about the economy and conditions of employment, about social programs and political institutions that influence and shape their lives. They trust certain institutions more than others, prefer certain social policies over others, have views on the extent to which they find the educational and health systems satisfactory. While individuals differ in their beliefs, social science methods allow us to study opinions to find out whether, in the various groups to which they belong, citizens demonstrate similar views. Over recent years, survey research has significantly developed, aided by the advent of computers which can store, analyse and carry out empirical tests on massive amounts of opinion data.

Today, as citizens, we see the results of survey data in the media. Surveys are being used to measure consumer preferences, political opinions, public attitudes on social issues; and the media use and publish many types of public opinion survey findings. Indeed, newspapers, magazines, radios and television all discuss results of surveys. Surveys are also used by large organisations to gauge their employees' attitudes about their workplace, their jobs, and their clients' satisfaction with the services and products the organisation provides. These findings are then used to improve employee satisfaction, workplace design and productivity, and service delivery. Such customer and employee surveys are very important in the private sector as a way to ensure satisfaction of both the customer and employees; where problems are identified, the surveys provide the organisation with the information required to spot and address these problems in a timely manner.

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Surveys have become important because governments have a great need for information on how their initiatives are perceived. Opinion surveys can provide such information by analysing the replies given by groups of citizens to important questions. The classic survey conducted in every country is the population census, usually undertaken every five or ten years, and which provides the government with significant statistical data on the population. The media ask citizens about their political preferences and degree of trust in and acceptance of politicians. Governments solicit their citizens' views and policy preferences. Other polls are carried out both by central and local governments to measure the extent of public satisfaction with services provided.

Governments undertake surveys when they require information on the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviours of their citizens. Analysis of this data highlights the degree to which these opinions are shared (or not) by different socio-demographic groups. By repeating surveys at regular intervals, governments can find out whether such attitudes and beliefs change over time.

When launching new policies or pursuing old ones, attempting to reform institutions and governmental delivery mechanisms, transforming public services and programmes, and abolishing or creating agencies, governments can often benefit from citizen feedback. While some reforms touch all citizens, many of the changes proposed by governments have effects only on certain groups, which willingly or unwillingly become targeted by changes. Feedback from such interest groups is very important to government in designing or reframing policy.

Of course, there are many ways of obtaining feedback. Several diverse approaches to citizen participation in decision making exist, and governments use participatory mechanisms such as formal consultations and town meetings. However, opinion surveys have the advantage of being a more rapid, and often a less costly, means of gathering information. Opinion surveys allow the government to reach a broader audience, and if sampled correctly, to extrapolate the findings to the population. When additional feedback mechanisms are coupled with a survey, this often provides a better opportunity to delve deeper into issues and to further test some of the findings of the survey.

While not as direct as other avenues by which citizens may influence decision making, surveys still provide for a degree of public participation and a sense of participatory democracy, especially if citizens are aware that their attitudes and beliefs are being actively sought by government. The value of this participatory exercise increases further still when citizens realise not only that their views are solicited, but that they have an impact on the final choice between policy alternatives.

Opinion polls provide governments with information and knowledge about the citizens' reactions to proposed or current policies. Polls which are carried out according to accepted scientific standards also legitimise the information. Of course, governments can use information for partisan purposes, but it is always difficult to manipulate public opinion.

2. Issues for Concern

Since surveys have become more widely used, significant criticisms have been levelled against them — the major one being that surveys can be inaccurate. This criticism is often made by those politicians or senior officials who dislike what surveys reveal. Yet, this criticism is only founded if the survey in question is scientifically unsound: if, for example, the sampling method is wrong or the sample is not representative, if the questionnaire or interview design is flawed or if the data was badly collected and erroneously analysed. When conducting a public opinion survey, one always samples from the larger

population. There always exists a margin of statistical error in the data thus obtained, and this needs to be factored into explanations of results.

In looking at survey results, one should not assume that the responses of those surveyed represent unbiased information of their true perceptions. Images and views can be designed in the media or the market by highly professional information specialists who are or work for clients who are interested in conveying specific messages and images. Sometimes, then, a survey simply tries to get at what a powerful or influential actor (government or business) wants respondents to think about. While this does not destroy the use of surveys, it is yet another methodological feature and concern that further complicates the interpretation of survey results.

Nowadays, given the great strides that have been made in social and behavioural sciences, it is very easy to guard against such flaws. That said, however, when faced with results of an opinion poll, the reader should try to glean information on the study design, sampling method and data analysis. Often, in the media, little information is provided on these aspects of the polls. However, when governments commission polls, they do have access to this information and are in a position to assess its degree of accuracy.

The issue of accuracy is even more pertinent in the central and eastern European region. People's trust in the government was always low in former communist regimes. Additionally, information, especially statistical, was defective. It was not so much due to the fact that the statisticians were not qualified, but rather because politics determined what would be measured and what would be omitted from the statistical measurement. This has resulted in public scepticism in post communist countries of the value of information, specially if it is produced and disseminated by government. Therefore, accuracy here is a two-way street. Officials in governments tend to discount data because they believe that polls are inaccurate, and the public has a tendency to distrust government and, therefore, have little faith in the results of government polls.

Another criticism suggests that polls may have a negative effect on the political process, influencing citizens to change their views on politicians and issues due to the "bandwagon" effect. This criticism is levelled more towards polls which deal with the popularity of political candidates and is especially true during elections. That a poll may create views on a subject which are artificial or which are politically manipulated is a possibility which cannot be ruled out. Opinion surveys can, in particular, provide politicians and officials with the opportunity to manipulate the attitudes of a wider public which receives the results through official and media sources.

3. Building Safeguards

But, in the final analysis, it is mostly through polls that we learn what the public thinks. One of the best safeguards against criticisms thrown at polls is the existence of a marketplace. With technological and informational advances, as well as educational and training opportunities available to anyone interested in becoming a pollster, the marketplace in OECD Member countries, as well as in central and eastern European countries, is saturated with people and organisations entering the polling business: academic researchers, contract research institutions, think tanks, government agencies, private sector polling organisations and market research companies, to name but a few. The advantage of the marketplace is the generation of alternative sources of expertise, the establishment of standards and norms, as well as the need it creates for establishing and maintaining a reputation for doing state of the art, scientifically valid surveys.

The ease of use of the technology which allows polls to be carried out, and the relatively low cost of information gathering, has led to a proliferation of polls. As pointed out above, when the media reports on poll results, they rarely provide additional information on how the poll was conducted, except to provide an indication of the margin of error of the poll. Whether a government commissions its own poll, or wants to be inspired by a poll published in the media, it still has to safeguard against accuracy issues. Some governments put in place central units, often staffed by social science advisors, who can comment on the accuracy of a poll and hence on the validity of the information. The establishment of units in the office of the prime minister or another central agency are not very costly investments when compared to the advantages they provide. For example, in Poland, such a unit exists in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. It analyses poll results, comments on accuracy and provides the government with updated opinion poll information. In some countries, ministries may have small units responsible for polling (e.g. in Canada the Government Services Ministry has a unit that evaluates all opinion polling contracts before they are tendered).

4. The Reports

We attempted to conduct a preliminary assessment of the degree to which public opinion surveys were being used by governments in OECD Member countries and in central and eastern European countries for public administration reform. The objectives of the reports which follow were multiple. We wanted to get an understanding of the use of opinion surveys in advancing administrative reform in general and within government, and ascertain their use in improving human resource management. A related objective was to establish the extent to which surveys are used as information tools as well as reform tools, especially in countries in transition. A third objective was to use the findings of the reports to launch pilot instruments, build up interest in the use of surveys and, if possible, undertake comparative work in central and eastern European countries.

To meet these objectives, we commissioned a number of country studies from central and eastern European countries. To put the work in a comparative perspective, we also sought to include a review from OECD Member countries. In order to have a common purpose in the undertaking, we agreed with the drafters of the reports the plan of the country studies and the areas to be included.

Among the questions addressed by the reports are the following: How do governments use surveys to monitor and to influence reform? To what extent are governments interested in obtaining views of their citizens as well as their own employees, i.e. of civil servants? Is the satisfaction of clients, citizens, civil servants important?

In the reports that follow, the reader will find that the same structure has been articulated around a number of key issues. First, we look at how the performance and acceptance of economic, political and social institutions are monitored. What is the extent of trust in economic, political and social institutions? How is the performance of these institutions rated by the citizens? The analysis of different levels of trust in central government, civil service, the police, the military, parliament, political parties, courts, etc., provides an indication of how the general public in post-communist societies identifies with parts of the administrative system.

Second, the authors attempt to get an understanding of polls dealing with policy priorities. What are the reform priorities of the population? Where do citizens perceive that the most urgent needs to start reforms lie? Does the population show preferences for given sectors or issues (e.g. health sector, educational system, income maintenance programmes, social protection, among others) as the targets for administrative reforms?

Third, EU integration is discussed, where instruments such as the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer have been widely used.

Fourth, a long section is devoted to the use of public opinion surveys in the policy cycle, whether it be at the level of policy initiation, implementation or evaluation. Here, we look at surveys which deal with the views citizens have on changes in the size of government and the number of ministries. The conceptual approach of public policy research regards administrative behaviour in general, and administrative reforms in particular, not as linear processes but as feedback processes between administrative institutions and social and political actors. This interaction between institutional actions and the reactions of actors calls for the observation of institutional behaviour and the measurement of actors' attitudes over time at certain intervals. Polls included under this heading are those conducted as reforms take place, so that elements of the planned reform can be changed in the course of implementation, together with polls dealing with the satisfaction of citizens with policy initiatives. When studying satisfaction, polls which report opinions and attitudinal patterns of civil servants are also important and are therefore included. The motivation of civil servants (the driving forces of achievement, career development and personal goals), as well as the level of satisfaction of senior civil servants with their jobs and organisations, are paramount in helping a government undertake civil service reforms.

Finally, we look at the internal and external images and perceptions of central government and public administration. These are polls in which the self-image of institutions (internal image) developed by those who work there is compared to that of the general public (external image). Very often, one can expect considerable differences between these two facets of the institution's image.

Additionally, all country reports from Central and Eastern Europe include brief introductions which provide an overview of administrative reform as well as a brief history of survey research in the country. In each case, comparisons between the responses of the population and elites are provided when possible. A brief paragraph identifies where survey data may be found in each country.

The country reports point out significant differences and similarities among the three countries selected for this report. The Czech Republic and Hungary had well-developed sociological traditions and institutes that undertook surveys at the national level prior to, and during, the communist era. Following transition, personnel working for these institutes moved quickly to the private sector to form polling organisations. The existence of a well-established tradition and trained personnel clearly accounts for the wealth in the number of opinion surveys undertaken in both countries. Lithuania, as a Soviet satellite, did not seem to have such a tradition, and most survey work started during the 1990s.

Some similarities must also be pointed out. In all three countries, it is difficult to gain access to opinion surveys commissioned by governments from private polling companies. It is rarely possible to obtain the results of all data analysis, and even more difficult to know how the results were used by government in subsequent decision-making. While one can understand the privileged client relationship which private polling companies would claim, it is more difficult to understand why governments would not make such information available. The right to know and transparency exigencies will probably make more polling data available in the future as countries in transition deal with access to information issues. In many OECD Member countries, when governments commission polls, the public has access to the information obtained shortly afterwards. For example, the Norwegian Social Science Data Service receives all survey data from the Norwegian Statistical Office. These data are documented and made available not only to the Norwegian social science community but to international research fellows as well. Access to such data is free. Furthermore, data from public opinion surveys carried out by private firms in Norway are also made available (except for certain consumer preference data).

An important point must be highlighted here. In OECD Member countries as well as in central and eastern European countries, a great deal of polling information currently exists. Academics, researchers in think tanks, private polling agencies, government opinion survey institutes, statistical offices and many others conduct surveys where citizens are asked questions dealing with their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions related to work that the government undertakes. In writing the papers, it soon became clear that a choice had to be made from amongst a multitude of examples. As a consequence, the reader should regard the cases described in boxes throughout each report as a representative example. Each example was chosen because the author felt it represented well the issue at hand, that the survey was scientifically sound (i.e. in terms of sampling and representativeness), that the questionnaire design and study design met scientific criteria and that it had been commissioned by government authorities with clear objectives in mind. In this manner, through each country report and the lead review on the use of opinion polls in OECD Member countries, the authors present a wide panorama of surveys.

5. Summary and Conclusions

We have taken examples of how public opinion surveys have been used as tools to advance aspects of the public administration agenda in OECD countries as a mirror to our understanding of how they are used in central and eastern European countries. The reports show that wide use is made of opinion polls in countries in transition. Polls are used to gather views on all aspects of administrative life — to find out whether citizens trust their institutions, what aspects of policies they prefer and how satisfied they are with the accomplishments of their governments. However, we have also observed that this wide ranging activity is not systematically co-ordinated by governments.

As they prepare for European accession and NATO membership, central and eastern European countries would benefit from systematic and longitudinal information on how their citizens view governmental achievements. One of the best ways to assess these attitudes is through focused surveys, supported by the creation of a unit at the centre of government to monitor and sponsor polling activity on its behalf.

Surveys will be used more effectively when those who conduct them can communicate clearly and effectively their findings to politicians and senior officials. In addition, governments need to disclose the results of polls they commission in the interests of ensuring transparency and obtaining valuable feedback.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AS INPUTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

Elke Löffler*

1. Preface

This paper examines the public opinion survey as a tool of administrative reform mostly in western European countries. Public opinion surveys include surveys which address the public in general, employees of public organisations and the higher echelons or “elite” level within public administration. These surveys may be administered by policy-makers and by managers of public organisations. Public opinion surveys are a flexible instrument which can be used for various purposes.

Even though public opinion surveys are used extensively, they are not the answer to every political and organisational problem. The following factors should be considered before initiating the survey process (Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld and Booth-Kewley 1997):

- First, the cost of carrying out the survey must be considered.
- Secondly, it should be kept in mind that specialised skills may be needed to conduct an efficient and effective survey.
- Thirdly, other data-gathering methods should be examined to determine if they can deliver comparable data more quickly, less expensively, or with less social and organisational disruption.
- Lastly, overuse of surveys may have long-term negative effects.

Public opinion surveys or polls have become an important policy-making instrument in OECD countries, as well as in central and eastern European countries. If a policy problem arises (or is being anticipated), the pollsters are at hand and provide the decision-makers with facts and figures. This material is used to support new and/or abolish old policies. The purpose of public opinion polling in this context is to describe the population’s (or population segments’) opinions and attitudes toward policy-related issues.

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The polls provide a sort of snapshot of people's opinions and beliefs concerning a certain public policy issue, but they do not study the structural components of socio-political consciousness to which opinions and beliefs are linked. A widely acknowledged problem, and — depending on the outcome of a policy poll — sometimes an even welcome fact, is the instability of results: depending on the pollsters and the questions, the results may vary. The analytical power from repeated surveys is much more reliable than that of one-time surveys. Repetitive surveys allow for longitudinal studies that give additional information on the results of public opinion surveys over time.

Surveys must be methodologically sound in order to produce reliable results. When creating a survey, the item format and contents, as well as the survey respondents, have to be selected carefully (for guidelines, see, for example, Czaja and Blair 1995). Most mistakes are commonly made in the stages of data analysis and interpretation (Klages 1997). It is also important that survey knowledge is used appropriately in the decision-making and change management process of administrative reforms.

Surveying (or polling) does more than simply offer a scientifically derived and representative account of popular sentiment. The substitution of polling for other means of gauging the public's views has also had the effect of influencing several key characteristics of public opinion. On the one hand, polling can affect the belief of individuals asked to respond to survey questions; on the other hand, polls also have an impact on the attitudes of those who subsequently read a survey's results. Nevertheless, the major impact of polling is the way polls cumulate and translate individual beliefs into collective public opinions (Ginsberg 1986).

Public opinion polls in the field of administrative reforms are very important since administrative reforms are not just a technical issue. However, administrative reform is not a policy field that catches the interest of the larger public. This means that public opinion surveys in the field of public administration have to make sure that they find their "recipients". One very obvious group of recipients are administrative employees and administrative elites who are directly concerned by administrative reforms. As the failure of most top-down reforms shows, it is very important for political and administrative change agents to consider administrative reforms as a process and to know the opinions of those concerned by administrative reforms. In other words, staff surveys that are carried out *ex ante*, *nunc* and *ex post* are an essential success factor for structural and cultural administrative reforms.

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient simply to know about the attitudes and opinions of the personnel of public administration. Since public organisations are exposed to various political, economic and societal factors, opinion surveys also have to extend to the various "clients" of public administration. Clients of public administration include the direct clients of public service agencies (for example, people receiving social welfare and economic actors), the citizens financing public services (the taxpayers), the voting electorate and the public at large.

Given the various target groups of public administration and the many facets of administrative reforms from organisational to legal, or even constitutional changes, public opinion surveys have a real potential in the administrative reform process.

Up to now, public opinion surveys have received a great deal of scientific attention with regard to methodological problems of data gathering, data analysis and interpretation of data. There is also a lot of literature on administrative reforms both in OECD countries and central and eastern European countries. However, there is very little information on the use of public opinion surveys in the context of administrative reforms.

2. Introduction

Public opinion surveys have become increasingly important in central and eastern European countries in the context of administrative reforms and institution-building. Although surveys on voting preferences, as well as on general social attitudes, have received most of the media attention, surveys are also used in government agencies and other public organisations to measure the satisfaction and the morale of civil servants. Thus, the popularity of public surveys is due, to a certain extent, to the many purposes these instruments serve. This paper will give an overview of the uses of public opinion surveys at various stages of the policy-making and implementation process of administrative reforms by illustrating major public opinion surveys in OECD and some central and eastern European countries. The focus will be put on the strategy of inquiry used by political and administrative decision-makers as well as on the function of surveys in the reform cycle.

3. Monitoring the Performance and Acceptance of Institutions, Government and Public Administration

Mass public surveys measure the political orientations of society towards government and public administration in general and towards individual institutions, such as ministries, parliament and courts, in particular. From the policy-makers' point of view, mass public surveys make it possible to recognise and deal with popular attitudes — even the attitudes of the most inarticulate segments of the populace — before they materialise in some unpleasant, disruptive, or threatening form of political action. In stable democracies, of course, the most routine behavioural threat posed by public opinion is hostile action in the voting booth, and polling has become one of the chief means of democratic political elites to attempt to anticipate and avert the electorate's displeasure (Ginsberg 1986).

Particularly in central and eastern European countries, the level of trust and distrust among the electorate and the mass public is very important for the functioning of democracy on the one hand and for the development of civil society on the other hand (Mishler and Rose 1995). One goal of communication in post-communist administrative systems is the improvement in citizens' trust in their national government in general and in ministries and other central administrative units in particular. In Eastern Europe, the New Democracies Barometer measures annually the different levels of trust in a variety of institutions in ten post-Communist countries. The distribution of the replies in the fourth annual ten-nation New Democracies Barometer, organised by the Austrian Paul Lazarsfeld Society in autumn 1995, shows that political institutions are not trusted, while the median respondent tends to be sceptical rather than actively distrustful (Rose 1997).

Ideally, the measurement of trust and confidence relates to the performance of political institutions as perceived by society; but often the results of polls represent people's long-term evaluation of their governmental system, independent of the current performance of that system. This can be explained by the fact that opinions, attitudes and values are not separable entities but interrelated in a complex manner. Furthermore, people's opinions about institutions, government and public administration may not only be influenced by deep-rooted personal beliefs, but they may also be distorted by media-generated images disconnected from actual performance. As a consequence, the results of public opinion surveys monitoring the performance and acceptance of the political system and public administration have to be interpreted very carefully.

The analysis of the variation of levels of trust among the population towards institutions can be useful as an indicator of change of the political culture in central and eastern European countries; this itself can condition the effectiveness of government and public administration in these countries. Western European

countries, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, experienced the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, and survey research played a major role before, during and after the transition itself (see Box 1).

BOX 1: ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SPAIN

In 1997, Spain celebrated the 20th anniversary of democratic elections since the death of General Franco and his authoritarian regime. This motivated a series of public opinion surveys on the attitudes of the Spanish population towards democracy. According to a recent mass public survey¹ of the Spanish population (1 214 men and women, over 18 years old), 45 per cent of those interviewed think that the overall development in Spain has been positive even though some mistakes have been made. A further 29 per cent of those interviewed think that the level of development which has been achieved since Franco's death more than compensates for the mistakes that have been made. Only 15 per cent of those interviewed think that the overall balance has been negative: 9 per cent said that "they have to recognise what has been achieved successfully in many respects" and a minority of 6 per cent perceived that the mistakes outweighed the successes in the 20 years of political development in Spain.

The same survey asked respondents to indicate the most positive and the worst event that they think has happened in Spain since Franco's death. Forty-two per cent of respondents indicated that the restoration of democracy was the most positive event, and 14 per cent perceived the regaining of liberty as a very positive event. Other political events and political institutions were cited by only 5 per cent or less of those interviewed. The answers showed no differences with regard to social adherence. Regarding negative political events, the most frequent answers were: terrorism, the ETA, murders, etc. (30 per cent). Many fewer respondents considered unemployment (10 per cent), corruption (10 per cent) and increasing urban crime rates (9 per cent) to be an extremely negative development.

The results of this survey are confirmed by other national surveys on political attitudes of the Spanish population. The data gathered and analysed during a joint project of three leading survey institutes in Spain give a more detailed picture of public opinion towards economic and political development in modern Spain². A question that has been raised repetitively in the CIRES project from 1991 to 1996 refers to Spaniards' degree of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in their country. The data indicate that a large majority of those interviewed (63 per cent) was rather satisfied with the quality of democracy in 1996. As far as the performance of the government is concerned, 39 per cent were rather pleased with the current government in 1996. This figure shows that democracy is deeply rooted in the Spanish political culture and that people distinguish between the overall political system and the government of the day.

1. Díez-Nicolas, Juan (1997), *Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the First Democratic Elections*, National Survey Report of the ASEP (Análisis Sociológicos, Económicos y Políticos), Madrid.
2. CIRES (1996), *La Realidad Social en España*, Gestingraf, Madrid.

In Germany, the Institute for Praxis-Oriented Research (IPOS) carries out annual mass surveys (financed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior) on various issues related to domestic policies. In the context of German re-unification, IPOS was charged with carrying out a comparative survey in East and West Germany to examine the level of trust of East and West Germans in political institutions (for the results, see Walz 1996). This example shows that particularly in times of fundamental political and economic

transformation, policy-makers are keen on having survey data of a society's trust and confidence in political institutions, government and public administration.

4. Policy Priorities

Public opinion surveys also gather information for policy-makers about the extent to which the population is concerned by reforms and what the population's reform priorities are. The data on popular policy preferences may help politicians to gain a better understanding of a particular situation or a problem. The analysis of the data gathered may also be useful as input into the political decision-making process when politicians have to choose between several alternatives of reform. Polls on reform priorities can, however, also give a government a better opportunity to manipulate and modify public opinion and thus avoid accommodation to citizens' preferences. This is more likely to be the case the more unpopular the public policy reform is.

In the context of mass public opinion surveys on reform priorities, it is particularly important to take a careful look at the public whose opinion is under consideration (Kohr 1989). Especially with regard to administrative reforms, information as well as salience (or relevance) are lacking for most individuals, because public administration and administrative reforms do not represent important issues for most individuals. This means that these surveys have to be tailored towards the "public" they focus on.

Given the complexity of administrative reforms, most are usually limited to certain administrative sectors. Thus, the national government needs information in order to decide in which part of the public administration it should start with reforms. In surveys addressing this topic, the public is asked in which public policy fields it perceives the most urgent needs to start changes. Furthermore, financial constraints force governments to define reform priorities. Thus, mass public surveys also measure the priorities concerning public spending (Smith 1995). For example, surveys ask the public if the extent of public spending in the education, health, social assistance and security systems, public transport, military and other institutions is too high, about right or too little.

In the United States in particular, polling has traditionally been used as an adjunct to policy-making. In recent years, however, polling has become a routine aspect of the process of policy-making in many OECD countries, and central and eastern European countries also use public opinion polls when preparing public policy-related reforms. The British Social Attitudes surveys are a good example of repetitive surveys that combine continuous attitudinal surveys with one-time surveys focusing on current policy issues (see Box 2). Some modules of the British Social Attitudes surveys are initiated by the Social and Community Planning Research Institute; others are initiated by government departments, local authorities or quasi-government organisations to provide information on aspects of social and economic policy. The Social and Community Planning Research Institute also houses, with Southampton University, the Centre for Applied Social Surveys, the main function of which is to run courses in survey methods and to establish and administer an electronic social survey question bank:

BOX 2: THE FUTURE OF THE BRITISH WELFARE STATE

The British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey series began in 1983 and has been conducted every year since. The series is designed to produce annual measures of attitudinal movements which will complement large-scale government surveys, such as the General Household Survey and the Labour Force Survey. One of its main purposes is to allow the monitoring of patterns of continuity and change, and the examination of relative rates at which attitudes, in respect to a range of social issues, change over time.

As one of its main topics, the British Social Attitudes series assesses trends in attitudes to tax and spending in Great Britain¹. The annual surveys relating to public spending are designed to give indications on the future role of the British welfare state²: If individuals are prepared to contemplate higher levels of taxation for themselves, and if the growth of private alternatives fails to undermine popular support for the welfare state, then its future may be relatively secure. If, however, tax resistance is growing, the British welfare state may be starved of resources and may end up as an “enabling state” by providing little more than a safety-net for the wholly dependent and largely relying on private insurance.

Each annual British Social Attitudes survey consists of an hour-long face-to-face interview with a probability sample of around 3 600 British adults, followed by a much shorter self-completion supplement. There are three versions of the questionnaire, each administered to one-third of the sample. One of the question sets refers to priorities for extra public spending³.

It is interesting to see that the same question asked in different ways — with and without budget constraints — gives different results: The British Social Attitudes surveys asked respondents to indicate their two highest priorities for additional public spending over the years in health, education, defence and help for industry. The results showed that education and health consistently attract the highest levels of support (in each case over 50 per cent in each year of the survey) but support for extra spending on them was substantially higher in 1995 (66 per cent for education and 77 per cent for health) than it was in 1983 (50 per cent in education and 63 per cent in health). In contrast, support for more spending both on help for industry and on defence declined over the period. Other questions related to the willingness to pay for extra provision. The British Social Attitudes survey also asked people whether they would like to see an increase or decrease in the level of spending and tax on health, education and welfare benefits. The results revealed that when the two are explicitly linked in this way, the majority of respondents opt for higher taxes and higher spending. Indeed, the majority has shifted over the years from support for the status quo to a desire for higher spending and higher taxes: in 1995, 61 per cent of respondents favoured increased taxes and more spending on these three items, and only 31 per cent preferred to keep taxes and spending on these services the same as at present.

In 1995 the series introduced a set of detailed questions which specified the incidence of possible tax increases that would be needed to sustain increases in public spending. The British Social Attitudes survey addressed three separate but related sets of questions to respondents: first, how much do demands for higher public spending depend on the expected targeting of the tax increases necessary to finance them? Secondly, to what extent is popular support for the welfare state based on perceptions of self-interest as opposed to notions of the wider public good? Thirdly, does the use of private services influence people’s support for the welfare state? Not surprisingly, the results showed that although people are less likely to advocate large increases in public expenditure when the personal tax consequences are spelled out to them in detail, a comfortable majority still support increases in spending on at least one or more of the core areas of health, education and universal welfare benefits. Priorities for extra public spending turned out to be a combination of both self-interest and altruism. There was tentative evidence that the consumption of private health affected people’s support of

national health care, but there was no evidence for that in the case of education.

This survey series on public spending and taxation tried to shed some light on an important issue of public policy, which is a permanent election issue in Great Britain. While many opinion polls suggested that the public favoured higher public spending, it was never clear that the electorate was willing to “put its money where its mouth is”. The results of the British Social Attitude surveys indicate to policy-makers that the British welfare state is still supported by a large majority of taxpayers. This result may be useful for the two main political parties in Great Britain when working out public policy programmes for election campaigns.

1. In addition to the main British survey, there is also an annual Northern Ireland Social Attitudes (NISA) survey, funded by all the Northern Ireland Departments. The fieldwork is carried out by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, using substantially the same questionnaire as in Britain.
2. Jowell, R., J. Curtice, A. Park, L. Brook & K. Thomson, (eds.) (1996), *British Social Attitudes — The 13th Report*, Cambridge University Press. This edition covers BSA 1995 survey — 1995 data will not be available from the data archive until 1997.
3. Brook, L., J. Hall and I. Preston (1996), “Public Spending and Taxation”, in Jowell, R., J. Curtice, A. Park, L. Brook & K. Thomson (eds.), *British Social Attitudes — The 13th Report*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 185-202.

5. Views on EU Integration

The EU integration process is a major challenge for both central and eastern European countries and western European countries (Löffler 1997). It is evident that new EU Members have to adapt the national political decision-making and implementation process as well as their organisational structures and procedures to the EU policy system. The “older” EU Member States also have to deal with the on-going EU integration process. The “widening” of the EU calls for reforms of the present EU financial system and the EU decision-making process, which will again have repercussions on national political and administrative systems. The “deepening” of the EU demands the incorporation of the regional level in the EU system, the promotion of horizontal co-operation between subnational administrations in Europe and EU constitution building in order to give the EU a stronger political quality. Even non-EU members, such as Switzerland, have to adjust their national economic regulations to EU law in order to participate in the European internal market. This means that the EU integration process has become a catalyst for the “internationalisation” of national administrative systems both in western and central and eastern European countries.

In view of the significance of the EU integration process for national political and administrative systems, it is not surprising that public opinion surveys, which investigate popular opinions towards European integration and the European Union, have been produced by the European Commission since the early 1970s. Whereas the early surveys focused mainly on measuring public awareness of and attitudes towards the Common Market and other European Community institutions, the surveys took a broader scope in content as well as in geographical coverage after 1973, with measures of subjective satisfaction and the perceived quality of life becoming standard features of the European Commission public opinion surveys.

In 1974, the Commission of the European Communities launched the Eurobarometer series of surveys, designed to provide regular monitoring of the social and political attitudes of the citizens of the then nine Member countries. These Eurobarometers are carried out in spring and autumn every year by the Survey Research Unit (B.X.7) of Directorate General X (Information, Communication and Culture). In addition to obtaining regular data of support for European integration and the perceived quality of life, each of the

Eurobarometers includes general public opinion, specific target group and qualitative surveys on a variety of topics.

At present, the Eurobarometer surveys are categorised according to five different types:

- a) Traditional Standard Eurobarometer in spring and autumn every year;
- b) Continuous Tracking Surveys (CTS) with quarterly reports published by Unit X.A.2;
- c) Telephone Flash Eurobarometer, primarily used for special target group surveys;
- d) Top Decision-Makers Eurobarometer to monitor the views of political, administrative, media and business leaders;
- e) Central and Eastern Eurobarometer to monitor economic and political changes and attitudes towards Europe and the European Union in up to 19 countries of the region.

6. Use of Public Opinion Surveys in the Policy Cycle

6.1. Policy Initiation

Mass public surveys allow for the analysis of the attitudes and expectations of the adult population before administrative reforms actually start. In comparison with organisational-level surveys within the public administration, mass public surveys show to what extent reforms are supported by the general public as compared to administrative personnel. Such surveys also indicate which groups of the population according to age, sex and social class support administrative reforms and which groups form barriers against changes in the structure and the process of public administration.

Employee surveys are most commonly used as a diagnosis instrument at the beginning of administrative reforms (Klages, Gensicke and Haubner 1994). The aim of the organisational diagnosis is to obtain systematic and comprehensive information on the working situation and leadership style of superiors as perceived by employees. This means that the main scope of this kind of survey is to identify problems and weak points within a public organisation and to analyse their causes (see Box 3). Beyond methodological soundness, employee surveys presuppose that all respondents are willing to articulate open and latent problems. This implies that anonymity and voluntary participation of the respondents have to be assured. Finally, the results of employee surveys should be used for organisational development and other improvement measures within the public organisation (Töpfer and Funke 1985).

Public opinion surveys that are typically used at the stage of policy initiation are population surveys in the context of urban planning. Public survey data may contribute to a more sound medium- and long-term planning process for local governments and other sub-regional administrative units by providing data on the relative importance of a number of community and regional issues. One “best practice” example for a public opinion survey to be used for strategic planning is the 1990 Urban Futures survey in the Greater Vancouver Region as part of the Choosing Our Future programme of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Hardwick, Torchinsky and Fallick 1991). The 1990 survey revisits the 1973 Vancouver Urban Futures survey carried out as part of the Liveable Region Plan. Both surveys dealt with urban issues and attitudes toward a range of economic, social, mobility and lifestyle issues. The results of the survey gave the Board of the Greater Vancouver District indications of how much importance Greater Vancouver residents attach to various community and social matters. As a result of the survey, the Board of the Greater Vancouver District took 54 actions in July 1990.

BOX 3: NEED OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

The Ministry of the Interior of Baden-Württemberg commissioned a comprehensive employee survey in autumn 1983 in order to assess the acceptance of administrative reforms in the area of human resource management. The aim of the overall reform concept was to improve the motivation of administrative staff and to develop a new organisational culture. Overall the survey covered five public agencies on the *Land* level with more than 1 000 employees. The survey project lasted about 24 months and was structured into five phases commencing with the decision of the Governmental Reform Commission to commission the implementation of the survey itself to an external research institute, where a working group was set up to define concrete measures of improvement.

The standardised questionnaire¹ contained 29 pages and raised questions about the workplace situation, the motivational structure, the evaluation of superiors, the quality of co-operation within the public agencies and the identification of the public agencies as well as questions relating to the respondent. Since most employees in the selected agencies had accepted the survey, the response rate was quite high (varying between 54 per cent and 83 per cent). In addition to the basic data analysis for each public agency, specific data analyses were also carried out differentiating between civil service grades, age of employees and departments. Regarding the leadership style of superiors² which was one of the major issues of the employee survey, the results showed similar trends for all five public agencies. In order to assess the leadership style, employees were asked to go through 33 items and to indicate on an ordinal 7 point scale to what extent the hypotheses were appropriate for their immediate superior. The main finding was that co-operative and challenging leadership was strongly underdeveloped.

As a consequence of this stated deficit, so-called consultant and promotion dialogues for chief executives were initiated in the five public agencies. This dialogue between employee and superior is based on the elements of consultancy, goal agreement and personal development and was scheduled to take place once a year³. After a training phase, the new leadership instrument was applied in four pilot projects. At that stage, another survey was carried out among administrative leaders to test the acceptance of the employee dialogue amongst middle management⁴.

1. Klotz, E. & S. Mauch (1994), "Personalmanagement in Baden-Württemberg. Die Implementierung einer Konzeption in der Landesverwaltung" (Teil 3), in *VOP*, Vol. 16, No. 6, pp. 431-434.
2. Klotz, E. & S. Mauch (1995), "Personalmanagement in Baden-Württemberg. Die Implementierung einer Konzeption in der Landesverwaltung" (Teil 4), in *VOP*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 28-31.
3. Klotz, E. & S. Mauch (1995), "Personalmanagement in Baden-Württemberg. Die Implementierung einer Konzeption in der Landesverwaltung" (Teil 5), in *VOP*, Vol. 17, No. 7, pp. 116-119.
4. Klotz, E. & S. Mauch (1995), "Personalmanagement in Baden-Württemberg. Die Implementierung einer Konzeption in der Landesverwaltung" (Schluß), in *VOP*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 210-220.

These examples bear testimony to the fact that both mass public surveys and organisational-level surveys produce a better information basis for political and administrative decision-makers to initiate public policy reforms.

6.2. *Policy Implementation*

The conceptual approach of public policy research, which is followed in this framework paper, relates to administrative behaviour in general and administrative reforms in particular, not as a linear process but as a feedback process between administrative institutions on the one hand and administrative actors on the other. On the organisational level, this process-oriented approach finds its correspondence in the concept of the “learning organisation” which stresses feedback cycles and continuous learning within the organisation. The interaction between institutional actions and reactions of actors implies the observation of institutional behaviour and the measurement of actors’ attitudes over time at certain intervals. In the case of one specific reform activity, it is particularly important to conduct surveys during the reform process to enable the actors to react to the reform process while it is ongoing. It is not enough to start a reform process and to measure and evaluate the outcome after it is completed.

The concept of surveys as an instrument of change management implies, in that perspective, the use of opinion polls during the reform process in order to accelerate or delay the speed of reform or to change crucial elements of the planned reform if the feedback process signals serious problems and obstacles to reform, which in turn might endanger the whole reform. That type of survey is still quite rare because these surveys have the strongest policy impact. The organisation of policy-related surveys in an ongoing policy cycle, demands continuous learning and risk-taking activities in a climate of fear. The problem is that once a reform process has been launched, all kinds of implementation problems immediately become visible, but tangible results are usually only achieved at the end of the policy cycle. This means that political and administrative decision-makers will have a problem selling the results of surveys to the public. One can formulate the paradox that the precondition for the use of surveys for learning purposes is the creation of a “learning public administration” in structural and cultural terms.

Even though most administrative reforms are still carried out as a top-down reform, there is more and more awareness of the process-dimension of administrative reforms. One encouraging example of the conception of administrative reforms as a learning cycle is a quality improvement pilot project in selected Finnish municipalities. The background of the Finnish quality improvement project was the increasing popularity of the so-called ISO 9000-series in the private sector. ISO 9000-9004 is an internationally recognised set of guidelines, which support organisations to define and document quality standards for organisational processes and products. The major purpose of the pioneering project of the Finnish Association of Local Authorities was to transfer this system of quality standards from its original industry context into a public administration context (see Box 4).

6.3. *Policy Evaluation*

6.3.1. *Satisfaction Measures*

Satisfaction measurement can relate to the satisfaction of civil servants in the working environment as well as to the satisfaction of clients with the quality of public services.

Regarding the first type of satisfaction survey, the measurement of administrative staff satisfaction always has to face the fear of reprisals in spite of guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. This results in rather low response rates, ranging between 20 per cent to 30 per cent (Klages 1997). There is empirical evidence that the visible commitment of the middle- and higher-level management to evaluation has a positive

effect on the response rate and the quality of the information provided by administrative employees and elites. One survey which obtained high response rates was carried out in Canada (see Box 5.A).

BOX 4: POSSIBILITIES FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT IN FINNISH MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS

The pilot project for the quality improvement of municipal administration and services was part of the “Quality and the Community Project” of the Finnish Association of Local Authorities¹. The project included five municipalities of different sizes and from different parts of Finland: the social and health services of the City of Espoo (population 186 507), the Swedish-language front-office operations of the City of Vantaa (population 164 376), the general administration of Pori (population 76 561), the housing services of Hämeenkyrö (population 9 676) and the financial administration of Kannus (population 6 291)². The purpose of the project was to determine the applicability of the ISO 9000-series of standards in improving the quality of municipal services and to test customised quality systems developed on the basis of those standards.

The pilot project commenced in the spring of 1993 and by February 1995, each of the municipalities had produced its own quality manual³, which was introduced in day-to-day work. Since then, the municipalities have continued to work independently to further develop their own standard systems. An intermediate survey was conducted in the spring of 1996 to evaluate the progress and experience gained through the pilot project. This survey charted the standardisation work carried out by the pilot municipalities and assessed the quality improvement work after the completion of the pilot phase.

The survey was based on semi-structured interviews with the quality managers of the pilot projects and the city managers of the municipalities involved in the project. The themes of the questionnaire were structured according to the quality manual for municipal provision. The themes included the commitment of the top management and functioning of the quality system, commitment to service provision and procurement activities, quality audits and human resource development together with customer satisfaction and process management. The results of the survey⁴ showed that the quality manuals were applied throughout the organisation and reviewed by higher management. According to the survey, the application of the quality manuals also had positive effects on customer satisfaction.

However, the measuring and monitoring of quality costs turned out to be deficient. As a consequence, a sub-project was initiated by the Finnish Association of Local Authorities to develop indicators for quality-related costs.

1. Mustonen, M. (1996), “The ISO 9000 Project: Trial of the Applicability of an ISO 9000 Quality Management System in five Municipal Service Functions in Finland”, in Hill, H., H. Klages, and E. Löffler (eds.), *Quality, Innovation and Measurement in the Public Sector*, Lang, Frankfurt, pp. 65-76.
2. Population figures from 31 December 1994.
3. Association of Finnish Local Authorities (1995), *Total Quality Management in Municipal Service Provision*, Helsinki.
4. Sundquist, S. (1998), “Interim Report on the ISO 9000 Pilot Projects”, in Hill, H., H. Klages, and E. Löffler (eds.), *Assessing and Evaluating Public Management Reforms*.

BOX 5.A: WORK ATTITUDES AND SATISFACTIONS OF SENIOR MANAGERS IN THE CANADIAN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

In 1986 and again in 1988, the Government of Canada sponsored two surveys of senior managers in the public service¹. The studies were designed in order to survey and understand perceptions and attitudes of senior civil servants related to work values, leadership, organisational culture, rewards and working environment. Since no such studies had previously been undertaken, no baseline measures existed. The researchers in 1986 extended their study to a sample of comparable managers in the private sector. Over 70 per cent of the respondents sampled answered a questionnaire with over 200 variables. In 1986, respondents in the public sector were selected using a stratified random sample from the universe of all senior managers working up to the level of Deputy Minister² in the federal public service of Canada in 20 line ministries and 13 large private companies. In 1988, the survey was repeated within the public sector only, and the questionnaire sent to all senior managers. The response rate in 1988 was also over 70 per cent.

Respondents received the questionnaire by post and were asked to complete it themselves. Items developed used five-point scales, and asked respondents to answer in a range of strong agreement to strong disagreement. Some open-ended questions related to values were also included. The study noted a serious discrepancy between the perceptions public and private sector managers have of the quality of management practices in their organisations. More importantly, both the 1986 and 1988 surveys revealed consistent differences of perception within the public service between those working at the highest levels of the organisational structure and those senior managers working a few levels below them. This situation, which the researchers termed “vertical solitude”, was not found to exist in the private sector. Further data analysis clearly suggested that work satisfaction was lower amongst the senior managers of the public sector in Canada compared to their private sector counterparts. For example, 42 per cent of the most senior managers in the public service agreed that promotions were based on merit, but only 19 per cent of respondents five levels below agreed with that same view. Seventy-eight per cent of the most senior managers in the public service felt that subordinates were encouraged to participate in decisions, but only 47 per cent of respondents five levels below agreed with this. No such spreads existed for the private sector. On this last item, 78 per cent of the most senior managers in the private sector felt that there was encouragement for subordinates to participate in decisions, and 74 per cent of those five levels below also agreed with this view. The 1988 survey, using the same questions, found that these differences among senior managers in the public service not only persisted, but became more acute.

The results of 1986, which showed the existence of “vertical solitude” in the public service but not in the private sector, led to serious discussions on the measures that needed to be taken by the government. The 1988 survey reinforced that serious problems in motivation and satisfaction existed. Analysis of open-ended questions demonstrated that even at senior levels employees did not share in the same organisational values and culture. In response to these surveys and other organisational studies pointing to a malaise, the government of Canada introduced an administrative reform programme called Public Service 2000³ for which ten task forces were created to suggest means to reform the public service by de-layering, improving service standards, putting in place progressive employment practices and reinforcing careers. The government acted quickly to put in place recommendations from the task forces introducing new regulations when necessary.

1. Zussman, D. and J. Jabes (1989), *The Vertical Solitude: Managing in the Public Sector*, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Halifax, Nova Scotia; Jabes, J. and D. Zussman (1988), “Motivation, Rewards and Satisfaction in the Canadian Federal Public Service”, *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 204-225.
2. The Deputy Minister is the most senior manager in a Canadian Ministry.
3. Tellier, P.M. (1992), *Public Service 2000: A Report on Progress*, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Canada.

Client surveys are very common outside the administrative system and are widely used by profit-making companies for market and consumer satisfaction research. Nevertheless, client surveys are increasingly used by service units in the public sector which have direct contact with clients. Client surveys are a useful tool for evaluating public sector goods and services on a variety of criteria, such as effectiveness and impact, as well as quality and productivity. However, client evaluations of specific services tend to be more positive than the rating of these same services by the general public (Poister and Henry 1994). This influence may be overcome by a random sampling methodology.

Furthermore, citizens responding to the more general satisfaction topics in citizen surveys often have no knowledge of the more direct, objective measures of service delivery. Linking surveys with more objective indicators can aid quality improvement through the balanced assessment of programme performance. Client survey data can be especially helpful in agenda setting in seven broad areas: customer expectation, work culture, work design, workforce requirements, hours of operation, costs, remuneration and evaluation.

It is obvious that client satisfaction surveys are most common for administrative sectors which are in direct contact with clients. This implies that client satisfaction measurement is mainly executed at the local level. In the Dutch City of Tilburg, the city management carries out “city market research” (Arntzen 1994). The annual market research surveys consist of a probability sample of 1 000 citizens over 18 years old who are asked about 15 city management related topics, which change every year. The results of the surveys are not only published in the local newspapers, they are also used by the city council and city management in the “controlling and budgeting” process of the City of Tilburg. This means that the results of the continuous market research surveys in the City of Tilburg form an integral part of the managerial and political accountability of that city.

Client satisfaction measurement is also starting to take place at the national level, as the example of the Swedish National Customer Satisfaction Barometer shows (see Box 5.B).

Client satisfaction surveys are used primarily as a tool to ensure the internal control of the public organisation. They allow regular and systematic assessment of the quality of goods and services delivered by front-line public agencies from a subjective client’s point of view. The level of client satisfaction reflects their utility, their capacity to satisfy needs and their fitness for use or purpose, individually or collectively. As in the case of many public services, service production and consumption coincide and the measurement of client satisfaction results in better judgements being made on the performance of those “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky 1980), who interact directly with the public and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions.

Subjective client satisfaction data and the perceived outcome of public services may also be used to enhance the accountability of devolved public sector organisations to external interested parties. In the United Kingdom especially, but also in Portugal, France and other OECD countries, citizens’ charters publish current levels and trends in key measurements and/or indicators of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The external parties who might be interested in such data include service users, the electorate, taxpayers, central government, or independent auditors acting on behalf of one or more of the constituencies. The intention is to increase the political pressure on elected and appointed representatives in governing boards by improving citizens’ awareness of performance. The external use of client satisfaction surveys is therefore servicing the top (political level) of organisational control in the hierarchy of public sector organisational control (Smith 1997).

BOX 5.B: PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE MEASURED BY THE SWEDISH NATIONAL SATISFACTION BAROMETER

In an effort to promote quality, Sweden has become the first country to measure customer satisfaction in more than 30 industries and for more than 100 corporations, including public enterprises such as telecommunications and postal services and sectors of public administration, such as the police¹. In 1989, the customers of the largest Swedish companies in 28 industries were selected as the target population to build the Swedish National Satisfaction Barometer. In 1990, the number of corporations was increased to 32. This meant that annually, some 100 000 respondents are contacted on a random basis. After screening questions to determine whether the respondent is the customer of any of the selected business and service organisations, the total sample size amounts to about 25 000 respondents per year who complete to an eight-minute telephone interview. Apart from a few sectors, each respondent is asked about one single organisation only.

Mean satisfaction scores (on a scale from 0 to 100) from 1989 to 1991 show that services score lower than products, both amongst monopolies and competing business firms. Whereas staple foods and automobiles score at the top of the Customer Satisfaction Barometer, the railroad, the police force and television broadcasting were at the bottom in 1991. The mean scores for the Swedish police, for example, were 56, 55 and 58 in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 compared to 77, 76 and 78 for automobiles. The grand mean for all sectors is 64 in 1989 and 1990 and 65 in 1991.

These results suggest that customers of services provided by the state are not overly satisfied. However, the trend appears to be slightly upward for some state monopolies which seem to gear up to meet possible deregulation. The USA is also establishing a national quality index according to the Swedish prototype. Efforts are also underway in Japan and in a number of EU countries.

1. Fornell, C. (1997), "A National Customer Satisfaction Barometer: The Swedish Experience", in Holloway, J., J. Lewis & G. Mallory (eds.), *Performance Measurement and Evaluation*, Sage, London, pp. 192-216.

6.3.2. Other Outcome Measures

Public surveys may also be used as an evaluation tool to assess the success or failure of administrative reforms after the policy cycle has come to an end. That kind of survey may be conducted both at the mass level and at the staff level. Evaluation surveys of administrative reforms have to cope with the problem that the effects of these reforms can only be perceived after a sufficiently long period of time, which does not always correspond to the legislative periods of the government which was responsible for launching the reforms (Trosa 1992). This argument is consistent with the empirical observation of *ex-post* reform surveys, which state that administrative employees perceive themselves to be insufficiently informed about work-related consequences of administrative reforms. An example from Italy illustrates this (see Box 6).

The Italian example shows that internal evaluations may promote "learning by doing" since public agencies are closely involved in questioning the "how" and the "why" of their activities. However, for many *ex-post* evaluations, internal evaluations may not be practical, cost-effective or even desirable. For example, it may be difficult for public agencies to convince other stakeholders that an internal evaluation has been conducted objectively.

BOX 6: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITALIAN CITIZENS' CHARTERS IN HEALTH CARE

During the shortest parliamentary term in post-war Italy (XI legislature, 1992-1994), several large-scale administrative reforms were launched: laws were issued reforming local government, the national health care system and the university system¹. The introduction of accrual accounting in the public administration went hand in hand with the reform of the central audit system. Also, a new relationship with clients based on quality standards was established. This was done by launching the “Carta dei servizi”, the Italian version of the British Citizens’ Charter initiative. As in the United Kingdom, the Italian citizens’ charter basically means that public structures are accountable for quality standards and have to put in practice a control and evaluation system in order to improve the quality of services. Contrary to the United Kingdom, in Italy no standard was set at a nation-wide level. Thus, public agencies of any kind were asked to set up their own quality standards.

One year after the introduction of citizens’ charters in the national health service, the Ministry of Health and Regions initiated an evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of this new management instrument². The Ministry of Health Services and Regions made it very clear that the purpose of the evaluation was not to control health agencies but rather to start a mutual learning process. Thus, the process of evaluation was also very innovative by relying on the principle of self-evaluation. The Ministry of Health Services sent out three different sets of questionnaires to health agencies at the national, regional and sub-regional levels. The first questionnaire was sent to health agencies which had already adopted citizens’ charters; the second version of the questionnaire was intended for health agencies which intended to adopt citizens’ charters but were not yet applying them. The third questionnaire scheme was sent to agencies which had not yet taken any initiatives to introduce citizens’ charters. All in all, the questionnaires were received by 310 health agencies at the sub-regional level; 96 per cent of which filled out the questionnaire. At the regional level, the response rate was an even 100 per cent — all 21 regional and autonomous provincial agencies participated in the evaluation.

The analysis of those questionnaires shed a first light on the effects of the introduction of citizens’ charters in the extremely sensitive area of health services. It is noteworthy that citizens’ charters were set up in 65 per cent of health agencies, which indicated a rather high degree of implementation. Nevertheless, the survey also revealed that only 45 per cent of these agencies monitored their quality standards and only 16 per cent did so by involving citizens in the verification of service quality. This meant that the monitoring of service standards was insufficient and was not empowering citizens in spite of the adoption of a citizens’ charter. This diagnostic information served the Ministry of Health Services to further develop operational instruments to strengthen the internal and external monitoring of service quality.

1. Dente, Bruno (1995), “I caratteri generali del processo di riforma” in Dente, Bruno, et al. (eds.), *Riformare la Pubblica Amministrazione. Italia, Gran Bretagna, Spagna, Stati Uniti*, Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, pp. 3-28.
2. Ministero della Sanità (1997), *Rapporto Nazionale di Valutazione sul Programma di Attuazione della Carta dei Servizi nel Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*, Rome.

7. Images and Perceptions of Public Organisations

These surveys compare the self-image of administrative institutions generated by the perceptions of their members, with the image that the general public has of those institutions. Very often, one can see

considerable differences between these two facets of the image of institutions. The comparison of such external and internal surveys also shows the homogeneity or heterogeneity respectively of the final verdict of administrative staff and the mass public about the character and the outcome of administrative reforms. A good example of diverging perceptions of public policy is an extensive survey which was carried out in 1991 among various stakeholders of a public hospital of the Austrian *Land* Tyrol (see Box 7).

BOX 7: PERCEPTIONS OF A PUBLIC HOSPITAL BY AMBULANT PATIENTS, VISITORS OF PATIENTS, HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES AND THE POPULATION

These surveys were commissioned by the Government of the Austrian *Land* Tyrol in 1991¹. They are part of a larger study² on the financial and regional impacts of the *Land* owned hospital in Innsbruck. Both the Institute of Fiscal Studies and the Institute of Sociology at the University of Innsbruck were instructed to investigate two main questions. First, the Government of Tyrol was eager to learn about regional-economic impacts of the location of the *Land* owned hospital in the City of Innsbruck. Secondly, the *Land* Government wanted to know whether the municipalities in the surroundings of the City of Innsbruck and the City of Innsbruck itself were paying their fair share to finance the hospital. This meant that the various target group surveys served the double purpose of giving information on patterns of financial distribution as well as the locational impact of the public hospital.

The survey part of the project included face-to-face interviews with visitors of permanent patients and face-to-face interviews with ambulant patients who were in the hospital from 13-19 May 1991. The surveys of hospital employees was based on written questionnaires. The survey of the total of the adult population of the *Land* of Tyrol was carried out in telephone interviews. In the case of the three target groups, most questions were related to the behaviour of respondents when travelling to the hospital and their buying patterns as a side-effect of their “business” with the hospital. The survey of the total population referred to more subjective issues, such as personal opinions on the performance and humanity of the hospital. In order to determine the image of the hospital amongst the population, the telephone interviews used a standardised questionnaire containing a range of the different qualities of the hospital. The respondents were asked to give marks to each measured quality on a scale from 1 (very good) to 6 (very bad).

As far as the image of the hospital was concerned, the population gave very good marks to all those hospital qualities that have to do with publicised opinions such as the international reputation of the hospital and physicians and their qualifications (1.6 in average). All those aspects that had to do with the basic needs of patients were also rated well (1.9 in average), whereas the humane aspect of the hospital was rated much more dissatisfactorily (2.5 for sufficient time spent on the medical care of patients). The results of the other three surveys confirmed the financial data on the distribution of hospital costs.

Comparing the objective data of the funding structure of the hospital with the survey data on the use of hospital services by various groups of the population and the impact of the running of the hospital on different geographical regions in the *Land* of Tyrol it became obvious that the regional groups which caused hospital costs and the regional groups which had to finance these costs were not the same. In particular, the City of Innsbruck had a net benefit from the location of the public hospital.

These facts had a political impact as far as patterns of financial redistribution were concerned. Concretely speaking, the City of Innsbruck had to contribute more to the funding of the public hospital than before.

1. For details of the surveys, see Altmann, Andreas, Manfred Gantner, Heinz-Jürgen Niedenzu and Max Preglau (1991), *Sozio —und Regionalökonomische Aspekte der Universitätskliniken Innsbruck. Ergebnisse einer Meinungsumfrage unter Besuchern, Patienten, Beschäftigten und der Tiroler Bevölkerung*, Innsbruck University, Innsbruck.
2. The Research Project ‘Regional Impact of Public Facilities at the Example of the University Hospital of Innsbruck’ is well documented in four volumes.

Box 7 shows that perceptions do not necessarily relate to the “objective” performance of the object of inquiry. This is confirmed by the results of another extensive survey which investigated perceptions of different groups of respondents and which was carried out on the level of local government. An international comparative survey on the internal and external perception of the performance of local democracy reveals that the perceptions differ more widely between citizens and local elites than between western and eastern European countries (Cusack and Weßels 1996a and b). The survey was conducted in 1995 in west and east German municipalities: in 40 west German and in 37 east German local governments, the members of city councils, local party leaders and the administrative top management — altogether 1 231 people — were asked to participate in a written survey about the problems faced by municipalities, the competencies of local government, conflict within municipalities and the effectiveness of policy-making. The response rate of the elite survey was 53.3 per cent. In addition, 2 400 citizens in 15 west German municipalities and 15 east German municipalities were interviewed in telephone surveys by a private survey institute. The selection of municipalities was based on the survey design of the international research programme “Democracy and Local Governance”. Thus, it was possible to compare the German data with the data obtained for the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, as well as Austria, Switzerland and the United States.

As far as the perception of pressing local problems is concerned, local elites both in west and east Germany identified economic problems to be the most important whereas issues relating to the quality of life (for example, the environment and the welfare state) were considered to be much less important. Citizens both in east and west Germany have completely different perceptions of the problems of their local government: unemployment, but also environmental and social welfare, are considered to be more important than the problem of financial constraints and economic development.

Compared to the perceptions of local elites in the other countries, German local elites perceive a higher number and more intense overall problem pressures than their colleagues in Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United States. This can hardly be explained by objective factors since German municipalities are still relatively well-off economically and their objective problems are relatively small compared to the problems of local governments in central and eastern European countries. One plausible explanation could be disappointed expectations in both parts of Germany even though the nature of the disappointment may be different: in east Germany, re-unification gave rise to a lot of material expectations that could not be realised whereas in west Germany, the economic prosperity of the past had built up expectations that did not coincide with the present economic difficulties.

This comparative east-west survey shows that people’s perceptions of political reality may be influenced by all kinds of factors and do not necessarily mirror the objective problem. Depending on the public chosen as respondents of a survey, the respondents may be insufficiently informed of the object of the survey. Nevertheless, people’s perceptions of political reality may cause reactions in terms of voting behaviour or — in the extreme case — even in popular unrest. Thus, it is important for political and administrative decision-makers to have information about the perceptions of political reality in different parts of the society.

8. Location of Survey Knowledge in the Administrative System

A crucial question for the use of surveys in administrative systems in general and in the context of administrative reforms in particular is the location of the data. A characteristic feature in OECD countries is the lack of central access and the decentralisation of those surveys. Nevertheless, there are central archives in certain OECD countries which can be accessed by Internet. These archives are located at national social research institutes and contain the database as well as general information on the design

and results of opinion surveys on a vast array of topics. The database can be obtained from those institutes upon request and in some cases, the database is even accessible by Internet. The European Integrated Data Catalogue CESSDA provides access to the central archives in France (BDSP), Denmark (DDA), the United Kingdom (DA), Sweden (SSD), Israel (SSDA), the Netherlands (Steinmetz), Germany (ZA), Hungary (TARKI) and Australia (SSDA). The data stored in those archives can be used for secondary data analysis, which allows the use of the same set of data for different purposes. Up until now there has been no real EU data bank which integrates the national databases of the EU Member States in this way. However, with further European integration, such a data bank becomes more and more important for politicians of the EU Member States. Nevertheless, it is very encouraging that associations of local authorities are also beginning to establish data banks of staff and client surveys. For example, the German Institute for Urbanism (DIFU) in Berlin has set up a data bank which already contains more than 30 surveys of German local authorities.

In most cases, however, the commissioner of a survey (ministries, local authorities) usually keeps the data under its own control so that other interested parties have no access to the data. Often the data will be released after a certain period of time and made accessible to the public.

The European Commission has stored the reports of all Eurobarometer surveys in DG X. It is important to note that the actual computer archive of the Eurobarometer is not in Brussels but in Mannheim at the survey institute ZEUS. ZEUS manages the SIR database and also carries out secondary analyses of the Eurobarometer surveys for the European Commission and other clients. Up until today, ZEUS has produced some 100 reports covering a wide variety of topics.. At the moment, some 1.2 million interviews, collected by about 120 Eurobarometer surveys, are stored in the SIR database. Every year about 50 000 additional interviews are integrated into the database. In addition to the numerical part of the ZEUS Eurobarometer database, an alpha-numerical database organises all the wordings of Eurobarometer surveys, which allows easy retrieval of survey findings. database

9. Evaluation of Opinion Polls as Tools for Administrative Reforms

The above examples show that surveys are a useful instrument to support administrative reforms at various stages of the decision-making and implementation process. Depending on the stage of the reforms, surveys serve different purposes (Klages 1997). Before launching administrative reforms, both politicians and administrative decision-makers may use mass public surveys, elite surveys and employee surveys as a diagnostic instrument. Whereas mass public surveys reveal the expectations of the public at large, surveys within the public administration give information on how administrative elites and administrative staff perceive administrative change and their readiness to accept administrative reforms. This enables politicians as well as administrative executives to define policy priorities and to work out reform concepts, including implementation strategies.

Administrative elite and employee surveys may also be used during the reform process to obtain feedback on whether and to what degree, reform goals have been accepted and realised by those concerned. This controlling function of surveys enables a learning process which forms the basis of improvement plans and amendments to the original reform goals. At the same time, surveys have an important participatory function when used during ongoing reforms. They activate the knowledge, experience and capabilities of administrative staff and strengthen employees' commitment to the reform process provided that the survey is not perceived as an audit but as a learning opportunity.

At the end of the reform cycle, further external and internal surveys may be carried out in order to serve as an instrument of evaluation. They assess the outcome of the reform process as perceived inside and

outside the public administration. Evaluations which are based on subjective data of surveys as well as on objective data of the tangible outputs of the reforms, such as increased efficiency, allow for a solid assessment of the overall impact of reforms. Surveys at the end of reforms may also be conducted with a middle- and long-term perspective; as follow-up surveys they can help to assess the sustainability of administrative reforms. Reform goals may have conflicted with other demands imposed on public administration. In particular, costly human resource-related administrative reforms, which only have tangible results in the long-term, are often superseded by the need to make short-term budgetary savings.

The re-building of public administration in east Germany has shown that an appropriate administrative culture is an essential precondition for the functioning of an administrative system (Reichard and Röber 1993). Whereas organisational structures and procedures can be changed quite quickly, established patterns of beliefs, attitudes and perceptions can only be changed in the long term. For example, east German civil servants tend to perceive their administrative role in a way which resembles the “classical bureaucrat” but west German bureaucrats are more oriented towards a “political bureaucrat” (Röber and Schröter 1991). In view of the divergence of formal administrative structures and procedures from cultural patterns in central and eastern European countries, surveys are important instruments for providing information on the political and administrative culture of civil servants in these countries. The adjustment of administrative structures and procedures in accordance with the administrative culture is a major step towards a successful administrative development in central and eastern European countries.

Because reform is a process and not an event, time is much more critical than generally acknowledged. As the low degree of implementation of many top-down reforms show, the timeframe is often ignored by political and administrative decision-makers. Surveys can be a beneficial instrument to bridge the gap between top-down reforms and the implementation of those reforms at the bottom level by indicating the time that is needed for the implementation. Surveys also provide information to those at the top about the constraints to be released and the capabilities to be developed at the bottom level to realise the full potential of administrative reforms.

Public opinion surveys are an indispensable instrument to ensure a democratic and participatory reform process of public administration in central and eastern European countries. However, they only improve the information basis of the decision-making process if they produce data which are representative, reliable and valid. In order to support administrative change management, surveys must not be used as an instrument of control but as a learning opportunity. This presupposes an open-minded learning culture of political and administrative decision-makers.

All in all, the use of public opinion surveys in the context of administrative reforms remains ambiguous. Even though public opinion surveys are most functional in the context of administrative reforms when being used as an information basis for rational planning and decision-making, they are often used as an instrument of control (in the negative sense) and as an instrument of manipulation. If administrative reforms in OECD countries and central and eastern European countries result in a “learning-oriented” use of public opinion surveys as an input to the process of administrative reform this would be a positive output of the current administrative reforms.

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PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AS INPUTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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1. Introduction

This paper reviews the uses of social surveys in public administration in the Czech Republic, particularly in the context of administrative reform. Both of the main goals of the reform — democratisation and increase in effectiveness of public administration — call for stronger feedback between the administrative institutions and the public. Opinion surveys are powerful instruments which can provide such feedback. However, in the Czech Republic, their use in public administration has so far been limited.

This paper points out the potential of survey research as input to administrative reform and to public policy in general. It is divided into ten sections. After a description of administrative reform in the Czech Republic (section 2), a brief history of survey research in the country follows (section 3) and a set of examples demonstrates the uses of surveys at different stages of the reform process (sections 4-8). Two concluding sections concern the institutional location of survey information (section 9) and the final remarks (section 10). Addresses of survey institutions can be found in the Annex.

The report draws from an *ad hoc* "survey of surveys" undertaken by the author in February 1997. A questionnaire was sent to a number of survey agencies known to conduct nation-wide investigations concerning public administration or relevant to it, with a request to enumerate and characterise the surveys which they had conducted since 1990. Information about 63 one-off and 9 continual surveys conducted in 1990-1997 was collected using this questionnaire. The rather unique and rich body of information gathered in this way has been used here.

2. Administrative Reform

The task of modernising the public administration in the Czech Republic, as in all former communist countries, goes beyond subjecting it to the basic legal norms of conduct which govern the execution of public responsibilities in the countries of western Europe. The challenge is to redefine the role of public administration in society, its relations with politics, the economy and the civil community.

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The reform of public administration is thus part of the process of overall transformation of Czech society that followed after 1989. Changes have been affecting the very foundations of political, economic and social life. In the rather complex stream of changes, it is often difficult to distinguish between the administrative, political and economic reforms.

As with the general process of transformation, the reform of public administration is still an on-going process which in no way can be considered as being concluded. During the first stages of the transformation, the main goal was the reconstruction of the political and the economic systems, including the respective institutions. Necessary reform measures in the field of public administration also followed, but a comprehensive administrative reform was postponed until a later date. Progress in this field was further delayed by the split of Czechoslovakia and by the founding of the independent Czech Republic in 1993. This delay of the administrative reform has had a negative impact on other components of transformation.

The following are amongst the more important reform measures taken so far in public administration:

- a new Constitution of the Czech Republic was adopted, valid since 1 January 1993, which defined a new structure and basic competencies of the state institutions, including the executive ones;
- a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Audit Board and a Supreme Administrative Court were instituted by the Constitution (the Supreme Administrative Court has not, as yet, been established);
- the structure and competencies of ministries of central government and of other central administrative bodies (e.g. central government's offices, committees and councils) were changed in several steps; the number of ministries was substantially reduced and their competencies were re-defined so as to comply with the principles of the democratic political system and the market economy (e.g. the directive and planning competencies of the state were abolished, the functions of control were strengthened); some new central bodies were established to cope with newly emerging functions or issues (privatisation, economic competition, refugees, drug abuse etc.); at the same time, internal structures of the ministries and other central bodies were also changed and their field offices restructured;
- the personnel policy and system of remuneration in public administration were changed (new selection and promotion criteria, new salary schemes, etc. were introduced); the importance of qualifications, experience and performance as a criteria for promotion was strengthened; for top-officials in the public sector, the requirement of non-involvement in high-level political positions of the Communist regime and of no collaboration with the former secret police was applied (the so-called "lustration" procedure);
- sub-national government was fundamentally reconstructed, administration was deconcentrated and decentralised to the local level: former regional (provincial) governments, which were considered to have been strongholds of the Communist regime, were abolished and will be (according to the new Constitution) substituted by a new system of self-governing regions and/or lands; district governments were restructured and their competencies were re-defined; self-government was introduced at a local level, its competencies were strengthened and separated from those of the state administration; the number of municipalities increased sharply by spontaneous fragmentation of the existing municipalities; new deconcentrated organs of central government were created; in late 1997 new regions (provinces) were established to become operative in 2000;

- fundamental changes of policies occurred in practically all fields of public administration, the following being the most outstanding: in public finances, a new budgeting system and new fiscal policy were introduced; in social policy, a system of unemployment benefits and labour market services were introduced as well as a new system of means-tested social benefits; in health care, privatisation of health services is taking place and a new health insurance system was introduced; in education, de-politicisation of schools took place, new teaching programmes were introduced, new universities were founded, private schools came into operation. A new organisation of the judiciary system took place, the status of judges was changed and the system of prosecution was entirely rebuilt.

As mentioned, in spite of extensive change, some fundamental tasks of the public administration reform have not yet been fulfilled:

- establishment of the Supreme Administrative Court;
- implementation of the Civil Service Code to secure a professional body of administrators, guaranteeing stability, continuity and political neutrality;
- creation of an intermediary tier of government allowing for a workable system of intergovernmental relations; new regions (provinces) were established, but only in the geographic sense, structure and competencies of the regional governments have yet to be defined;
- introduction of more effective supervision of the financial markets and of the banking system;
- design or re-design of some policies: the health care policy, the housing policy, the regional policy, the educational policy;
- creation of institutional, legal and administrative pre-conditions for accession of the Czech Republic to the EU.

This list is far from exhaustive.

3. History of Surveys

The beginnings of survey research in the Czech Republic date back to the 1930s. After World War II the fate of survey research closely followed the political development in the country at that time. During the short period of semi-democracy from 1945-1948, the state-sponsored Institute of Public Opinion Research was established in 1946 to produce survey data. After the Communist take-over in 1948, social research activity was banned and the respective institutions were dissolved. The thawing period in the second half of the sixties, culminating in the "Prague Spring" of 1968, witnessed a massive surge of survey research. Training in survey methodology became part of university curricula in the social sciences. Textbooks were published with translations of both western and Polish authors as well as original works of Czech authors. The renewed Institute of Public Opinion Research was active from 1967 until 1970 when it was again dissolved. Many other institutions were also producing survey data at that time — institutes of applied economic and social research affiliated with ministries, academic institutions, human resource departments in large industrial enterprises, etc.

The "normalisation" regime, introduced in 1969 after the Soviet intervention, cracked down on social research, but it did not destroy the survey capacities entirely. The regime recognised the usefulness of

survey data as feedback on its own policies, but wanted to strictly control production of the data, access to them and their uses. A new Institute of Public Opinion Research was established as an intelligence arm of the Communist Party Central Committee, formally under the roof of the Statistical Office. Information about its research projects was not publicised, nor were the findings made known to other researchers. They were made available only to the high ranking Party authorities. However, besides this highly controlled central institution, many other less conspicuous bodies kept producing opinion survey data, though covering only certain groups or categories of the population and only covering certain specific sets of issues. They too were under supervision, but this was less strict. Typical producers of survey data in the late 1970s and 1980s were the applied research institutes of the ministries of labour and social affairs, of health, of construction and architecture, of the economic ministries and also academic institutions (at the universities and at the Academy of Sciences). Larger enterprises, employing sociologists and psychologists, sponsored surveys on workers' satisfaction, on their subjective mobility and living conditions, etc. Many surveys concerning housing conditions, developmental preferences, residential stability and satisfaction of residents were sponsored by local governments. The majority of such surveys were policy oriented and were organised to provide information for social development planning and programming, for social policy, for the rationalisation of the managerial and administrative procedures. Or, at least, they were legitimised by such functions. In reality, their actual use in decision-making was rare. Only a small portion of the findings were ever published. The results were usually presented in mimeographed reports that were available only to small groups of insiders. Much of this was descriptive and void of any theoretical underpinning. On the other hand, the technical level of surveys was relatively good.

A further chapter in the history of survey research opened up after 1989. Political and ideological controls were lifted and survey research was entirely liberalised. The demand for survey research has sharply increased, as entirely new kinds of information were sought after, concerning demand for consumer goods, media as well as political preferences and behaviour.

The state-sponsored Institute of Public Opinion Research, now the most important public survey organisation in the country, was fundamentally restructured and freed from any external political or ideological interventions. The Institute is financed by the Czech Statistical Office with which it has a loose organisational link, but it enjoys far-reaching freedom as far as the research programme is concerned.

A plethora of commercial survey agencies were founded (none had existed before) which are mostly engaged in market research. At least twenty to thirty such agencies of differing size, with different specialisations and territorial range are active in the country at present. Some of them are local branches of foreign or international firms. About one half of the agencies conduct, at least occasionally, policy-oriented research which is commissioned or which can be used by public administration. The majority of the recent surveys relevant to public administration were sponsored by local governments and their findings are used in the management of local development. Local surveys are frequently conducted by small consultancy firms which cannot afford to collect data on larger samples of respondents.

Approximately ten commercial agencies represent the nucleus of larger firms which are more frequently engaged in political and policy-oriented research on a national scale and are capable of producing reliable data usable in public administration. Those most prestigious, which probably have the highest share of the market in this particular field are STEM, FACTUM, UNIVERSITAS and AMASIA (full names and addresses of these organisations can be found in the Annex of this paper).

While private survey agencies have mushroomed since 1989, the social research units of the state socio-economic research institutes have been vanishing, together with those institutes themselves. Also

abolished were the social policy units in larger industrial enterprises which frequently conducted policy-oriented social surveys.

As a result, the majority of opinion surveys are nowadays carried out by commercial organisations commissioned by a variety of sponsors, both public and private, and often by foreign subjects (the European Union — cf. the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer; the United States Information Agency; foreign commercial and academic institutions; etc.). Domestic academic institutions (universities, institutes of the Academy of Sciences) also sponsor or conduct directly policy-relevant opinion surveys, though much less frequently than their commercial counterparts.

It is rather difficult to estimate the number of surveys conducted each year as most of them carry no publicity, being considered a private affair of the sponsors. It can be estimated that up to one hundred surveys are carried out each year in the Czech Republic (including market research, opinion polls, media research, political research, academic research, local and regional-relevant surveys).

The attitude of public administration toward survey research has been mostly cautious. Administrators have quite often shown a distrust of social surveys as a monitoring instrument and of their findings. It is more often the economic statistics and results of economic analyses which are accepted as the legitimate source of data, while attitudinal data are usually considered a too soft and, in principle, rather unreliable kind of information. Survey results are usually confronted by the already established views and their acceptance depends on their ability to support the intended policies. However, in spite of that, survey findings are closely followed and frequently commented upon by the authorities.

Social research methods, including survey methods and statistics are the standard part of university curricula in the social sciences. There are at least ten university departments in the Czech Republic which offer such programmes, although their quality may vary.

4. Monitoring the Performance and Acceptance of Institutions, Government and Public Administration

Surveys monitoring the performance and acceptance of institutions are frequent. About one half of the surveys in our sample of 72 belonged in this category. Some of the major survey agencies (The Institute of Public Opinion Research, The Centre for Empirical research — STEM, FACTUM) monitor on a regular basis (continual surveys) public opinion concerning the acceptance and performance of the main institutions of the state, using identical sets of questions. Time series of comparable data are thus generated. The Institute of Public Opinion Research runs monthly surveys on public attitudes toward the constitutional bodies and half-yearly surveys regarding the attitudes towards other institutions (courts, police, army, trade unions, secret service). Similar regular surveys known as The Trends are run by STEM. The results of both agencies are usually reported simultaneously in the media, providing a good opportunity for comparison. During 1995-96, FACTUM repeated its surveys five times on public opinion concerning the performance of Parliament, the Government, the President and the possibility of influencing these institutions.

The institutions covered by the surveys included main constitutional bodies (the Parliament and the deputies, the President of the Republic, the Central Government), local governments, the courts, army, police, banks, trade unions, churches, voluntary associations, political parties and also individual politicians. Rankings of political parties according to their preferences, and of politicians according to their popularity are regularly published.

This kind of research is typically sponsored by the media, by the respective institutions themselves, by academic institutions and by foreign semi-private institutions. Part of this research is self-sponsored: producing and publishing data on the above issues helps to increase the visibility of the respective survey agencies (see Box 1 for an example).

Results of opinion polls concerning institutions of the state are closely followed both by the general public, media and politicians.

**BOX 1: CONTINUAL SURVEY OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENT**

A set of standard questions concerning the attitudes of the general public towards Parliament, Central Government and the President are asked each month by the Institute of Public Opinion Research. The population are citizens of Czech Republic aged 15 and over; quota sampling is used (quotas are constructed according to sex, age, education, region, population size of place of residence); size of the sample is 1 100 persons. The data are collected by means of interviews and stored in the Institute's internal data archive.

The highest level of trust has been enjoyed by the President of the Republic and is followed — but on a considerably lower level — by Central Government. The two legislative bodies — the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate — were the least trusted amongst the main institutions of the State. The differences have been fairly stable over a long period of time, although the last months witnessed a general decrease of trust in all the institutions mentioned. The only exception was a sudden surge of positive feelings towards the President in connection with his illness.

	Year/Month					
	1996			1997		
<i>% trusting</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>
President	76	79	78	87	66	65
Central Government	48	48	45	50	38	26
Parliament*	24	41	32	34	25	18
Senate	-	-	-	21	23	18

* Lower Chamber of Parliament

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research, Continual Survey 1, Survey Information No. 97-07.

Another group of surveys, which overlaps to a large extent with the previous category, deals with attitudes towards concrete administrative and governmental organisations — e.g. toward the individual ministries (in particular the ministries of health, education and labour and social affairs), towards the army (see Box 2 for an example) as well as towards their policies (on health, education, social, vocational training and defence).

Another data series confirms the consistently low prestige of army officers. In three consecutive surveys regarding the prestige of various professions (1993, 1995, 1996), a career soldier (a major) ranked last but one amongst twenty different professions coming after professions such as a shop-keeper, TV repairman and professional sportsman, and only coming before the job of a cleaning lady (Institute of Public Opinion Research, Survey Information No. 96-07).

BOX 2: ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ARMY

In June 1991 the Institute of Public Opinion Research conducted a survey on the image of the Czechoslovak Army. The survey was commissioned by the Military Institute of Social Research. The population were citizens of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic aged 15 and over and the sample was 1 954 persons. Quota sampling was used. The data were collected in interviews. (Institute of Public Opinion Research 1991b). The survey disclosed the low prestige of the army and of army officers in Czechoslovak society. It was undertaken to help design a public relations policy of the army. Its findings were confirmed by several other surveys suggesting a chronically low status of the army as an institution. A time series of the Institute of Public Opinion Research data spanning from 1990 till 1997 suggests that little lasting success was reached in improving the army's image:

	Year/Month				
	1990/2	1992/3	1994/2	1996/2	1997/2
% trusting the army	39	59	57	36	35

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research, Survey Information No. 97-02.

5. Policy Priorities

Surveys concerning policy preferences are amongst those which are regularly repeated. Of the 72 surveys in our sample, five surveys dealt with policy priorities, of which four were continual surveys. Comparative over-time data on policy priorities of the population are collected each year in surveys conducted by the Institute of Public Opinion Research as well as by STEM. Moreover, STEM has been commissioned by the Institute of Sociology to conduct half-yearly surveys on the economic expectations and attitudes of the population. A time series of this data is available commencing in 1990. In general, the results show an increasingly critical attitude of the general public towards complete freedom for private ventures and foreign firms.

For example, while in 1990, 87 per cent of respondents thought that private entrepreneurship should be given complete freedom, by 1996 only 54 per cent endorsed that view.

In a FACTUM survey, citizens were asked what their expectations were from the state, politicians, deputies, ministries, local governments and voluntary associations. A large number of surveys concerning local policy priorities are sponsored every year by local authorities and the findings are used in the individual local development programmes. The Institute of Sociology, in its surveys of local governments (the field-work was done by STEM), mapped and compared, at a national level, policy preferences of the municipal administrators, local councillors, mayors and the citizens. A surprisingly high agreement between the citizens and the representatives was ascertained in the assessment of the importance of individual policy items (see Boxes 3 and 9).

The findings are, or could be, used by political parties and individual politicians as background information on the mood of the general public. By indicating developing tensions and dissatisfaction, they fulfil an important feedback function.

BOX 3: POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The Centre of Empirical Research — STEM runs a continual survey of preferences concerning main social problems. A standard set of questions concerning policy priorities has been asked every year since 1992. The population are citizens of the Czech Republic aged 18 and over. The sample is 1 200 to 1 500 persons. Until 1993 random sampling was used, based on the Population Register, with quota sampling being applied later (criteria used were sex, age, education, region, population size of place of residence). The data were collected during face-to-face interviews and are archived in STEM. (Centre for Empirical Research, Continual Survey 3). A similar continual survey is run by the Institute of Public Opinion Research. Fighting criminality has been consistently considered the top policy priority, followed by the reform of the health services. Social security comes next, while the economic issues — economic reform, living standards, housing and rents and unemployment — remain behind.

% considering the issue very pressing	Year/Month					
	92/10	93/10	94/10	95/4	96/4	97/5
Economic criminality	-	70	76	73	70	83
Health services	-	55	46	56	54	75
Organised crime	-	68	73	66	68	68
Social security	-	48	59	60	53	55
Economic reform	69	53	42	41	33	61
Living standards	54	52	54	54	49	48
Housing and rents	-	32	41	43	49	50
Unemployment	44	40	42	37	26	32

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research, Survey Information No. 97-10.

6. Views on EU Integration

Public opinion on the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union has been regularly monitored by the Institute of Public Opinion Research since about 1996 when Czech application for EU membership became a salient agenda item (the application was submitted in 1996). Questions concerning this issue were also occasionally asked by other survey organisations. However, more attention was paid in the surveys to the more imminent membership of the country to NATO which was likely to materialise some 3-5 years earlier than the EU accession (see Box 4).

Public views on EU integration have so far been characterised by a rather poor knowledge of the different aspects of membership and of the conditions which must be fulfilled prior to accession. About one third of the adult population say they are not at all informed about ongoing contacts with the EU on Czech accession and 54 per cent say they are little or not at all interested in this matter. This has been reflected by a considerable, although diminishing share of “don't know” answers to the question concerning the support of EU membership. The percentage of positive answers has been growing over time and has more than twice superseded the share of negative reactions. The opinion is widely held among the experts that the low profile approach of the authorities until now towards EU membership should be changed for a more intensive explanatory campaign.

BOX 4: PUBLIC SUPPORT OF EU ACCESSION

In its continual survey, the Institute of Public Opinion Research has been regularly asking questions concerning the accession of Czech Republic to the European Union. In a recent survey conducted in September 1997 58 per cent respondents supported the membership of Czech Republic, while 22 per cent were against. Full 20 per cent had no opinion on this matter. The positive attitude correlated with education. Over time, the support for membership has been growing at the expense of those undecided. The percentage of opponents remained stable.

<i>% supporting accession</i>	3/1996	11/1996	1/1997	9/1997
Definitely yes	16	18	22	21
Rather yes	26	33	36	37
Rather no	13	18	16	14
Definitely no	8	8	7	8
Don't know	37	23	19	20

In the same survey, 6 per cent said they were well informed about negotiations with the EU, 63 per cent were partially informed and 34 per cent said they were not informed at all. Forty-six per cent said they were interested in the discussions concerning Czech membership, while 54 per cent had little interest or were not at all interested.

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research 1997c.

With the approach of accession talks, the above data have become a major concern for the authorities, particularly after the change of government in late 1997. Communication strategies are being developed to increase public awareness of the different aspects of EU membership. However, discussions concerning the more imminent NATO membership of the Czech Republic attracted much more public attention.

7. Use of Public Opinion Surveys in Policy Cycle

Whilst survey information plays a role in the policy cycle, it is not always possible to reconstruct the concrete functions a particular survey fulfilled in policy-making, or to prove its concrete policy impact.

7.1. Policy Initiation

The most frequent amongst the surveys contributing, indirectly at least, to policy initiation are those which locate and characterise social problems. At least one-third of the surveys on our list falls into this group. Their thematic range is as wide as is the range of public policy itself. Subjects of the surveys included the situation of the Roma minority, subjective standard of living, preferences concerning administrative territorial organisation of the Czech Republic, the social situation of university students, evaluation of public safety, criminality and the population climate, etc.

Typically, these surveys were sponsored by institutions responsible for the respective policies — mostly by the relevant ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior) and by other administrative bodies. Their relevance for public administration is that they can indicate problems and tensions that call for a change of the existing procedures and/or institutions for initiation of new policies.

Two examples are mentioned below. The first one, focusing on the Roma community, had a well-defined policy function and its results were already used in shaping the Government's policy toward this ethnic

group. The second survey, concerning the territorial organisation of the Czech Republic, was undertaken at the request of the Parliament, with the expectation that the results would help design the territorial reform of the country. That expectation was not fulfilled (see Boxes 5 and 6).

BOX 5: SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY

A nation-wide survey was commissioned by the Government's Council for Nationalities and conducted by AMASIA in April 1997. Its aim was to map the present social situation of the Roma ethnic group in the Czech Republic, the attitudes of administrators toward this community and their opinions concerning policies toward the Roma. The findings were expected to help focus the Government's programme and policies concerning the Roma affairs. The population were functionaries of those state and municipal administrative offices which deal with the Roma affairs (Labour Offices, District Offices, Offices of Education, the Police, Municipal Offices in 112 cities and towns) and functionaries of Roma organisations, altogether about 1 300 persons. In the Czech Republic, it was the first survey ever of its kind devoted to Roma issues. The data were collected by means of distributed questionnaires and have been stored in the Prime Minister's Office. The survey findings were incorporated into a Report on the Situation of the Roma Community in Czech Republic which was presented to the Czech Government. They have contributed to the recent establishment of a Government-sponsored Committee for Roma Affairs (AMASIA 1997). As regards the attitudes of the general public towards the Roma minority, they have been regularly monitored by the Institute of Public Opinion Research. The findings are not favourable: a highly negative attitude toward this ethnic group persists among the Czech population. The Roma are the least acceptable of the different nationalities and ethnic groups who live on Czech Republic territory:

	Year/Month					
	91/11	92/11	93/11	94/11	95/11	96/11
% population with positive/negative feelings toward the Roma	4/70	4/77	3/77	5/68	5/69	5/69

This situation together with the multiplying cases of inter-ethnic violence and recent emigration of Roma families to Canada and Great Britain have prompted the government and civic organisations to pay more attention to Roma affairs.

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research, Survey Information 96-11.

7.2. Policy Implementation

The use of opinion surveys in policy implementation is infrequent. Only three surveys in our sample can be more or less safely listed as having contributed to implementation of reform. One dealt with public opinion on health services, health institutions, medical personnel and the health system's reform; the second concerned the protection of individual data; and the third survey dealt with attitudes on housing issues. Survey research has not been a much sought after source of information with the present Czech reformers.

Surveys focusing explicitly on administrative reform as a circumscribed set of measures are also rather rare. Those examined concern attitudes toward reforms of the health care system (see Box 7), the welfare system, higher education, the intermediary level territorial administration and the housing policy.

BOX 6: OPINION ON TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION OF CZECH REPUBLIC

In March 1991 the Institute of Sociology, together with the Centre of Empirical Research — STEM conducted an opinion survey concerning the preferred territorial organisation of the Czech Republic. The survey was commissioned by the Czech National Council (the Parliament of Czech Republic). Its aim was to obtain information on how the population in different parts of the state viewed alternative versions of the territorial division of the Czech Republic and the future administrative status of the subnational territorial units, as well as the status the Czech Republic should have within Czechoslovakia. The findings were intended to serve as an input to the then prepared reform of the state's territorial organisation. The population were adult citizens of the Czech Republic. Probability sampling was used, the sample was 2 007 persons and data were collected during face-to-face interviews.

Respondents had to answer two sets of questions: one concerning the different forms of the future territorial organisation of the state (unitary state, federation, confederation), where they had to choose the most appropriate one, and the other set of questions concerned the competencies of the different kinds of territorial units. A striking inconsistency of the two sets of answers was the most important finding of the survey: on one hand, respondents preferred a more deconcentrated form of state and on the other, they did not wish to see a multiplicity of different state organs which a loose form of state would imply (several parliaments, governments, supreme courts, constitutions), fearing the financial cost of such an arrangement. Findings of the survey were distributed by the sponsor to the deputies, and they aroused heated discussions in Parliament's corridors. (Institute of Sociology 1991).

A similar pattern of attitudes was found years later by surveys concerning the administrative organisation of the Czech Republic. While decentralisation as an abstract principle was supported by the majority of the population, establishment of the decentralised regional governments was viewed with mixed feelings. People feared increase in the number of administrative offices and the financial cost which this could involve. In an October/November 1997 survey on the pros and cons of the newly established self-governing regions, a critical attitude clearly prevailed: 26 per cent thought the decentralisation of government to be disadvantageous, and only 12 per cent considered it an advantage. As to the concrete objections against the new territorial organisation, these were an increase in the number of administrative offices (34 per cent respondents) and secondly, too high financial demands (28 per cent respondents).

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research 1997b.

7.3. Policy Evaluation

7.3.1. Satisfaction Measures

Three kinds of surveys may fall into this category: 1) targeted surveys which assess the satisfaction of specific publics (clients) with specific services; 2) surveys assessing the satisfaction of the general public with different branches or functions of public administration (the general public is viewed in this context as the public administration's summary client); and 3) surveys which assess satisfaction of public administration staff.

BOX 7: ATTITUDES TOWARD THE REFORM OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

In November 1995, MEDIAN conducted a survey of opinions concerning the health care system. It focused on the health care system in general, its reform, health care institutions and physicians. The population were citizens of the Czech Republic aged 14-79 and sample size was 1 000 persons. Quota sampling was used. The data were collected by means of structured interviews and these are stored with their owner — the MEDIAN agency. (Median 1995b).

The reform of the health care system has been a chronic problem in the Czech Republic during recent years. Efforts to find even partial solutions have so far been, for the most part, a failure. Amongst the most urgent policy issues facing the Government it was found that the health service ranked second (74 per cent respondents mentioned the reform of the health service as very pressing). This was concluded by a survey conducted by the Institute of Public Opinion Research in June 1997.

Source: Institute of Public Opinion Research 1997a.

As for the first type, most of the numerous existing surveys were sponsored by local governments. They assessed the satisfaction of local citizens with communal services (municipal transport, street cleaning, trash collection, local schools, etc.). Other surveys in our sample dealt predominantly with clients of welfare institutions falling under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and were commissioned by the research institute of this Ministry. They were concerned with the attitudes of the unemployed towards the labour market and labour market services, with attitudes of clients of social welfare departments of the District Offices towards social policy and social problems, with the attitudes of young families and unmarried singles towards social policy and social problems, and with the attitudes of university students towards the financial aspect of their studies and the social services available to them.

A survey of the unemployed who were clients of Labour Offices was conducted by UNIVERSITAS in April-May 1995. This survey was commissioned by the Commission of the European Union and partly supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. It focused on the experience of the unemployed with services offered by the Labour Offices, on the causes of unemployment and on employment-seeking strategies. The population were unemployed people in the Czech Republic and the sample consisted of those persons visiting Labour Offices. The size of the sample was 750 persons. The data were collected by means of questionnaires distributed by Labour Offices and are filed with UNIVERSITAS. (Universitas 1995).

As for the second type of survey which measures the general public's satisfaction with the different services delivered by the national administrative system, many of the surveys listed above regarding attitudes toward the health care system, education system, social welfare system, housing policy, courts, police, army and secret service etc. can be viewed as monitoring clients' satisfaction. Recently, it has principally been the health care services which were the focus of interest, due to the protracted crisis they have been facing.

Surveys of the third kind which assess the satisfaction of public administration's personnel with their working conditions (i.e. salaries, working hours, promotion, fringe benefits, interpersonal relations, etc.) do not appear to be very frequent and only one such survey appeared in our sample. It concerned police officers. The survey was conducted by UNIVERSITAS in November/December 1995, was commissioned by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic and supported by the Hans Seidel Foundation. It focused on the motives of job choice, job satisfaction, an evaluation of the police as an institution, an evaluation of the interpersonal relations within the service and on the relationships between the police and the public. The population were policemen employed with the police of the Czech Republic. The sample size was

1 500 persons and stratified proportional sampling was used. The data were collected by a questionnaire. This file is confidential and is stored with the UNIVERSITAS agency (Universitas 1995c).

It is assumed that most surveys of this kind are conducted by the public administration agencies internally, without using the services of professional (and expensive) survey agencies. This may be the reason why only one such survey appeared in our sample.

7.3.2. *Other Outcome Measures*

The impact-assessing surveys can also be divided into the more specific and the more general ones. Practically all surveys dealing with the performance of public administration and with the satisfaction of the general public can be listed as evaluating, in a more general sense, the impact of administrative reform. Many of the surveys mentioned in other parts of this report, for example the TRENDS series of the STEM agency belong here.

As to the more specific surveys targeted on the evaluation of the outcomes of concrete policies, three investigations were identified. The first one dealt with the effectiveness of the active labour market programmes. Its aim was to assess the impact of such policies (see Box 8). The other survey, mentioned previously, concerned health care reform. The third related to the satisfaction of local political actors with the outcomes of local government reform.

BOX 8: IMPACT OF ACTIVE LABOUR POLICY ON THE LABOUR MARKET

This survey was conducted by SC&C and was commissioned by the World Bank, together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. Its aim was to assess the effectiveness of the active labour market programmes. The first stage of the study was an analysis of the relevant institutions and of the pertinent statistical data. The second stage was a survey. The population were participants in the labour market — employers, workers, unemployed, school leavers, etc. Multi-stage sampling was used — districts were sampled first and labour market participants, second. Sample size was 2 000 — 2 500 persons and a control group of the same size was also surveyed. Data were collected by interviews and telephone calls. The data files have been stored with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic and with the World Bank. It was found that the labour market policy has been, in general, effective and has contributed to the remarkably low unemployment rate in the Czech Republic. The role of the active labour market policy has been decreasing and that of the passive policy increasing since 1992. The survey was part of a wider international project.

Source: SC&C 1996.

8. Images and Perceptions of Public Organisations

Surveys comparing the self-image of institutions and their key actors with the external image held by the general public are rare. The only two surveys of this type known of and examined were both sponsored by academic institutions and were inputs to academic research. However, in both cases the respective academic institutions took pains to alert decision-makers of their findings.

One of the surveys was undertaken during 1994 — 1996 by the Department of Public and Social Policy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. It compared attitudes of the public towards policy issues, both at a local and global level, with those of administrators. The other survey, or rather, set of

surveys, were already mentioned above. They were commissioned in 1991 — 1993 by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences and compared attitudes of four kinds of actors in local politics: the citizens, the councillors, the mayors and the chief municipal administrators. The attitudes concerned policy priorities, spending priorities and performance of local governments, the understanding of roles of local politicians, as well as more general political values and attitudes (see Box 9).

9. Location of Survey Knowledge in the Administrative System

In the Czech Republic, there exists no system of co-ordination and documentation of social surveys (future, present or past). There is no central place or clearing house where information about existing or planned surveys would be available, and no roster exists of surveys covering the different aspects of the administrative reform.

Surveys are commissioned and conducted in a decentralised way by a number of different organisations which are seldom sufficiently informed about each other's activities. The data are usually stored internally. Some survey organisations have established their internal data archives, however establishment of a joint data bank or archive is still pending.

The majority of the data are owned by the surveys' sponsors or by the survey agencies themselves. Primary data as well as survey reports are often considered confidential, or they are only available against payment. An exception to this is the state-sponsored Institute of Public Opinion Research which publishes lists of surveys it performs, distributes a bulletin with brief information on the results and makes available — for a modest sum — detailed reports on the findings. Thus, it is personal contacts, media, press releases, press conferences and publications in scientific journals that are the most common current sources of information about existing surveys.

This situation is certainly far from ideal, if evaluated from the perspective of administrative and economic rationality. Results of those surveys which were financed from the public money should, ideally, be available to any interested public institution. Establishment of some kind of central data bank or, at least, of a documentation service, covering surveys relevant to public administration, may be an answer to the existing needs. What should be avoided, however, is any regulation and centralisation of survey research. Negative experience with the over-centralised information policy of the pre-1990 Communist regime, which had heavily regulated the use of surveys and insisted on developing clumsy, over-sized information systems of dubious practical use is a sufficient warning. That experience calls for caution in case of any potential plans to strengthen the role of state in handling survey intelligence.

10. Conclusions

There is no doubt that surveys can be a useful source of intelligence for the administrative process. It is also a truism to say that the potential of social surveys has been chronically underestimated or misunderstood by public administration in this country. Some of the reasons are:

- the surviving tradition of "self-directedness" of public administration, i.e. a small interest and low sensitivity of many officials to external feedback;
- helplessness of many administrators as far as uses of surveys in the administrative process are concerned; such helplessness is due to the absence of qualified knowledge concerning survey methodology and the explicative potential of survey data;

- a biased attitude of some officials toward social data — their belief that only economic information can be relevant in public administration;
- inability of many social researchers to present survey data and survey findings in a way that would be understandable to politicians and administrators, and in a form beneficial to the administrative culture;
- careless or even irresponsible presentation of survey data by researchers: survey data have frequently been presented without indicating their methodological qualifications — size of the sample, sampling method, sampling error; however, conclusions were drawn from data differences that were within the range of the sampling error.

The main obstacles to survey research in the Czech Republic, external to the realm of public administration, are no longer political. They are now of a rather practical nature. Among the most relevant is a decreasing willingness of the public to communicate with researchers — and hence the resulting high percentages of refusals and non-response in social surveys. The reason is a growing concern about intrusion of privacy, and fear that the information rendered will be misused.

Also, increasingly stricter measures are applied by the authorities to protect individual data: survey organisations are barred from access to the Population Register, and other administrative registers that could be used in sampling are protected from non-administrative uses. As a result, survey organisations face extreme difficulties when constructing random samples. Sometimes, to by-pass this obstacle, they have been applying semi-legal or even illegal solutions, contributing to a disproportionate increase in the cost of quality survey research. Because of their high price, large-scale sample surveys are increasingly inaccessible to institutions of public administration which cannot afford to pay for them. The rising cost of survey data has been changing the structure of users, skewing it away from non-commercial sponsors toward commercial firms.

The prerequisites for an effective use of survey intelligence in public administration include:

- further democratisation of the public service — contributing to the awareness of importance of external feedback;
- training of public administration staff in the basics of social science methodology,
- training of social researchers in the art of communication with the world of public administration;
- the existence of highly professional survey agencies capable of producing valid and reliable data at reasonable costs;
- availability of information on the existing and planned surveys and on their accessibility, on the capacities enabling them to conduct the surveys and on the conditions under which they render their services;
- availability of inspiring examples of successful uses of surveys in public administration in contexts akin to those of the Czech Republic;
- availability of time series and comparative data for as many relevant indicators as possible.

BOX 9: ROLE IMAGES AND POLICY PREFERENCES OF THE CITIZENS, COUNCILLORS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

During 1991 — 1993 the Institute of Sociology commissioned three surveys of key actors in local politics in the Czech Republic. The aim of the surveys was to obtain comparative information on how citizens, local councillors and the municipal administrative officers view their roles, how they evaluate the performance of local governments and what their policy and spending preferences are. As well as for academic purposes, the findings were also channelled to the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic for policy purposes. Data was collected by STEM — The Centre for Empirical Research. The populations were 1) adult citizens of Czech Republic; 2) local councillors; 3) mayors of municipalities; and 4) chief administrative officers in the municipalities. Quota sampling was used for the citizens (sample size 1 052 persons) and stratified sampling for the councillors (sample size 1 183 persons), mayors (sample size 139 persons) and administrative officers (sample size 139 persons). The data were collected by structured interviews. The outcomes were channelled into discussions concerning assessment and continuation of public administration reform. The data files are stored in the Institute of Sociology. The surveys were part of a comparative international project on Local Democracy and Innovation. (Institute of Sociology 1991-1993).

A remarkable overlap was found between citizens, mayors and councillors as far as their policy preferences were concerned:

Local problems considered highly or considerably urgent by:

	Citizens %	Councillors %
Public safety	81.3	87.0
Protection of the environment	77.3	89.4
Public utilities	82.8	75.8
Public social services	78.3	74.5
Repair and construction of houses	77.5	71.0

Similarly consistent was the opinion of both groups regarding the preferred qualities of local councillors:

Qualities of councillors considered highly or considerably important by:

	Citizens %	Councillors %
Ability to solve conflicts	93.9	91.9
Moral qualities	93.6	97.0
Knowledge of local conditions	93.2	92.3
Professional knowledge	86.7	75.6
Entrepreneurial spirit	62.7	67.3
Good speaking abilities	62.7	53.0
Administrative experience	43.7	23.2
Membership of a political party	5.1	8.7

Source: Illner and Hanspach 1994.

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Social Change and Criminality in Prague. Universitas, 1993.

Social Conditions of University Students. Universitas, 1995e.

Survey of Unemployed Persons. Universitas, 1995d.

Trust in Constitutional Bodies and Social Organisations. Amasia, 1996c.

Trust in the Organs of Government, Opinion on Police. Amasia, 1995a.

Urgency of Societal Problems. Continual Survey 3. Institute of Public Opinion Research.

Annex. Addresses of Main Survey Research Agencies and Other Research Institutions which Conduct Surveys and Store Survey Data Relevant for Public Administration Reform

Aisa s.r.o.

Lesanska 2a, 141 00 Praha 4

Director: Dr. Jiri Boguszak

Amasia s.r.o.

Vrozova 6, 150 00 Praha 5

Director: Professor Dusan Pavlu

Department of Public Administration

Institute of Sociological Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Celetn 20, 110 00 Praha 1

Director: Professor Martin Potucek

Factum s.r.o.

Heyrovskeho nam. 780/5, 162 00 Praha 6

Director: Dr. Jiri Herzmann

GFK s.r.o.

Ujezd 450/40, 110 00 Praha 1

Research Director: Dr. Pavol Fric

Institute of Public Opinion Research

Solovska 142, 180 00 Praha 8

Director: Dr. Eliska Rendlova

Institute of Sociology

Academy of Sciences of Czech Republic

Jilska 1, 110 00 Praha 1

Director: Dr. Michal Illner

Median s.r.o.

Strasinska 31, 100 00 Praha 10

Director: Dr. Premysl Cech

SC&C s.r.o.

Petrska 5, 110 00 Praha 1

Director: Dr. Irena Bartova

STEM — Center for Empirical Research

Jilska 1, 110 00 Praha 1

Director: Dr. Jan Hartl

Universitas s.r.o.

Borovska 1425, 190 16 Praha 9

Director: Professor Jiri Burianek

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AS INPUTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM *IN HUNGARY*

Julia Szalai*

1. Introduction

This paper looks at the ways in which public opinion surveys have affected the shaping of administrative reforms in post-1989 Hungary. It is hoped that by looking at these reforms through the window of surveys, some insight will be gained on the in-depth changes in governance over the past six to eight years.

The origins of these changes date back to the times of late-socialism. Due to a long period of “preparatory” expert discussions and public debates about the continuation of those cautious reforms that had been initiated in the early 1980’s, Hungarian society entered the 1990’s with rather elaborated and widely shared ideas about the necessary transformation of public administration in its move towards a democratic order. By this time, the core elements of the new approach to governance had been crystallised and were supported by the political values of openness, accountability and service to the public.

In spring 1990, it was these fundamental principles that provided guidance to the formulation of the first acts of the newly elected Parliament to launch the radical restructuring of the entire administrative system. In line with these legislative texts, new institutions were set up within a fortnight and a number of new laws limited the “rights” of the central bodies of governance (ministries, police, state offices, etc.) to intervene from above. The institutional and legal framework of the new democracy was thus created within an exceptionally short time. However, to fill the framework with meaningful content proved to be a more difficult task.

Hence, after seven years of experience, it is justifiable to ask a few questions about the actual outcome of the reforms that have been undertaken. The first of these questions relates to the essence of the transformation: how far do the structural changes in administration really serve the two major tasks of moving from a command-regulated economic order to a market-based one, and from a top-down control over politics to the bottom-up representation of interests? Secondly, what forms exist for expressing the needs of the various segments of “the public”, and what is their route to the decision-making bodies and administration? Thirdly, do public opinion surveys play some role in giving weight to diverse social, economic and political interests? Lastly, what happens to seriously clashing interests on the level of governance: what are the fora of conflict-resolution, and how do the various governing actors relate to these fora? Do public opinion surveys provide some arguments for them in their debates?

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These are those major questions that this chapter attempts to respond to by discussing some decisive steps of recent administrative reforms as reflected in a range of public opinion surveys. After an overview of the major structural elements of the reforms, surveys in their impact on policy-formation, implementation, evaluation and regular monitoring will be presented in relation to the most important areas of governance.

2. Some Decisive Features of the Post-1989 Administrative Reforms

The most paralysing legacy of the past regime that the new democracy in Hungary had to face was the all-round presence and heaviness of the central state in all decisive matters of economic, political and social life. Therefore, the first and most important task of a meaningful administrative reform was to re-define the competencies that the different levels of governance should hold in the new arrangements of power and responsibility. In concrete terms, central, as opposed to community-level, decision-making procedures had to be circumscribed, the division of duties with assigned financial resources for their accomplishment had to be determined and the guarantees of visibility and public accountability had to be created.

Besides new legislation on the duties and competencies of civil servants in all areas of public administration, two sets of action were taken to establish the institutional framework of a significantly altered way of governance. First, a number of new organisations were founded to exercise control over the legislative, administrative and financial procedures of the various governing bodies; second, a series of regulations were formulated to define the entitlements, property-bases and finances of the decentralised decisions over, and daily management of, public services, welfare and public safety.

As to the first set of tasks, the most important change was certainly the increased weight given to Parliament. Prior to 1989, the power of Parliament was minimal. It had to do nothing more than enact and approve with the “stamp of the law” those decisions which had been taken outside its influence in “secret” negotiations within the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Obviously, with the appearance of the different political parties and with Hungary’s full commitment to regular democratic elections, the role of Parliament has suddenly changed. It has become the decisive forum of compromising clashing interests and exercising control over the Government. Although the legislative deeds of Parliament are under steady criticism, they are taken much more seriously than before.

Besides more intense attention on the part of the electorate, new institutions help to guarantee the lawfulness of administrative actions and the orderly application of the law in lower-level regulations. Three such institutions (almost without precedence under socialism) have to be mentioned: the Presidency, the Constitutional Court and the National Audit Office.

Though the formal power of the President of the Republic is somewhat less in Hungary than in certain other countries in the region (e.g. the Czech Republic or Poland), the President’s role in keeping a balance between the Government and Parliament, safeguarding legality and embodying the unity of national interests, cannot be emphasised enough. In many of the public issues generating serious political conflicts, it was the President who maintained constitutional order and halted authoritarian attempts (stopped harsh police interventions in cases of mass demonstrations or strikes, put an end to the persecution of agents of the secret police of the old regime by a Presidential Decree and exercised permanent control over the mass media to ensure the distribution of fair information for citizens amid the heated party debates over the new media-laws, etc.).

The second new institution enjoying high popularity is the Constitutional Court. The judges of the Court are elected by Parliament, and are empowered to control all aspects of the legislative procedure. Their

decisions are mandatory for both Parliament and the government. Since as yet the new Republic has not worked out its “own” constitution, the main role of the Court is to give general guidance to legislation by exemplary decrees over cases debated either by groups of citizens, or by one or another organ of the administrative system. The decisions of the Court are highly esteemed and are followed with great interest. Over the past six years, several hundred proclamations helped to clarify the actual content of certain newly declared political and human rights, the entitlements and property rights of local governments, the legal implications of budgetary reforms, some contested aspects of the law on abortion and the necessity of protecting the environment and women’s rights, etc.

The third new institution has different roles from the above two: the National Audit Office is empowered to control the use of public money and safeguard accountability in its strictest economic sense. It is Parliament which authorises this body to investigate the economic, financial and bookkeeping activities of the various ministries, local authorities, social security, public foundations, the State Privatisation Agency and different public organisations. The reports of the National Audit Office are presented to Parliament which has the right to take action if necessary. Although such claims are almost always articulated, relatively little has actually been done to follow up on the dry factual reports on public disputes over responsibility and accountability. Therefore, the control functions of this new administrative body are reduced to rather formal investigations without serious personal and organisational consequences. Its prestige is high in professional circles, but less esteemed by the public, which, due to the lack of full publicity of its reports, sees the activities of the National Audit Office as the wasteful efforts of a handful of honest men to introduce legality in a sphere which traditionally has been loaded with corruption and misuse of authority.

The second set of important changes in administration is aimed at giving stronger weight to the representation of local needs and interests and at decentralising decisions over a number of issues in economic development, employment, delivery of services, and provision of welfare. The legal framework of the envisioned new division of power between the central and the local levels of public administration was established by the Act on Local Self-Governance in summer 1990. As laid down in this Act, all settlements were entitled to elect their new local governing bodies to substitute for the old councils (which had been set up according to the principles of political loyalty and centrally prescribed quota, and had been subordinated to tight hierarchical control from above, being concentrated in the headquarters of the ruling Communist Party).

The new local governments became the proprietors of those lands and infrastructural facilities within their geographical boundaries which earlier had been possessed by the faceless “nation-state”. They were also seen as independent economic actors with a certain degree of freedom, but with a wide range of legally prescribed tasks.

The dual principles of free elections and reorganisation of the governing system seemed to guarantee not only the extension of democratic participation, but also to assist in a rise in efficiency in decision-making and the allocation of resources. Thus, the reshaping of local governance brought to the forefront all the key aspects of systemic transformation: old authority had to be changed by modern administration, subordination by representation, bureaucratic orientation by entrepreneurial innovation, command by service and central dependency by independent self-determination.

Given the outstanding role of local governments in the realisation of administrative reforms, the order of priorities in their actual policy has been accompanied by intense public debates throughout the past seven years. It is also in relation to their exceptional role in shaping people’s living conditions that — as will be presented below — local governments are much more frequent customers of public opinion surveys than the organs of the central administration. Their vivid daily contact with the electorate gives solid

justification to the surveys, and the findings of the various polls are directly utilised in the decision-making process.

3. Brief History and Some Current Features of Public Opinion Surveys

By the 1980s, regular measurement of public opinion as a useful (and necessary) preparatory tool in the decision-making process became acknowledged not only by professional circles, but also by the authorities of the Communist Party. The Party-sponsored surveys in those days served to “pre-test” the reactions of the various social groups to those planned actions that the Communist Party was already determined to take. In other words, public opinion polls provided a quick “barometer” for politicians, and their results were used to legitimise either increased caution, or, on the contrary, the need for speeding up the reforms. Thus, officially commissioned surveys were centred around issues in the forefront of the reforms: first of all, they had to test people’s attitudes toward the continuation of economic changes in the direction of marketisation. In addition, a number of polls were designed to measure people’s optimism/pessimism toward the foreseeable future, their observations on the functioning of a range of public institutions from health care to the educational system and their expectations from social services, etc.

Since all these issues were highly politicised, it goes without saying that public opinion surveys were under the strict control of the Communist Party. The main organisation in charge of running them was the Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC), an institution financed rather generously, directly from the state budget and subordinated to the Party-nominated President of the Hungarian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company. The results of its surveys were not published until the late 1980’s. However, some of the conclusions (backed with “cited” scattered data) could appear under the name of authors otherwise employed by the Centre.

Despite all the ambiguities of the authorities, public opinion research was highly rated as an important source of information and as a reliable tool for measuring public approval of the reforms. In acknowledgement of their usefulness, an ever widening circle of social science research institutes was entrusted to investigate an extensive range of issues from centrally allocated resources.

Thus, from the mid-eighties onwards, apart from the Mass Communication Research Centre, public opinion surveys were done either independently, or in conjunction with other empirical investigations in nearly all major social science research institutions and also in the Central Statistical Office. These surveys were financed exclusively from public funds, either in direct contract between the research team and one or another organ of the Party or the state administration, or through the slowly evolving schemes of grants for research in service of governance. In the latter cases, the degree of freedom to publish the research results was greater, but strict control was gradually lifted also in cases of directly sponsored investigations.

When, after more than two decades of closure, sociology departments were re-opened in the major universities in the 1970s, due to the strong traditions of empirical research in Hungarian sociology, survey methods were taught from the outset as inherent parts of the curricula. The professional knowledge in running opinion polls was further extended by those internal courses that the leading researchers of the Mass Communication Research Centre organised for their permanent interviewers and research assistants. With this well-established expertise as background, it is hardly surprising that after 1989, the increased need for public opinion research has been easily satisfied — at least from the viewpoint of available trained personnel.

However, the collapse of socialism generated far-reaching changes in the organisational arrangements of survey research. In 1991, the prestigious Mass Communication Research Centre was closed down because of its earlier party-affiliation. Its leading researchers went into private business and within a short time, four major research centres of MCRC were set up as offshoots. Three out of the four new organisations — Medián, Sonda Ipsos and Modus — are privately owned. The fourth — Public Opinion Research Centre — belongs to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and is financed partly from the state budget, partly from research-grants applied for in open competition. This latter offspring of the former MCRC is engaged in theoretical work, but also runs opinion-surveys on relatively small samples.

Beside the four successors of the Mass Communication Research Centre, a number of research institutions appeared on the market of opinion surveys. However, most of them run polls in addition to their basic activities (media studies, customer service, market research, environmental studies or “ordinary” sociological work). In most of the cases, these surveys are one-time thematic surveys with no follow-up, adjoined to the focal subject of the project (the themes vary from topics such as local environmental issues to views on social stratification, the changing labour market, private business, entrepreneurial habits, changes in household economies and lifestyles to choices in the school-system, patterns of occupational mobility, work satisfaction, etc., or to some “classical” subjects of market research such as investigations into consumer satisfaction or evaluation of certain types of business). Regularly repeated polls are much less frequently carried out and even then only on a narrow thematic basis. However, the two major privately owned public opinion centres — Medián and Sonda Ipsos — do such work in order to follow the changes in voting behaviour and general political attitudes.

Recently, a series of new and important studies was carried out on opinions on various aspects of the budgetary reforms by TARKI (whose research covers mainly changes in living conditions, environmental issues, migration and shifts in the composition of the labour market, etc.) and on some characteristic features of the changing political culture of contemporary Hungarian society by the Department of Political Science of the Central European University (its specialisation is mainly in international comparative research within the post-communist countries of central Europe).

Although it is difficult to make numeric estimations, the topical composition of public opinion surveys has greatly changed in recent years. In comparison to the earlier focus on attitudes toward the economic reform, the most important novelty is surely the current dominance of polls measuring trends in people’s voting behaviour, political thinking, and, especially, in their attitudes towards the various parties. Willingness to participate in the elections, popularity of the parliamentary parties and the leading politicians, public support for the programmes of the competing political actors are among the topics of these surveys, some of which have been repeated regularly and simultaneously by the two most respected agencies, Medián and Sonda Ipsos.

These regular polls are financed by the press (the leading newspapers and journals have their “own” centres to work with). In addition, the parties also commission regular polls — though the findings are rarely published but are kept for internal “orientation”.

Another recurrent topic of the polls (never investigated before 1989) is the evaluation of governance: again, it is mainly a few newspapers that commission surveys of this type. Alongside them, the widespread needs of local governments dominate the scene. They approach the public opinion centres with requests to get feedback either about the acceptance of certain local programmes or about the general evaluation of the work of the elected bodies and the offices of the municipality. A further group of public opinion polls consists of surveys on people’s economic expectations and their views on the progress of certain elements of ongoing economic restructuring (here again, it is the mass media that show the greatest interest in such investigations, though some of them are run from research grants.)

In addition, the trade unions should be mentioned among the sponsors of opinion polls. From time to time they commission research on “classical” topics of unionism, such as issues of welfare, views on unemployment and poverty, people’s occupational expectations or their reactions to the anticipated changes in the administration and delivery of certain social services.

A striking feature of the topical distribution of surveys is the very low representation of studies on “elite views”. According to the unanimous information provided by the major poll centres, investigations on the visions, reform ideas, expectations and views of those in key positions of decision-making and management are commissioned only at the local level of public administration or in different organisations of public services (mostly in health care). In contrast to the public sphere, these types of surveys are, however, “customary” phenomena in the business world. To shape their longer-term business policy and staff recruitment, the largest enterprises and banks entrust the centres to run investigations to find out the ideas of top managers and those high up in administration on the position of their firm on the market, future perspectives on development, necessary areas for investment, career expectations, organisational climate and fields of lower efficiency in production and marketing, etc. Obviously, none of these firm-based surveys are accessible to the public, thus, elite ideas can rarely be compared with those of citizens on the same issue.

Summing up the above, one can report the gradual acceptance of polls as sources of information either as “pre-tests” of foreseeable reactions to future reforms, or as evaluations of the outcome of institutional changes of the recent past. In general, macro-level bodies of decision-making rely less on survey results than local authorities do. It seems that the closer those designing the changes are to those being “subjects” of them, the richer the utilisation is of the empirical findings of population surveys (including polls) in determining the concrete steps, priorities and the timetable of the reforms.

In the subsequent sections below, some of the most decisive spheres of administrative reform will be outlined and the major findings of public opinion polls investigating people’s views about them will be discussed. The presentation will be structured according to the various fields of administration/activity, and within them, the utilisation of survey-results either in preparation, or in control of the reforms will be summarised. In each section, one exemplary case will be discussed at length.

4. Monitoring the Performance and Acceptance of Institutions, Government and Public Administration

The recent history of democracy is too short in Hungary to be sure about its unconditional acceptance by all citizens and all political agents. Therefore, it is essential to know: to what extent do people support those institutions which are there to safeguard it? How far has the functioning of these new institutions met people’s expectations? Have they developed trust in them, or has the degree of distrust increased over time? By raising these comprehensive questions, changes of the general political climate are approached — an issue which is important and interesting enough to account for broad public resonance. Thus, it is not surprising that the domestic and foreign press, the different television and radio broadcasting agencies and a range of independent foundations are willing to sponsor regularly repeated surveys to get as detailed responses as possible. However, it is worth noting that so far, central government has not commissioned such investigations.

Although the evaluation of the central government’s work is a recurrent topic in these types of polls, success or failure of the institutions of the state apparently is not rated on public assessment — those in power measure efficiency in different terms. As subsequent surveys immediately after the first free elections showed convincingly, there is a certain degree of discrepancy between lay and official

expectations on performance. While people hold in high esteem those institutions which seem to stick to their own rules and are open to public control and criticism, the administration's own evaluation would seem to appreciate bureaucratic virtues, loyalty and the strength of its political support in the first place (Bruszt and Simon 1991; Rabár 1991).

The summary reports of the major public opinion survey centres published yearly give further insight into the nature of this departure. . When asked the direct question: "how important are politics to you", the great majority would respond by saying "I do not care". People usually regard politics as "dirty", "disgusting", "full of hatred and quarrels", a sphere where "the actors follow just their own particular interest", etc. (Medián 1992, 1994; Simon 1992). Despite their negative views on politics in general, Hungarians are, however, exceptionally well informed, both about the institutions and the major actors in current political life. In addition, they would give quite high trust to these institutions, even if they do find problems in their current functioning (see Box 1).

This controversial relation to politics is also reflected in people's voting behaviour: though the prognoses had anticipated a definite decrease in participation in the second elections in 1994 (Political Yearbook 1993), in fact, the rates actually outweighed those of the first ones in 1990. At the same time, political events (meetings organised by the parties, broadcasting of the sessions of Parliament, organised mass demonstrations, etc.) are usually followed with disinterest, and the parties do not report substantial increase in their membership (Biro 1994). All in all, people regard politics as a matter of professionalism: they refuse the noisy self-made figures, and prefer those who have proven previously to do a good job (Bokor 1994).

Another general thread of people's political thinking is their distrust in the parties as representatives of different ideologies, interests and political strife. While the support given to the abstract concept of multi-party based democracy is high, the actual embodiments of the concept are not very welcome. People usually do not see decisive differences among the various party programmes, though they would correctly rank the parties either on the liberal-conservative, or on the ruling-opposition divide (Hann, E., 1996). The simultaneous surveys of the major poll centres unanimously confirm that Hungarian society trusts most those institutions in service of the democratic order which are neutral in their party affiliation. It is habitually the Presidency, the Constitutional Court, the army and the police which are thought to best fulfil their functions (Marián 1996; Hann 1996; Szabó 1997).

Although detailed questions have rarely been asked about the evaluation of the work of the local governments in the above mentioned regular public opinion polls on the general "state of the arts" in public administration, the "ranking" of the municipality amongst the institutions in the service of the citizens is still asked in the monthly surveys of both Medián and Sonda Ipsos. As a measure of general satisfaction, it is worth noting that local governments are among the institutions enjoying a high degree of trust. In both sets of surveys, their average scores (on a scale rating the institutions between 0 and 100) have been around 50-57 in recent years; and in contrast to Parliament, the government, ministries, trade unions or the parties, their good rating has not changed too much over time. The relatively favourable placement of community-level governance is mainly due to the fact that people — especially in the villages — really feel the change in this regard. While central institutions still prove to be too distanced and alienated from them, they definitely see more political opportunities to influence the decisions of the municipalities.

BOX 1: PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AMID HARSH SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Starting with the inauguration of the new government in August 1994, Sonda Ipsos launched a regular monthly survey to follow the changes in people's views on the performance of various fields of the state administration, especially that of the different ministries. The surveys are run on a rotation basis with a regionally stratified sample of 1 000 inhabitants, representing the adult population (aged 17 and over) of the country. This follow-up research is commissioned by one of the most popular dailies (*Népszava*), which also publishes the main results of each month's investigation. Long-term comparisons of the monthly findings were analysed and published in three subsequent reports in the 1995, 1996, and 1997 Political Yearbooks, respectively (Karajannis 1995; Karajannis 1996; Szabó 1997).

The detailed evaluation of the performance of the various ministries is consistent with all that has been said above. The three ministries receiving the highest scores in the monthly surveys over a time span of two and a half years (between August 1994 and March 1997) are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior (supervising the police). In contrast, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Welfare are constantly at the bottom of the scale. Even the Ministry of Finance, the harshest force of rigid monetarism, rates better than the administration responsible for matters of social policy and health care! Thus, one can say that Hungarian society has accepted that in the current shape of its economy, generous spending cannot be afforded. In return for austerity, people expect, however, high professionalism and clear steps towards the improvement of the general conditions.

In addition to these longer-term trends, the monthly scores show some oscillation: people appear to react immediately on new policy-measures. Thus, the announcement of new schemes for financing higher education (Ministry of Culture and Public Education) or the introduction of new support schemes for local economy (Ministry of Finance) are "rewarded" by a definite rise in the average "mark" of the given ministry. Similarly, the tightening of financial assistance given for small-scale agricultural production (Ministry of Agriculture) is "sanctioned" with a drop in scores. True, policies cannot always be shaped according to public approval. However, these surveys show that even "unpleasant" measures are accepted when outweighed by the apparent professionalism and good performance of the administration. Thus, those ministries steadily at the lower edge of the scale perhaps do not have to identify their lack of their popularity in the measures that they have to take, but might make use of the survey data in initiating a revision of organisational efficiency.

Sources: Karajannis, M. (1995), "Kormány a mérlegen" ("Government on scales"), in Kurtán et al. (eds.), *Politikai Évkönyv 1995* (Political Yearbook, 1995), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 558-567.

Karajannis, M. (1996), "Kormány a mérlegen 1995-ben" ("Government on scales in 1995"), in Kurtán, S. et al. (eds.), *Politikai Évkönyv 1996* (Political Yearbook, 1996), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 687-697.

Szabó, Cs. (1997), "Átalakulófélben" ("Midway in transformation"), in Kurtán, S. et al. (eds.), *Politikai Évkönyv 1997* (Political Yearbook, 1997), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 632-642.

5. Policy Priorities: Views about Reform at the Local Level

As pointed out earlier, the re-shaping of community-level governance followed the central elements of administrative reforms of the 1990s. The two local elections in 1990 and 1994 were characterised by extensive public interest. This is clearly reflected by the rather high rates of participation on both

occasions (the respective ratios were over 50 per cent in the 1990 and 44 per cent in the 1994 elections, with marked variations according to the type of settlement in favour of the villages). Issues related to local government were followed with great concern from the outset. People had high expectations of the new institutions of local-level administration. In their view, the elected new municipalities should primarily embody the rights of the community. In addition, they should guarantee the autonomy of decisions on all internal matters, assist rapid economic advancement and safeguard high standards of a wide range of services for people's daily use.

As also mentioned above, the top-down decentralisation of power and authority was accompanied by a grandiose programme of property distribution in the hope of creating a stable base for autonomous economic activities. In accordance with the clear liberal drives of the new economic policy, serious attempts were made to reduce the economic weight of the state by delegating a number of earlier centrally performed tasks to local levels. Thus, local authorities were appointed to administer all welfare programmes and also the greater bulk of compulsorily delivered public and social services. To perform their new tasks, they were designated as the owners of the municipal infrastructure in assistance of the various provisions. It was also hoped that by reducing the regulatory role of the central state, further economic advantages would emerge: the actual presence and the costs of bureaucracy and administrative activities would drop, hence, moveable resources for other purposes would be liberated. In this design of a liberal turn, macro-economic claims for efficiency seemed to be in full harmony with the micro-level political demands for disengagement from dictates and control from above. Thus, decentralisation appeared to have an impact much beyond the technical implications of management and administration. It was seen as a straightforward route to democracy and economic prosperity.

The actual execution of these ambitious reforms has been followed from the outset by a range of surveys. Among the topics for closer investigation were changes in local finances (Péteri 1993), the diverse policies on service delivery (Horváth 1993), changing priorities according to the social composition of the settlements (Horváth 1996), the ordering of economic tasks and steps of technical developments (Ferencz and Kiss 1996), variations in the professional considerations on job-creation (Vajda 1996), welfare-policy (Szalai 1995; Horváth 1995), educational and health policy (Kákai 1996), etc.. In conjunction with the collection of hard facts about budgeting and staff recruitment, most of these surveys also made enquiries about the views of the different bodies in local administration. The surveys were either financed from research grants or sponsored by the local authorities themselves. Simultaneous opinion polls were not carried out, neither were surveys of the same nature repeated over time.

Surveys revealing the acceptance of short and longer-term policies of the municipalities also usually ask questions about their performance. A recurrent finding of these investigations is the rather good evaluation of the work of the elected councillors and the different local committees (Horváth and Péteri 1993). People acknowledge professionalism and give approval even to restrictive local measures if they "get the point" in well-founded and clear steps towards economic advancement. It is important to note that party politics at the local level is generally refused. Communities wish from "their" self-elected bodies to put aside ideological and political differences and work to come to some sort of compromise on common local matters. In accordance with this orientation, the number of party-affiliated councillors is rather low in the municipalities, and one finds a number of "strange" coalitions on the local boards unimaginable on any of the higher fora of decision-making (Tóth 1995; Bocz 1996).

Amid the favourable general atmosphere, "outsiders" and those in the various bodies of local governance are in agreement to refuse an increase in local taxes (all three past central governments made attempts to reduce budgetary support and convince the local authorities to make more efforts to raise funding within their community), and would rank the earlier mentioned different functions of local governance rather similarly. When asked about the competing tasks of political representation, the embodiment of

community-rights, the administration of decentralised tasks of governance or the provision and distribution of public infrastructure, they give clear priority to the last set of tasks (see Box 2). The overwhelming majority sees self-governments as responsible bodies meeting the welfare needs of their community and providing a number of public and social services. At the same time, they would give them less bureaucratic tasks and would refuse that these bodies become too preoccupied with economic management and finances.

All in all, local-level administration seems to be supported much more by the public than the central state administration. The locally elaborated programmes better reflect the priorities and needs of the community (see Box 2), therefore, they enjoy a higher degree of support both from the elite and the electorate. Given this rather favourable general climate, regular surveys of the field could provide useful results that should be explored in the preparation of decisions on central schemes for job-creation, infrastructural investments and in the targeted comprehensive programmes for reducing the still remarkable regional inequalities.

6. Views on EU Integration

After four decades under full-fledged Soviet rule which had been driven by the logic of the Cold War, the collapse of socialism suddenly opened the historical chances to re-negotiate Hungary's geo-political position. The issues at stake were manifold, ranging from the country's military links to the future character of her political, economic, social and cultural life. Although the Communist rule openly oppressed or, at least, strongly de-favoured any such attempts, the deliberate effort to maintain the European traits of society had been an integral part of the daily life of families and local communities throughout the entire period of socialism. Thus, despite all attempts from above to establish the notion of the Iron curtain also in the "other-ness" of various socio-cultural aspects of the prevailing way of life, people's European self-identification has found its way in thousands of westernised patterns from housing to the most frequent leisure activities to food consumption and the "western" style of dressing. This decade-long prehistory of informally sustained "Europeanism" has to be identified with the fact that claims to constitute a political and economic order compatible with people's cultural self-definition received nation-wide approval among Hungarians around the turn of 1989-90. In this context, it is not surprising that all political parties emphasised as one of their very first priorities to start negotiations with the European Union (then European Communities), NATO and other regional organisations about membership in the important bodies of supra-national policy-formation and decision-making.

However, when facing the huge amount of work that has to be done to pave the road toward representation on the various European boards, the initial enthusiasm of the general public somewhat cooled down. It turned out that neither the prevailing legal system, nor other systems such as those of educational social security, economic management or the technological regulations of production were compatible with those applied in the western part of the continent. Thus, strong efforts have to be made for a purposeful conversion of all these systems of administration, and the process still might take years — if not decades.

The foreseeable difficulties did not challenge, however, the publicly supported commitment of the subsequent governments to start the necessary reforms. As part of the long preparation of full "entrance into Europe", a number of steps were taken straight after the enactment of the first government in 1990. On the one hand, new institutions and organisations were founded to be the "professional" bodies in charge of co-ordination for "Europeanisation" among the various governing agencies. On the other hand, administrative reforms in all the important public spheres have been permanently observed and re-formulated in the light of regulations taken by the European Union. A cornerstone of the process was

BOX 2: PRIORITIES IN LOCAL POLITICS AS SEEN BY POLITICIANS AND THE PUBLIC

In 1991, the Foundation for Local Democracy and Innovations (Budapest) carried out a survey on various political, administrative and economic aspects of local governance. The survey was run on a layered countrywide representative sample of 208 local authorities (the sample was built up according to regions, the size of the settlements, the urban/rural divide and a comprehensive index of fundamental socio-economic characteristics). Within each local government, almost identical questionnaires were given to the mayor, the head of the office of the local administration (municipal clerk) and all councillors. In addition, a population survey of a representative sample of 1 000 inhabitants was run with a questionnaire consisting of a wide range of similar, but also some additional questions, on living conditions and general political orientation. (The research project was financed by the Norwegian Research Council for Applied Social Science.)

The survey concentrated on those political, professional, organisational and human values that are at play when building up the various bodies of the municipality and also orient the procedures of decision-making. Besides priorities applied during the preparation of the yearly budget, the policy and mechanisms of local economic management, views on the responsibility of the central state in assisting the local authorities, and options on longer-term economic development were included in the focus of the research.

The study showed a surprisingly high degree of congruence between views of the local elite and the population. When asked about the most important gifts a “good” councillor should possess, “honesty”, “ability to find compromises” and “sufficient knowledge of the locality” were emphasised with a high degree of consensus. With similar agreement between “insiders” and “outsiders”, the values of ideological commitment (including religious beliefs) and party affiliation ranked at the bottom among the thirteen items under consideration.

Moreover, the most important tasks that a local government should carry out were also seen in harmony by the four groups of respondents. The list offered for choice consisted of 27 items that the interviewees had to “rate” on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (one of the most important tasks). With minor variations in the actual averages, the options of the three “insider” groups were identical: job-creation, public safety and the development of local phone services were the leading items on their lists, while the enlargement of parking facilities, the improvement of secondary-level education, and investments in nurseries were the items ranked lowest. The ordering of items was not remarkably different in the population survey, although, besides giving the highest scores to public safety and job-creation, people also claimed much more effort in the area of services for the elderly.

The “refused” items were, however, very different from those on the lists of the “insiders”. In the population survey, people regarded as least important the improvement of public transport, enlarging parking facilities and protecting ethnic and minority rights. The low positioning of this last item partly reflects the rather widespread prejudice against the Roma (who are the only ethnic minority of any considerable size in contemporary Hungary) and partly the lack of public discourse on certain newly defined human rights. In contrast, those already in positions of power and decision-making seem to be more aware of the essence of these rights, though still would rank the classical tasks of service provisions and local economic management higher.

The survey revealed a great deal of professionalism in local decision-making. It also brought to the surface the widespread possession of those organisational and administrative abilities that the local elite had slowly acquired in various administrative positions during the 1980s, which they now capitalise on by taking on the burdens of responsible decisions. Thus, a number of the municipalities were able to formulate rather refined programmes for medium- and longer-term development within a surprisingly short period after the elections.

Source: Horváth, M.T. and Péteri, G. (1993), “Új változatosság” (“New variety”), *Helyi demokrácia és újjátások*, Alapítvány, Budapest, Hungary.

the handing over of the “European questionnaire” in 1996. This event opened the gate to more concrete negotiations between the present government and the administration of the EU about the “schedule” of co-ordinated programmes in preparation of formal membership.

Unlike most other spheres of the ongoing administrative reforms, the proceedings taken to attain Hungary’s integration into the European Union have been seriously and regularly monitored by government-financed public opinion surveys. In the past seven years, a number of simultaneously run investigations have been commissioned to measure the level of knowledge which various groups of Hungarian society have about the structure of policy-formation and decision-making at the European level, people’s evaluation about the nations/regions having the greatest impact on the future of the country, and also their changing attitudes concerning the personal and nation-wide consequences of membership.

Among these surveys, the most comprehensive ones are the yearly “Eurobarometer” studies run in 19 central and eastern European countries. In the case of Hungary, it is the MODUS Consulting Ltd. which is responsible for the fieldwork and the comparative analysis. In addition to the uniform parts of the questionnaire repeatedly run in all participating countries, MODUS also puts forth some Europe-related questions which are primarily of domestic concern (this set of country-specific questions aims at measuring changes in attitudes toward the inflow of foreign capital, modifications in people’s political orientation on the cosmopolitan/autarchic scale and their perceptions about the improvement/worsening of Hungary’s development in a longer-term perspective).

As the trends of the past five years show, parallel to the decrease of full support of neo-liberal economic policy, fears have been on the increase to enter the European market without a strong protective policy of the government. Although the majority would still “vote” for joining the European Union, claims to make more efforts for better training and a deliberate labour market policy to prevent marginalisation of the Hungarian labour force have become stronger. In accordance with their more endangered perspectives, it is mainly elderly rural people and urban unqualified workers who see more negative than positive aspects of the ongoing “Europeanisation” and who openly fear Hungary’s future EU membership (see Lengyel, Molnár and Tóth 1996 and also Box 3).

7. Use of Public Opinion Surveys in Policy Cycle

7.1. *Policy Initiation: The Case of Health Care Reform*

The numerous constraints and inadequacies that people experienced in the functioning of the health care system were amongst the most widely discussed issues even in the 1980s. The reasons for the accusation were manifold. Firstly, a wide range of indicators signalled the unstoppable deterioration of the health standard of society. Age-specific mortality rates — especially those of the male population — had been increasing since the second half of the 1960s; the incidences of alcoholism, mental disorders and cardiovascular diseases have steadily exceeded the corresponding figures in most other European countries. The occurrence of fatal accidents put Hungary at the top of the industrial world. Rates of infant mortality have stopped improving since the mid-1980s, etc. (for a comprehensive summary, see Losonczi 1997).

BOX 3: HUNGARY ON THE ROAD TO EUROPE

In Fall, 1996, Sonda Ipsos made a series of public opinion surveys to measure general knowledge about and attitudes towards European integration. The surveys were commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and were financed from funds of the Phare Programme. The study embraced samples of four different social groups which were selected as particularly important ones from the point of view of building up a purposeful government strategy on dissemination of information about policies to attain Hungary's EU membership. The groups singled out for closer investigation were the following: the young, those living in backward rural-agricultural areas, journalists, and adults "in general". These groups were represented by the following samples: 1 400 respondents were randomly selected from the youth aged 16-29; a geographically concentrated sample of the size of 1 000 individuals was chosen to represent the rural-agricultural population; a small sample of 250 journalists was interviewed to reveal the views of those working in various fields of mass communication; and a "key sample" of 3 000 individuals aged 18 or above was selected with the classical random methods to gain information about attitudes of the adult population in general.

In accordance with the findings of other surveys, this series of investigations also found that most Hungarians have a positive attitude toward future membership in the EU. Differences behind the average are self-explanatory: the young and middle-aged groups are stronger supporters than the elderly; urban professionals gave more approval than village-dwellers; those in industry and various services saw future membership as more advantageous than agricultural labourers. When asked about the reasoning to join the EU, people gave mostly economic arguments; cultural and political ones were less frequently mentioned. As to the future political formation of a united Europe, the relative majority (46 per cent of the "adult sample") spoke of a European Confederation, while somewhat less support was given (with 38 per cent of the "votes") to a "European United States". In accordance with these ideas, people thought that trade, environmental or monetary policy are pan-European matters, while issues of social policy, education, defence of the borders, or transport should be left to national levels of decision-making.

The surveys showed a relatively high level of knowledge about the foreseeable changes in spheres of employment, property relations, education, migration or communication. However, information about the organisational structure of the Union proved to be of very low standard. Even less known were the procedures of election to the European Parliament, the symbols of "Europe", or those recent regulations which have been taken on regarding monetary union.

As to the expected hopes, Hungarians foresee a strengthening of national identity and increased respect for Hungarian culture as a result of future membership. A high proportion of respondents also rates better chances for the country in foreign affairs and in international interest representation, as well as a substantial improvement in general economic conditions. As to the disadvantages, the majority fear an increase in the already disturbing phenomena of crime, alcoholism, drugs, suicide, etc. In addition, some domestic problems came up as a cause for great concern. Causes for dismay were the expected further cuts in social spending, and also the deepening social and regional inequalities between more and less adaptable parts of society.

Signs of a relatively high degree of solidarity were expressed not only with fellow Hungarians, but also on the international scale. People proved to be very critical of all "separatist" actions and of any manifestations of competition among the central European governments. The vast majority sees Hungary's future in the context of the region and thinks of the attainment of formal EU membership together with other "Visegradstates".

In light of these surveys, the spheres to improve dialogue between the government and society appear with great clarity. As a result of the investigation, a "programme on the advancement of communication" was elaborated by the Office of the Prime Minister in summer 1997. Starting in

August 1997, the major dailies, public radio broadcasting and the Hungarian State Television launched different series on a number of economic, financial, labour market, social, educational and cultural aspects of future integration. These series aim at raising awareness of the specificity of certain policy areas in the EU, and also at disseminating information on those political and bureaucratic procedures which shape the actions of the Hungarian Parliament and the government in order to take a step further towards membership.

Source: Csepli, Gy and Závecz, T. (1997), “Várakozások, remények, félelmek: az Európai Unió képe a magyar közvéleményben” (“Expectations, hopes, anxiety: People’s image of the European Union in Hungary”), in *Politikai Évkönyv 1997 (Political Yearbook 1997)*, DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 650-669.

Secondly, the health care system proved less and less capable of coping with the more and more serious problems it had to face. In the background were structural constraints as much as the late consequences of decade-long under-financing of the services. The system showed serious symptoms of overuse: a decline in the quality of its provisions. A chronic shortage of facilities and lack of correspondence between the needs of the patient and services on offer have developed to become widely shared experiences of society. At the same time, access to an adequate form and institution of medication became increasingly dependent on bribes and latent social, political contacts, which all worked to the detriment of the less well-off social groups — those who would have been in need of more frequent and intense medical intervention. This recurring shortage of medical care, deteriorating health and increasing socio-economic inequalities seems to be everlasting (Szalai 1986; Orosz 1995).

Given this state of affairs, the promise for meaningful reforms in health care was one of the most emphasised priorities in all the party programmes at the beginning of the 1990s. The subsequent governments had to face the fact that these reforms would require a substantial increase of funds spent on health. Since any such claims were in sharp conflict with the general drive for reducing budgetary expenditures, alternative solutions had to be found.

Although the decisive steps are still ahead, some important changes were made. The first was to put public health service under the administration of social security (in other words, to separate its revenue from the state budget and to set up an independent, responsible professional body for its management), and induce normative rules in the financing of the various provisions (per capita quotas in primary health care, disease-specific scoring in hospitals, etc.). Second, efforts were made to “economise” drug consumption and the costs of all kinds of medication. Third, restrictions were made on long sick-leave, and the controls for obtaining disability pensions have been tightened. Fourth, the notion of “mixed provisions” has been supported by giving favours to private business in certain specialisations. Fifth, attempts were made to meet one of the most frequently articulated demands: the previously exceptionally low salaries of physicians and nurses in state hospitals have been significantly raised. However, all these measures generated rather controversial results. In some areas, the quality of the services continued to decline, and efforts to keep pace with rising prices put unbearable extra burdens on the impoverished strata of society. Thus, the conflicts around the issues of health and health care are still the focus of public debate.

The public opinion surveys on the subject give some feedback on the intensity of these conflicts. Investigations amongst various groups of physicians representing a wide range of specialisations led to the same results: those working in the sphere see chronic under-financing as the major cause of all other “diseases” of the system. Recurrent complaints are the lack of preventative care and the low standard of rehabilitation. Regardless of the peculiarities of their profession, all groups of physicians agree upon the analysis of the most disturbing structural feature of the system: the costliness of hospital care compared to the much cheaper and often more effective outpatient services (Orosz 1995; Losonczy 1997). A further set

of frequent critical comments refers to the backwardness and bad distribution of equipment and infrastructural facilities. When asked about the possible solutions, the various professional groups emphasise the combination of two necessary steps: the need for a widely discussed, well-elaborated long-term health plan and the urgency to move toward the establishment of a multi-sectoral health care system with the inclusion of private capital and non-profit provisions (Orosz 1992).

Lay opinions do not seem to differ too much from professional opinions. People rank health high on the priority list of values and would be open to accept the presence of private and non-profit institutions in the area, provided that the rules of payment and access become much clearer and better regulated than now (Gyekiczki et al 1991; Csontos et al 1996). Although bad experiences are mentioned in one or another health care institution are rather frequent, there is still a high degree of trust in the physicians whom people would like to see better paid and better supported with assisting personnel (see Box 4).

7.2. *Policy Implementation: Views on the Budgetary Reform*

In order to lessen the financial burdens holding up free economic activity and quick adaptation to the world market, serious reforms have been initiated to reduce the extent of the state budget. Parallel to these reforms, steps were taken to redefine the concepts and functions of central financing. In contrast to the past undifferentiated distraction and redistribution of incomes on the ground of central command, a number of regulations were enacted to circumscribe the notions, functions and subjects of the various taxes, the bases of different contributions, the entitlements for returns and assistance, and the guiding principles of central redistribution.

Issues of budgetary reform have constantly been on the agenda of public debate in recent years. Moreover, there has been great pressure on Parliament and the Constitutional Court to make strong attempts to define and stabilise the legal framework of both taxation and access to subsidies. Since steps toward a meaningful budgetary reform have been taken amid the conditions of a serious and lasting economic crisis, the process has been accompanied by recurrent harsh social conflicts. The clashes for and against the maintenance of central intervention have been extraordinarily intense in this sphere of administrative reforms.

A number of surveys revealed the causes of these conflicts and ambiguities (Gyekiczki et al 1991; Fischer et al 1992; Tóth 1994; Fábián 1994). In the first place, the economic motives are obvious. Independent economic activity entirely separated from the state requires a stable capital backing and a well-functioning market, but neither of these conditions could be created in the past decades. This is why it is the central state which is faced with strong demands and continuous pressure to provide financial guarantees for the individual entrepreneurs to establish safe business. Further, the need for the economic presence of the state is kept alive by the fact that the restructuring of production has also begun to erode those market relations that had hitherto been regarded as more or less stable and “everlasting”. The privatisation of state firms has disrupted the state orders thought to be secure, while the collapse of the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (CMEA) and the eastern markets has confused and endangered the established export relations. All this greatly increases the risk of full independence and increases the social pressure for the buffer role of the state.

**BOX 4: HUNGARIANS WANT BETTER HEALTH CARE,
BUT WHO IS TO PAY THE BILL?**

In 1994, the Health Insurance Fund commissioned and financed a survey on people's recent experiences with the health care system and their views on the introduction of contribution-based provisions and a few other elements of the health care reforms. The investigation also aimed at revealing some decisive sociological determinants of people's health behaviour and the major patterns of "using" the system. The research was carried out by a team of the Economic and Social Research Institute of the Trade Unions. Questions were asked in a one-hour long interview from one of the adult members of a national representative sample of 5 000 households. The extensive final report never became accessible to the wider public, though a summary was published in the Working Paper Series of the Health Insurance Fund (a semi-public series which does not get into "normal" circulation in bookstores or public libraries, but is available upon request).

The survey revealed a very low standard of knowledge about the financing of health care. Though both the employers and the employees pay a substantial contribution to cover pensions, family benefits and the costs of "free" medical care (at present, the employees' rate is universally 10 per cent of gross salaries/wages, that of the employers' is 42.5 per cent of their monthly wage fund), neither the overall proportion of contributions, nor its internal division between the two funds managing in-cash benefits and health services, respectively, was known. Better educated people estimated these rates somewhat better than those with less schooling, though the level of knowledge was rather low even amongst them. Interestingly enough, all those whose occupation was related to the broadly understood health sector were aware of the current regulations on payments- as if the issues of maintaining the health service were their "internal" matters.

Even less was known about other recent changes in the health care system. People could not even guess the ratio of subsidies paid from central funds to certain basic pharmaceutical products in general use. All that they knew was the extreme increase in prices in this sphere of consumption.

When asked about the most disturbing shortages and quality problems in health care, people's most frequent complaints referred to the low level of hygiene in hospitals and the poor quality of food given to the patients. These reproaches were rather general; they did not prove to be a result of recent personal experience. In addition, understaffing and overcrowdedness were also amongst the repeatedly mentioned critical remarks.

A series of questions asked whether people would accept payment and/or the decline of quality and/or reductions in budgetary funding of certain social services outside health care as a "price" to be paid for improvement in the following areas: services of general practitioners, outpatient clinics, hospitals, in-cash benefits for pregnancy and all other areas within the medical sphere. The findings are revealing: people would stick mostly to hospital care (they would not give the green light to any cuts in this area) and would mostly accept the gradual introduction of payments for special provisions. However, by far the most favourite option was to suggest that the decision-makers find areas outside the medical sphere where, in people's view, more "economising" of the scarce funds of the state would affect less basic needs of less wider groups. The maintenance of state-supported, free (or, at least, cheap) health care is a strong claim of Hungarian society.

A fundamental conclusion of this survey was the need to raise people's knowledge about the "economics" of health care. The investigation inspired decision-makers on the Board of the Health Fund to suggest to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences the incorporation of regular studies on health care into the National Strategic Research Programme in preparation of the EU integration. As part of this Programme, the first series of expert meetings were held between May and September 1997. It ended up with a major conference (also reported in the press) — the first of those public events where health care professionals have an opportunity to discuss longer-term plans of the health reform with economists, sociologists, representatives of health management, officials of local governments and a number of civil health organisations.

Source: Bondár, É. and Ékes, I. (1995), *Egészségbiztosítás alulnézetben* (Healthcare from below), OEP, Budapest, Hungary.

However, the causes of this ambivalent relationship include not only direct economic components, but also cultural and attitude factors. Above all, it is worth mentioning the boomerang effect which accompanies liberation from the political power of the state. Paradoxically, the decades of resistance to the state as the oppressor is now quite clearly being reversed and angry claims are made for historically deserved remuneration. Behind the opposing principles of privatisation intended to "regulate" the plundering of public assets, intensely competing demands for material compensation can be detected. Having the arguments justifying these claims accepted and embodied in the legislation is a question of rude political force. In this way, privatisation and the distribution of properties is the direct function of the latent bargaining positions established over the past decades (Sági 1994; Szelényi and Szelényi 1996; Szalai 1996).

The other arenas of economic life throw an even clearer light on the ambivalence towards the state. The large number of civil societies, associations and foundations now being organised are model cases of the simultaneous demand for self-organisation and for bureaucratic recognition (Vajda 1995). The situation is similar in the acquisition and regulation of income. Enterprise managers and trade union activists are unanimous in protesting against all forms of central restriction of wage bargaining and legally put limits on sale prices. At the same time and with the same momentum, they also heavily rely on the very same central state. They use the old channels that have proved successful in obtaining individual treatment to win compensation for themselves from various bodies of the central budget in face of inflation and other economic hardships. The desire to minimise risks in itself gives the actors a tendency to formulate advantages for themselves in face of others in various "exceptions" and "concessions" and in other forms of bureaucratic protection (Laki 1995).

In accordance with these widely shared views and deeply rooted interests behind the resistance against serious cuts of state spending, recent public opinion polls show that people on the whole refuse those reforms which aim at a substantial curtailment of earlier universal benefits and programmes (Tóth 1996; Ferge 1996). However, when surveys go deeper and ask also about the "sacrifices" that people would be ready to make in order to maintain the schemes in question, the picture becomes more complex: readiness to pay more depends a lot on current economic conditions, level of schooling, place of residence and age. In general, those who are aware of the rationale of the reforms (young, urban professionals with at least an acceptable level of income) would be willing to support more taxation in a situation where the utilisation of the funds becomes clearer than is currently the case (see Box 5).

These surveys also demonstrate the prevalence of solidarity with the poor and those with special needs. They show that people are inclined to accept even a rather significant increase in personal contribution, if they see where their payments go: if regulations on entitlement for certain services are clearer and less

“exemptions” are made in the actual distribution of funds and resources (Sági 1996). Further, the support for private/public mix in educational and health care services was proved, showing from another angle that the values of knowledge and health maintenance enjoy high positioning in people’s preference list in contemporary Hungarian society (see Box 5).

BOX 5: WHY DO WE PAY TAXES?

In 1996, TARKI executed a survey to measure people’s general knowledge about the fiscal system, taxes and state financing. The survey was run on a sample of 1 000 individuals, representing the economically active population of the country. The project was commissioned and financed by the Ministry of Finance (with partial contribution from the Central European University). The one-hour interviews combined methodological elements of classical opinion research with a specially designed experiment to create a decision-making situation for the respondents. Besides asking their views on the tax content of certain items for daily consumption (bread, petrol), on the extent of the state’s responsibility in providing free health care, family benefits, minimum pension, drug subsidies and free higher education, the respondents were requested to make choices item by item: would they be willing to pay higher contributions, and/or certain state provisions should become more strictly conditioned, and/or those having access would be more limited, and/or certain quality requirements of free provisions would be given up.

The survey provided insight into the great variation in the standard of knowledge regarding different aspects of state finances. Beside the decisive impact of educational level, occupation, age and place of residence of the respondents, it turned out that people’s knowledge is highly dependent on the quality of information available through the media and also on their own direct contact with one or another institution/scheme under consideration. However, willingness to accept some reduction in the role of the state in the provision of the above listed services/benefits did not show strong correlation with these variables. The survey revealed a rather high degree of solidarity *together* with the acceptance of more play of the market and some increase in individual financial contributions (e.g. the majority of respondents opted for the maintenance, or even some extension, of welfare assistance for the poor at the expense of paying more for it; access to free medical care was supported even when more sacrifices were asked for, etc.).

Investigations of this character are useful “pre-tests” of curtailments of the various schemes earlier exclusively provided by the state. Apparently, the public reactions are not uniform: there are areas where the claim for maintaining the state’s full responsibility is stronger than others. In addition, with more efforts to raise the level and quality of information on the rationale of certain fiscal reforms, the government could attain much more public support than it has until now.

Source: Csontos, L., J. Kornai and I. Tóth, “Az állampolgár, az adók és a jóléti rendszer” (“Citizens, taxes and the welfare system”), *Századvég*, No. 4, Budapest, Hungary, pp 1-28.

7.3. Policy Evaluation: Views on Gains and Losses of Economic Reforms

Although reforms to achieve higher efficiency and better performance of the economy has an exceptionally long history in Hungary (dating back to the late 1960s), the collapse of socialism brought about fundamental changes in the conditions determining the scope of steps to be taken towards genuine economic advancement. The unstoppable decline of production from the early 1980s onwards made it clear that production could hardly be increased amid the given structural conditions of a command economy. The potential of the cautious reforms proved to be exhaustive: the continuation of economic development required fundamental change in the prevailing property relations. However, such a claim

touched upon the strongest political taboos of the socialist regime. Thus, all the radical ideas built on the dominance of private ownership seemed to remain in the drawers forever. But with the systemic changes of 1989-90, the chances of realising them changed from one moment to the next. On the basis of the ready-made programmes also outlining the necessary legal, financial and organisational steps required for a successful economic transformation, significant measures were taken immediately after the elections of 1990.

The most important amongst them were the acts and regulations on privatisation. Besides the legal acknowledgement of private capital, a number of monetary measures were introduced to speed up the conversion of earlier state-run firms into private business and the formation of small enterprises on the ground of informal production of the second economy. Thus, within six years, private property became dominant. At present, more than 60 per cent of productive assets are in private hands. The expansion of private ownership has been accompanied by a drastic change in the composition of production: the once painfully underdeveloped service sector has grown to become a decisive part of the economy, now providing some 60 per cent of GDP.

In addition to privatisation, strong actions were also taken in foreign trade. The generous subsidies given to the export of Hungarian products were to inspire increased productivity, but also aimed at gaining sufficient returns for the payment of Hungary's gigantic foreign debts. The same goals were served by liberating the prices of practically all domestic products from their heavy central subsidies. At the same time, full liberalisation of the import side of trading was aimed at orienting production towards better adaptation to external challenges.

Further elements of the reform served to develop of the earlier missing commercial banking sphere: a substantial injection of central funds and international loans helped to rapidly modernise the financial system which is badly needed to invigorate economic growth. Institutional changes in banking have also been accompanied by a liberalised monetary policy.

It must be said that all these changes have taken place amidst a serious production crisis. Thus, radicalism in shortening the period of transition toward a market economy had to be counteracted by a number of strong measures to mitigate the negative effects of the process, first of all, to control inflation and the rise in unemployment. In this context, the establishment of central and regional institutions of industrial relations became an important element of the reform process. Despite all the efforts, the greater part of Hungarian society has experienced a remarkable decline in real income and a formerly unknown degree of uncertainty in recent years. Thus, "economic reforms" mean mostly negative experiences for the majority (Marián 1994; Jüttner 1995). These experiences greatly influence people's perception of the changes, and are clearly reflected in the views expressed in the numerous public opinion polls on the subject (Hunyadi 1995; Jüttner 1996).

The widespread feeling of insecurity has been signalled recurrently by a number of surveys. When asked about perceptions of economic changes, the two aspects where people express fear are the limited hopes to preserve their job and to maintain a given standard of living. Year by year, the anticipated rates of unemployment exceed the actual number by some 30-35 per cent. Expectations for substantial loss of income are also high, though less so, when asked about personal future. People see more opportunity for their own personal efforts to gain additional resources than for others in general (Jüttner 1995). In other words, people's evaluation about the general state and future perspectives of Hungarian society is somewhat gloomy. It is the intensification of personal efforts which remains the only source of hope for improvement.

Surveys on economic expectations also show that with the passing of time, nostalgia for the relatively secure financial situation people experienced around the late 1980s has been increasing (Jüttner 1995; Lengyel 1996). At the same time, they do not want a command economy. When asked about their most preferred system of economic regulation, hardly anyone approves of “socialist” management, while the support of a free market, and, especially, of a “mixed” economy is on the increase (see Box 6; Hann 1996). Similarly, people approve denationalisation and privatisation — though they would like to see more state-actions to ensure more recognition of the interest of “rank and file” employees also in private business (see Box 6).

BOX 6: WHO ARE THE WINNERS AND LOSERS OF THE MARKET ECONOMY?

Since 1991, Medián Marketing and Public Opinion Survey Centre runs regular surveys to reveal the changes in people’s attitudes toward the ongoing economic changes, especially towards privatisation and the establishment of a market-based economy. The yearly surveys are commissioned by the press (mostly by the leading economic weekly *HVG*), in co-operation with the Central European University, the Institute of Political Studies and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). The samples number 1 200, representing the adult population of the country by the basic socio-demographic characteristics. The interviews recurrently raise questions on people’s views about the trends of domestic economic development, the most preferred system of macro-economic management, gains and losses of transition toward a market economy, and their attitudes towards various aspects of privatisation.

In a longer-term comparison of people’s responses to the strictly comparable questions of the yearly surveys, increased scepticism and disappointment is signalled by the 1996 report. While the ratio of strong supporters of Hungary’s commitment toward the establishment of a full-fledged market economy was as high as 24 per cent, the corresponding figure dropped to 7 per cent by 1995. While in 1991, 41 per cent thought that “things do go into the good direction”, the share of those still holding this view decreased to 21 per cent by 1995. It has to be added, however that the ratio of those deeply frustrated has also decreased in the meantime. The proportion of those thinking that “things go definitely into the wrong direction” dropped from 41 to 33 per cent over the period in question. As to the set of questions raised about various aspects of privatisation, the data show a clear decrease in people’s consent, although the slope of the decrease varies amongst the 9 items.

The majority still supports the notion that earnings should be regulated by the market without interventions from above (though the rate of those holding this view dropped from 68 to 61 per cent between 1993 and 1995). However, this is the only “element” of marketisation still enjoying an approval rate of more than 50 per cent of the respondents. The second most accepted component, i.e. the privatisation of the large state firms, lost its earlier 50 per cent support rate (the rate of consent dropped to 39 per cent by late 1995). In all other cases, the low rate of consent experienced earlier has further decreased. By 1995, only 23 per cent would permit foreigners to buy productive firms; only 15 per cent would welcome them as owners of estates; and as little as 5 per cent would accept foreign ownership of lands.

A deeper analysis revealed important variations beyond these averages. Support for the establishment of a market economy, privatisation and the minimisation of central intervention is still strong on the part of the most educated (the ratio of those who see the trends in economic changes positively is 57 per cent among those with a degree, in contrast to only 33 per cent among respondents with primary education), the young (the respective ratios are 47 per cent among those in their twenties, in contrast to the 30 per cent of those over 60), and those who prefer the free market to any kind of a mixed economy (the approval rate is 55 per cent in the first, while only 33 per cent in the second group).

These findings of the subsequent surveys on economic changes and privatisation clearly reflect people's recent experiences with economic restructuring. Due to those austerity-measures (especially, the drastic temporary decrease of income and consumption after the Bokros-package of March, 1995), the majority of the population faced increased difficulties in maintaining their former standard of living and experienced increased insecurity in daily life. Increased scepticism and disappointment reflect these experiences. In a response to people's negative reactions, the government made strong efforts to introduce clearer rules in property-relations and countervail the material losses with better delivery and access of a number of public services.

Sources: Marián, B. (1994), "A politikai közvélemény a Medián kutatásainak tükrében — 1991-1994" ("Political opinion as reflected in the surveys run by Medián — 1991-1994"), in Kurtán, S. et al. (eds.), *Politikai Évkönyv 1994* (Political Yearbook, 1994), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 719-757.

Hann, E. (1996), "A politikai közvélemény a Medián kutatásainak tükrében" ("Political public opinion as reflected in the surveys run by Medián"), in Kurtán, S. et al., *Politikai Évkönyv 1996*, (Political Yearbook, 1996), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, 1996.

Obviously, these "averages" of public opinion hide great variations according to the level of schooling, occupation, place of living, and, above all, the actual standard of living. In general, urban professionals (men somewhat more than women) are strong supporters of radical steps toward marketisation, and they are the least critical of austere measures in service of the longer-term goals (Hann 1994). The former middle-classes of qualified blue- and white-collar workers are usually half-hearted "voters" of the reforms. In full accordance with their greatly changing personal conditions and perspectives, their varying positive response rates in the subsequent polls indicate a high degree of hesitation: on the one hand, they see themselves partial winners of the changes, on the other, the gains seem to wither away easily, if central protection decreases too rapidly.

It is the elderly, the unskilled, the long-term unemployed, and, above all, the Roma who identify themselves as the greatest losers where change is concerned and expect further deterioration of both their personal and "class" situations (Ferge 1996; Simon 1996; Kolosi and Sági 1996). Nevertheless, even they do not wish a return of the old times. What they would like to see are more actions from central administration to counteract the negative aspects of the transition with more efficient measures in social policy (Hann 1996; Ferge 1996).

8. Images and Perceptions of Public Organisations

As indicated above, accountability and service for people were perhaps the most widely shared claims of a genuine reform of public administration. The claims originated in the widespread experience about the rather hostile and dysfunctional working of the administrative organisations during the decades of socialism. In those years, "the public domain" appeared in people's eyes to be the field where powerful state bureaucrats calling themselves "public servants" set the rules in an authoritative manner, where the "court" meant persecution instead of the protection of justice, where the "police" represented subjugation instead of maintenance of law and order. Hence, the claim of a democratic order became identical, demanding a clear turn in principles, values and the daily functioning of those key organisations which "personify" the power of the state in a most direct way.

A number of new laws and measures were set into motion to assist the reform process. Firstly, the judiciary was cleared from earlier political control and new institutional elements were built into the legal system to safeguard impartiality. Secondly, the police service has been restructured, and new departments

set up. In addition, local governments became legally entrusted to control the work of the police within their boundaries. A series of intense educational programmes for the personnel have also been launched to attain a meaningful change in the daily work of policemen. Third, the 1993 Act on Public Servants re-defined the duties and entitlements of employees in various agencies of public administration and regulated the conditions of control over their work.

All these measures have been followed with great public interest. The press also plays an important role in keeping interest alive: misuse of power, revelation of violent behaviour of one or another local policeman, disclosure of corruption in public institutions, deeds of racial discrimination of the authorities against Roma communities, etc. are frequently reported in the media and are discussed exhaustively as much in the dailies, as in various radio and TV programmes. Hence, publicity is one of the most powerful means to guarantee lawfulness and accountability. At the same time, it also helps to shape the new image of the public organisations in question.

A series of opinion surveys gives strong feedback to the institutions about the efficiency of their efforts to build up this new image. The major poll centres all follow the changes in people's perceptions of the central government, the local administration, the court, the police, and the army (Marketing Centrum, 1997; Sonda Ipsos, 1997; Modus 1997). The trends show clear improvement. Every year an increasing proportion of respondents report seeing some progress in the work of the government, experience significant improvement of professionalism in local administration, put more trust in the work of the police or the army than before, and notice increased efficiency in the court's work to defend lawfulness instead of political interests.

While these trends hold for all kinds of institutions, the absolute level of trust is, of course, not identical. As was already mentioned, the ordering (according to the average scores on a scale from 0 to 100) seems to be fixed by positioning the President and the Constitutional Court at the top and central government at the bottom. (Marián 1994; Hann 1996; Szabó 1997). The other side of the coin is, however, somewhat darker. Growing experience on the prevalence of corruption on different levels of public administration has induced scepticism and distrust, and has provoked a rather sharp decrease in support of the parties of the coalition government: the various polls of 1996 unanimously report a substantial loss of "unconditioned" voters for both the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats (see Box 7; also Szabó 1997; Závecz 1997).

9. Location of Survey Knowledge

As the previous sections indicate, the actual use of survey results is rather limited in contemporary Hungary. The causes are multiple. Firstly, it is only in a minority of the cases that survey results are available to the public. The majority of investigations run by the most professional major poll centres is commissioned either by private business or by the political parties, in which case the contracts usually have strict publication limits. As can be seen from their yearly reports, surveys for open publication make up, at most, a quarter of the work of the four biggest survey centres (Medián, Sonda Ipsos, Modus, Marketing Centrum). In all cases, it is exclusively the press-commissioned polls which can be published in their entirety and without limitation. In addition, surveys commissioned by one or another ministry are put up for "summary report" in the Political Yearbooks published yearly (however, in these cases, partial censorship is exercised by the authorities). Thus, it can be said that democratic discourse and the establishment of the painfully missing culture of political argumentation is relatively poorly served by public opinion research at present.

BOX 7: HOW DO PEOPLE SEE THE PURITY OF PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS?

In 1996, “Marketing Centrum” National Marketing and Public Opinion Survey Institute ran a series of monthly surveys to reveal people’s perceptions of a range of public organisations, the changes in their political expectations and their support to the prevailing arrangements in administration. The surveys were commissioned by the press. Every month, fieldwork was run on a rotated sample of 1 000, representing the population over the age of 18 with all the important socio-demographic characteristics. The main findings of the monthly investigations were regularly reported in one of the leading dailies, *Népszava*. A summary report analysing changes in the trends over the period of 12 months was also first published in this daily.

As this set of surveys revealed, trust in public institutions and the approval of their work are highly sensitive to daily political events. Though trust and satisfaction are strongly correlated, they are not identical. As the monthly trends computed for the entire year show, in terms of percentages, people’s trust in the central government exceeded their approval of its work. Due to the continuation of austerity measures (especially to the serious cuts in social security benefits and spending on welfare), dissatisfaction has been on a slight increase over the year, while people did not withdraw their faith in future improvement. Starting the year with a 26 per cent rate of approval of the work of the central administration, the corresponding figure grew to 36 per cent by May, with a decreasing tendency to 29 per cent in December of the same year. As to the perception of the local governments and the police, the trends proved to be more stable over the year: the daily work of both these public institutions enjoyed the approval of 46-52 per cent of respondents.

In the political arena, the year’s scandal was the so-called “Szokai — Tocsik” case: the revelation of a major corruption affair in the public sphere. In short, the story was the following: as part of the privatisation process, the State Privatisation Agency was authorised to sell certain estates to the local governments. However, serious bribing was detected behind the artificially low prices bid in the contracts. As it turned out, the “mediating agencies” received extra large honoraria after each barter where they “convinced” the local government to give up some of its “capital claim” for a modest return in cash. This case directed public attention towards the revival of corruption in the highest circles of state bureaucracy.

The set of questions on corruption in the November questionnaire of the monthly follow-up survey of the “Marketing Centrum” aimed at measuring people’s perception of the purity of a range of public organisations after the revelation of the “Tocsik-Szocskai” case. As the findings show, the best “scores” were given to the army and the courts: 14 per cent of the respondents thought them being free from all kinds of bribing, and only 15 and 19 per cent, respectively, saw their work being imbued by corruption. It was the central government which failed most on this “exam”: 37 per cent of the interviewees saw it very corrupted and only 7 per cent of them voted for full purity. Other public organisations —the police, local governments, the Parliament- occupied a middle position in people’s perception: 24-26 per cent of them saw these institutions as very corrupted, while 7-14 per cent perceived them as morally clean.

Amongst other reactions from the public, these findings also had an impact on taking decisive actions on corruption. Some of the new measures help to exercise more control over the validity of sale contacts born in the privatisation process; the struggle against the black economy has been intensified; tax authorities have been empowered to tighten fiscal investigations in exports and imports; a special department of the police was set up to follow large barterers, etc.

Source: Marián, B. (1997), “A politikai közvélemény a Szokai-Tocsik-ügy évében” (“Political opinion in the year of the Szokai-Tocsik case”), in Kurtán, S. et al. (eds.), *Politikai Évkönyv 1997* (Political Yearbook 1997), DKMKA, Budapest, Hungary, pp. 532-568.

The second source of under-utilisation is the rather widespread distrust in the findings of opinion polls. Because of the relatively short history of independent research, “bad news” from one or another survey is taken as an example of “secret” political predilection of the reporting survey centre and heavily attacked in the press. Given the low standard of general knowledge about sampling and data-processing, such attacks certainly destroy the prestige, popularity and powerful use of survey research.

The third factor behind under-utilisation is the uncertainty of finances. Since opinion polls are to measure people’s views at a given time, their findings are not for long-term use — except when repeated. However, amid the general shortage of resources, organisations or agencies rarely have funds for repetitive surveys. Thus, in most of the cases, polls are just one-time surveys which lose relevance within a relatively short time, and it is considered to be rather difficult to build longer-term reforms on their results.

What follows for the actual “mapping” of the availability of survey results is a rather anarchic and geographically scattered picture. Practically all the ministries, many local governments and a wide range of various other institutions in the public domain commissioned surveys during the past 6 to 7 years, but the detailed reports are in their files and are inaccessible to the public. On the other hand, the major poll centres (as agencies contracting for the execution of the different surveys) possess the data files, but are not authorised to put them into data archives for “independent” research. Given this situation, it is also hard to know how much opinion surveys have influenced decision-making, how much they were explored for monitoring the work of one or another agency, or to what extent they have shaped longer-term policy-formation. The only source of responses for such questions is the series of Political Yearbooks, where the major poll centres give summary reports of the main results of investigations run in the preceding year. Since only surveys with unlimited access can be used for the purpose of these reports (these are the ones commissioned mostly by the press), information is rather limited in scope. The recurrently reported topics are the following: perceptions of the work of the key institutions of public administration; views on the government and its policy priorities; changes in party orientations; modifications in people’s voting behaviour and their evaluation of major political and economic decisions.

10. Conclusions

In this chapter, six broad areas of administrative reforms were presented from one perspective: how do “rank and file” people understand and evaluate the attempts to modernise the various areas of governance and to attain higher efficiency of services and provisions. Although all the selected fields are of great importance in daily life, obviously, the time span of the reforms differs amongst them. Everything which happens in the budgetary sphere has immediate consequences in the consumption of commodities and services, while the impact of “Europeanisation” is more gradual. Local investments broaden people’s job opportunities without any further actions, while the improvement of hospital care requires the co-ordinated work of a number of authorities within and outside the medical profession, etc. These “professional” characteristics of the various fields of administrative reforms are clearly reflected in the respective public opinion surveys. In general, reforms with immediately felt favourable consequences enjoy greater support than those where people either do not see the coherence of actions, or fear that those in power might “change their minds”. Another differentiating dimension is the “closeness” and “controllability” of decisions. People feel more comfortable in areas where they see the entire process from the registration of needs through the preparation of regulations to experience of the results. Their “closeness” and greater “accountability” gives greater popularity to the actions of the local administrations than to those of the far-distanced central government or Parliament. However, this difference is not self-evident. With more efforts on communication and public discourse, much could be done to gain support to state-level actions — even if their execution requires some sacrifices on the part of

society. As proved by a number of surveys, Hungarian society does not think in “black or white” terms. The majority is ready to accept even a temporary worsening of the general conditions if sufficient arguments for such a necessity are given. True, acceptance of the negative sides of the reforms greatly depend on people’s evaluation of those in power: experiences with corruption, conceit and arrogance seriously damage people’s confidence that those deciding for them really “represent” them and are in powerful positions of governance according to their highest merits in the service of their country.

As this chapter demonstrated, opinion-surveys can provide in principle useful tools to inform those in charge of bringing about administrative reforms. The surveys might orient them towards expected reactions to one or another measure that they are to take, may help to monitor changes in the work of different public institutions and also might provide feedback on the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in different segments of society. Both the standard of professional knowledge and the organisational structure of the leading survey institutions constitute guarantees of the validity of the information that those interested in exploring the findings of public opinion polls might expect. However, a better utilisation of opinion surveys as tools to assist administrative reform would require further conditions: the commitment of public organisations to publicity and their efforts to initiate public discourse around the findings that the different surveys “measure” on their work.

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Annex. Addresses of the Main Public Opinion Survey Centres

Marketing Centrum Országos Piackutató Kft.

Nagymező utca 21.

H-1065, Budapest

Tel. (361) 1531 366; Fax (361) 3316 343

Medián Közvélemény- és Piackutató Intézet

Seregély utca 21.

H-1034, Budapest

Tel. (361) 2504 334; Fax (361) 2504 346

Modus Gazdasági és Társadalmi Marketing Tanácsadó Kft.

Szép utca 2.

H-1053, Budapest

Tel. (361) 1174 449; Fax (361) 1173 240

Szonda Ipsos Média-, Közvélemény- és Piackutató Intézet

Attila út 93.

H-1012, Budapest

Tel. (361) 1568 885; Fax (361) 1753 846

Társadalomkutatási Informatikai Egyesülés (TÁRKI)

Victor Hugo utca 18-22.

H-1132, Budapest

Tel. (361) 1497 531; Fax (361) 1290 470

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS AS TOOLS OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN LITHUANIA

Rasa Alisauskiene*

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the role of public opinion surveys during the process of administrative reform in post-communist Lithuania. . The process of system transformation as well as the results and conclusions of empirical public opinion surveys were analysed by political scientists, sociologists, economists, journalists and other experts. A significant number of surveys has been conducted since the beginning of the reforms in eastern Europe in 1989, but little is published about the applications of public opinion studies findings and effectiveness of the applied research in policy -shaping during the reform.

Recent post-communist history shows that modern public opinion surveys in Lithuania have become an integral part of social life. In 1989, the publication of any public opinion survey results made news and was discussed in a lively manner in the media, amongst politicians and the public at large. At the same time, the population of Lithuania was eager to take part in such studies. There were almost no refusals since the possibility to openly express opinions about important issues was a new phenomenon which was previously both unheard-of and even dangerous.

After eight years of reforms, public opinion studies are no longer major news, except in cases where some unexpected findings that confront established stereotypes are reported. The public became accustomed to being interviewed and now is no longer as interested and willing to participate. Does this also mean that at the beginning of the “singing revolutions,” public opinion had more influence on the decision-making and shape of reforms than it does at present?

Do the opinion-formers, decision-makers and public care about these findings? Are the surveys done for their own sake, as a sort of profitable business or do they still play an important social and political role?

In this article, responses to these questions will be found by examining recent history of public opinion studies in Lithuania, their changing role in society and practical application of their findings.

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2. Administrative Reforms

2.1. Social Change in the Baltics

Starting in August 1991, momentous political and social change has taken place in the Baltic states, when state independence from the former USSR became recognised by the international community. However, post-independence feelings of unity and hope for the future have given way to despair and dissension, mainly due to economic difficulties and political infighting.

Among the most important changes were the first independent elections of new political bodies (parliamentary and presidential). For the first time since the 1930s, voters selected from multi-party lists. In addition, there have been important economic changes: new state currencies are now in place, and tentative steps have been taken towards the transforming of the economy to a market-oriented one.

Although there has been great change, the legacy of over 50 years of Soviet rule has had a great influence on political, economic and social development in Lithuania. One of the important legacies has been the impact on social values and attitudes. Probably the most sensitive problem bequeathed by Soviet rule are the results of economic development pushed forward by Moscow leaders.

On 11 March 1990 the Supreme Council of Lithuania voted for the restoration of the independence of the Lithuanian Republic. With this Declaration of Independence, a new post-communist era in Lithuania commenced. However, only after the failed coup attempt in Soviet Union in August 1991, was the re-established Lithuanian Republic recognised by the international community.

The external political situation strongly influenced the focus of public opinion and the country's political leaders during the first years of the existence of post-Soviet Lithuania. Two periods in the most recent history of the country can be singled out: 1989-1991 and 1992 to the present day. Singling out these two periods is important in order to understand how the country was developing. These two periods are also important for the main topic of this chapter — analysis of the development and use of public opinion surveys in Lithuania.

Since the failed coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991, the political situation of the Lithuanian state has changed greatly. This period can also be described as the shifting point in Lithuanian public opinion. Before August 1991, the main factor differentiating opinions of various groups in Lithuanian society was political. The political problems (relations with the USSR) were predominant in the public consciousness — people believed that only after solving the problem of re-establishment of the statehood could the economic and social reforms be implemented.

In the political arena, two main orientations (independence versus being part of the USSR) were represented by the Popular Front (*Sąjūdis* movement) supported by the majority of Lithuanians (in summer 1990, 68 per cent of the total Lithuanian population supported *Sąjūdis*) versus the Communist party loyal to the Soviet Communist party and such movements as *Jedinstvo*, supported mainly by a Russian minority (its total support in the summer of 1990 was 6 per cent of the adult population). Deputies of *Sąjūdis* at the Lithuanian Supreme Council announced the restoration of the Independent Lithuanian State in the first meeting of the Lithuanian Parliament on 11 March 1990. The Communist party (CPSU) ceased to exist in Lithuania after the previously mentioned failed coup attempt in Moscow.

The main differences between the “Left” and “Right” political parties in Lithuania were linked at that time to the tactics for achieving independence and implementing economic reform (see Alisauskiene et al Summer 1993; Horichter et al 1993; and Alissauskas et al 1993).

2.2. *Administrative Reform*

Lithuania, as well as the other post-Soviet countries, had to undertake a twofold task in order to reform its legal and institutional set-up. Not only the old legal system had to be transformed, but also the whole legislative system had to be created as new. The other central European countries could undertake this reform using the already existing structures of sovereign nation-states (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, etc.). In the case of Lithuania, as well as two other Baltic countries, all legislation and institutional framework prior to re-establishment of independence were part of the federal Soviet system.

Therefore, public administration reform, which started in 1990 and is still an ongoing process, had to deal with the following tasks:

- to design the new institutional set-up for the independent country;
- to design the basic principles for the legislative system;
- to transform the old institutions inherited from the Soviet system;
- to establish the new legal base and institutional framework in such areas which were totally under the central Soviet control (Foreign Policy, Defence).

In the process of public administration reform, the following tasks were accomplished or are now under focus:

- A new Lithuanian Constitution was prepared and voted for by the electorate in the national referendum in October 1992;
- A new electoral system for the national and local elections as well as Presidential elections was introduced;
- The institution of the Constitutional Court was introduced and is functioning;
- The office of the President of the Republic was established and the first President of post-war Lithuania was elected in the beginning of 1993 by general vote;
- A national Parliament was re-established;
- A multi — party system was instituted;
- Institutional reform is ongoing with the establishment of the Ministry of National Defence and transformation of the other Ministries; the number and functions of the ministries are changing and are still being debated;
- At the regional level, the office of regional administrators was introduced and the administrative reform of the country regional divisions was undertaken;
- At the local level, the municipalities and their governing was transformed;
- The code of civil service, defining the functions, responsibilities and guarantees for people in public office was adopted;

- Legislation is under revision in order to harmonise it with the requirements for the candidate countries for EU accession.

3. History of Surveys

During the Soviet era, no nation-wide representative surveys which would become publicly available, were conducted. Social research, however, was developing in academic institutions. The Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of Lithuanian Academy of Science and Vilnius University were the main centres for empirical social studies. The main focus of the surveys conducted in these institutions were related to industrial sociology, education and problems of youth socialisation. These surveys in the majority of cases were purely empirical and their findings were used by the industry or educational institutes. Such surveys were sponsored by the centralised state institutions, such as the Academy of Science, all-Union programmes and industries.

No private institutions for public opinion surveys existed prior to 1990. Addresses of survey institutions can be found in the Annex.

Rapid development of public opinion surveys started in the period 1987-1989. New national political leaders, established independent media as well as foreign institutions became increasingly interested in monitoring public opinion in the disintegrating Soviet state. The political climate in Lithuania also stimulated the growth in the number of public opinion surveys as they were perceived as *vox populi* and a popular tool to withstand Soviet claims to keep the Baltics in the Soviet Union.

During 1987-1990, national public opinion studies were conducted by groups of researchers in academic institutions, e.g. the Academy of Science and Vilnius University. During this time, these groups established networks of interviewers and acquired both knowledge and contacts with foreign colleagues and clients. Later, during 1991-1992 these efforts and experience became the basis for the establishment of private public opinion and market research institutions.

From 1987 to 1990, the majority of public opinion surveys dealt with political issues such as:

- Public attitude towards the independence of Lithuania;
- Public confidence in the social institutions and new political forces;
- Public attitudes towards the role and support by foreign countries for Lithuania,
- Electoral behaviour and motivation.

During this period, the main sponsors of the surveys were the national independent media, new political parties, Parliament, central and local government and international institutions, such as the United States Information Agency, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, foreign media (BBC, RFE/RL, Voice of America, Times Mirror group) and American and European Universities.

The second period in post-communist survey research history started in 1992 and is still ongoing. It is characterised by two features:

- Change in the political climate and mood of Lithuanian public: this mood became more focused on the domestic social issues, it became more pessimistic;
- Establishment of the private research organisations.

In 1992, two major and well-known public opinion and market research organisations were established in Lithuania:

- Baltic Surveys Ltd., a member of the Gallup network; and
- Vilmorus.

Both are members of the European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR). Baltic Surveys Ltd. was established using the experience of the Vilnius University research team. It is a joint venture with the British Gallup organisation. Vilmorus was established using the experience of the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of the Academy of Science. At the same time, a number of private consulting agencies were established in Lithuania. They also conduct some smaller range public opinion studies.

In 1994-1995, several new private public opinion and market research companies were established, mainly dealing with market research. Among them, Megapolis, Social information centre, Fund Sociology also conduct *ad-hoc* public opinion studies. The topics analysed are mainly related to social problems and education. Since 1992, approximately 90 per cent of public opinion surveys are conducted by private research organisations.

The range of sponsors of these studies has changed since 1992. During the early period of post-communist development up until 1992, the main sponsors of these studies were Lithuanian central authorities, domestic and foreign media and international organisations. Since 1992, the Lithuanian central government's share amongst the sponsors has diminished. Also, the funds from the Academy of Science and universities have become either limited or unavailable. However, the share of the Lithuanian media and foreign institutions amongst the sponsors has increased.

Since 1991, Lithuania has taken part in an annual Central and Eastern Eurobarometer project (survey conducted from 1991-1997 by Baltic Surveys). This survey monitors the changes in opinion of the residents of Central and Eastern Europe and is sponsored by the European Commission. It has been carried out annually in Central and Eastern Europe since 1990 (see Horichter, 1993, and "Public Opinion About the European Community," 1992-1997).

Since 1992 the New Baltic Barometer survey is conducted regularly by Vilmorus. This survey also monitors changes in opinion of residents in Central and Eastern Europe and is sponsored by the European Commission. It is also conducted on an annual basis but focuses more on economic reforms in the region than on political issues.

The major sponsors of public opinion surveys in Lithuania in 1990-1996 were the European Commission, the United States Information Agency, Radio Free Europe /Radio Liberty Research Institute, The World bank, American and British universities, the Lithuanian Parliament and Government and the Lithuanian media.

On average from 1990 to 1996, there were approximately 50 studies conducted per year on public opinion in Lithuania. They varied in the number of topics covered, sample sizes, target groups and level of public availability.

Bearing in mind the busy and developing scene of public opinion surveys in Lithuania, one would expect that the authorities would be aware and accustomed to using the findings of these studies. However, the picture is not that simple. Like other central European countries, the attitude of the authorities to public opinion studies is controversial. The reaction (or at least, the one publicly expressed), strongly depends on

the findings: in the case of negative ratings, the reaction is most often defensive and directed against the methodology or the institute conducting the study. However, if the results are positive, then the publicly shown reaction is positive and the actors under evaluation are praised.

The role of the domestic media in commissioning and reporting public opinion studies' findings cannot be underestimated. The media is the sponsor and broadcaster of those findings on a regular basis. Such publicity guarantees the control over the methodology, the availability of the information to the public at large and the possibility of drawing the public's attention to the country's most urgent problems. Reporting the findings of public opinion surveys on the evaluation of the reform, the functioning of the various institutions and political actors, the media also stipulates the reaction of decision-makers to the issues surveyed and problems highlighted.

3.1. *Policy Mood in Lithuania*

To try to establish some trends in the reaction of the authorities towards the opinion research one should look at the changes in the general social context of the country. The changes in the mood of the population were also established by means of social research.

The mood of Lithuanians during the seven years of social change (1989–1996) can be described as having an increasing number of worries and fears for the future and a very high feeling of deterioration in the personal economic situation. People in Lithuania were highly dissatisfied with the economic situation in the country. Pro free-market or mixed economy, they often wished for more rapid reforms. An important change occurred at the beginning of 1997: the public mood in Lithuania began to become more optimistic, especially in regard to the evaluation of the economic reform and financial situation (see Stimson 1991, and *The Features of Political Consciousness of Lithuanian People* 1991).

The reaction to the political and economic transformation taking place in Lithuania after the international recognition of the independent Lithuanian state brought about a reversal of the earlier philosophy "democracy first, economy second". In a situation of breakdown and revolution, democracy was regarded as guaranteeing freedom and a better life, and the most important problems just after the revolution were to secure order and solve economic problems.

After a few years of reforms, the Lithuanian population confronted with social and economic hardships turned from political to economic issues. Social issues such as standard of living, pensions, inflation and crime became prevalent in the public consciousness. Social institutions were evaluated with regard to their efficiency in confronting these problems. The Lithuanian population became more rational in its judgements about the pace of reforms and their directions.

4. Monitoring the Performance and Acceptance of Institutions, Government and Public Administration

4.1. *Economic, Political and Social Institutions*

The monitoring of public confidence in the political and economic institutions has been undertaken by Baltic Surveys and Vilnius since the beginning of the post-communist era in Lithuania. Indicators of this kind are usually measured as a part of the national Omnibus.

From 1989 to 1992, the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University measured public confidence in social institutions. The measurements were made first on a quarterly, and then starting in 1992, on a bi-monthly basis. Since its establishment in 1992, Baltic Surveys has continued to monitor the population's opinion on the functioning of public institutions. Since 1993, this has been a monthly measurement. Such indicators as the level of public confidence in Parliament, the President's Office, Central Government, local administration, national armed forces, police, courts of justice, Central Bank, media and the Church are measured. These surveys are sponsored by the national daily *Respublika* and reported on a monthly basis (see *The Features of Political Consciousness of Lithuanian People* 1991). Since 1992, Vilmorius has been measuring public confidence in institutions several times a year. These studies are sponsored by political parties, the media and international organisations (see Box 1).

BOX 1: MONITORING THE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The Lithuanian Barometer is a project which has been run by Baltic Surveys since 1992 on a regular basis. From 1993, the level of public confidence is measured on a monthly basis. The block of indicators on the confidence in institutions, politicians and political parties is sponsored by the national daily *Respublika* and published during the last week of each month. A national representative sample of 1 000 respondents, aged 15-74 is used for this project. The data are collected in face-to-face interviews. Lithuanian and Russian questionnaires are used. The margin of error does not exceed 3 per cent.

The results of the monitoring of public confidence in social institutions show that over the last 6 years, only the mass media has achieved increased confidence. By the end of 1997, over 70 per cent of the Lithuanian population had confidence in the Lithuanian mass media. The second institution enjoying a high level of confidence was the Church. Its rating did not fall below 55 per cent. All other institutions, including Parliament, the President's Office, Central and local Government, national defence, police, courts of justice and the Central Bank had lost their image in the eyes of the public. By the end of 1996, all these institutions had higher negative scores than positive.

The data from measuring public confidence in social institutions is used by the Government and various ministries as well as the media to check on how the public perceives their performance. These data were quoted by politicians and public administration representatives many times when analysing the development of democratic society in Lithuania.

The data collected in the Lithuanian Barometer project enabled the application of the policy mood concept for evaluating changes in Lithuanian public opinion.

As J.A. Stimson says, "Domestic policy mood is the concept. It arises from a view of public opinion as an aggregate entity.... The starting point of mood is information on specific preferences.... The desired final measure is a regular time series, regular in the sense of having exactly one value for each period. Policy mood can be measured, can be, that is, assigned a set of numbers that indicate the underlying thing itself" (Stimson 1991).

Policy mood as an aggregate indicator of the state of society can be described both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Following its dynamics over time, the policy mood rise, fall or stability over a given period can be estimated (Stimson 1991).

The main impact of these kinds of surveys is their influence on the level of awareness of the Lithuanian public about public opinion itself. The results of these kinds of studies are most often published in the media and are therefore the best known examples of public opinion surveys.

The application of the results of these surveys cannot be measured directly. The results are used by politicians in their public relations campaigns together with the examples of public approval or disapproval of the performance of politicians and institutions.

4.2. Central Government, the Public Sector and Public Administration

This type of study is closely related to those previously described. The ratings of central government and public administration are most often evaluated together with the measurement of the level of confidence in other social institutions. These kinds of continuous measurements have been undertaken by Baltic Surveys and Vilmoris since 1992.

The results of these surveys, conducted amongst the national population, show a general trend: the diminishing level of confidence in the Government. However, this is not a “flat” trend. Each national election in Lithuania was preceded by a tremendous fall in the Government’s ratings whilst immediately afterwards, expectations rose and ratings improved for several months. The existence of such trends is supported by the data of both survey organisations, running studies independently, but using comparable methodology.

Another type of study dealing with the evaluation of the performance of the government, public administration and the public sector, are the *ad-hoc* studies, commissioned by the government, ministries and international organisations.

There were several examples of long-term monitoring, initiated by the Government itself. In 1992-1993 and at the end of 1995, Baltic Surveys monitored public evaluation of central government and public administration performance in the studies commissioned by the central Government. The data from, these studies were used by the Government itself and not made public. However, the results were applied in order to design public relations campaigns and to prepare the public for what were expected to be unpopular decisions. On several occasions, the Government made decisions about the timing for publication of the results and ways to present new laws to the public on price control and pension plans after public opinion on these issues had been measured.

In February/March 1997, Vilmoris conducted several studies commissioned by Central Government. In these studies, conducted on national samples, the public attitude towards reforms, initiated by the Central Government, were measured. Once again, little information was published, but the Government made use of the results in designing its public relations campaign and explaining to the Lithuanian public those measures which had been found to raise major concerns in the surveys.

In both cases, these studies were sponsored by Central Government who were also the end user.

5. Policy Priorities

Since 1992, there have been number of surveys conducted amongst the Lithuanian elite. In September 1993 Baltic Surveys conducted a survey amongst Lithuanian politicians, state-owned and private business leaders and media leaders; 136 respondents were interviewed. At the same time, the general public was interviewed using the same set of questions. The results of the survey allowed a comparison of the opinions of elite members and the general public on the general trend in the country’s development, their views on economic reform, changes in the economic situation and the level of confidence in social institutions.

Elite members were more supportive of the establishment of a free-market economy in Lithuania (88 per cent considered this to be the right choice) than the general public (62 per cent).

Both sides were more often dissatisfied with the implementation of economic reform (85 per cent of elite members and 68 per cent of general public). When evaluating the economic situation in Lithuania, the elite were more pessimistic than the general public. At the same time, the Lithuanian elite had less confidence in all social institutions with the exception of the Government and courts of justice, than the general public. This is an example of an *ad-hoc* study which was sponsored by the media and of which the results were published (see Alisauskas et al 1993, and Alisauskiene and Bajaruniene 1993).

Another series of studies, in which Lithuanian elite members were interviewed, was sponsored by the Norwegian Research Council. One project dealt with the Baltic parliaments. In 1992, 90 per cent of all Lithuanian Parliament members were interviewed by Baltic Surveys. This study dealt with the values, attitudes and opinions of politicians. In particular, the spheres which were considered to be the most important in the country's development were assessed, as well as the priorities for the country's development. The results of this study concluded that Lithuanian politicians (similar to the general public) considered economic reform and strengthening of the national security to be the most important issues.

The second Norwegian sponsored study conducted by Baltic Surveys in 1993 and repeated in 1997 was carried out with 300 so-called elite, including political, administrative, business, media and intellectual elite. Once again, opinions and attitudes towards reforms and social development amongst other topics were studied. The data obtained in these studies are still being analysed and will be published in Norway.

Both studies were sponsored by foreign institutions and none of the results were published in Lithuania. The main conclusions, based on the data from these surveys, were made available to Lithuanian politicians by the researchers (see Box 2 for one such example).

The Lithuanian Free Market Institute, a non-profit organisation, conducted several studies, sponsored by various international organisations, amongst Lithuanian elite members during 1995-1996. These studies examined the attitudes of various elite groups towards reform and country priorities together with values of the elite. The results of these studies were reported by the media and given to the elite members. They showed strong support by businesses and the political elite for the market economy, as well as the creation of a multi-party democratic system.

Amongst the wide-range studies comparing the values and attitudes of the elite and the general public are the annual studies conducted by Baltic Surveys and sponsored by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute (In 1996 it became "InterMedia Survey", United States). These studies allow the collection of an extensive database on the values and attitudes both of the elite (political, business, media, intellectual and administrative) and the general public. The same questionnaire is used for the general public and elite. The data from the two surveys are comparable. This project is repeated every year, therefore the analysis of its results enables the establishment of trends in changes in public opinion.

6. Views on EU Integration

Since 1991, the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer survey has been conducted in Lithuania on an annual basis by Baltic Surveys on behalf of the European Commission. At the time of writing this report, six annual studies had been carried out and 1997's survey was being prepared.

In this study, the opinions of people in Central and Eastern Europe towards EU, international relations and domestic development are measured. This survey is run on a national representative sample of the country's residents aged 15 years and over.

**BOX 2: POLICY PRIORITIES AT THE ELITE AND AT THE MASS LEVEL:
PRIVATISATION IN LITHUANIA**

This project, dealing with the opinion of both the general public and the elite on the privatisation process in Lithuania, was sponsored by the Phare Programme. The survey was conducted in January 1998 by Baltic Surveys. A national representative sample of 1 007 respondents, aged 15-74, was interviewed face-to-face. Using a comparable questionnaire, 103 elite members, including political, administrative and media elite were also interviewed.

Amongst the general public, 34 per cent supported the sell-out of large enterprises to foreign companies, whilst 52 per cent opposed this decision. Amongst the elite, 79 per cent were supportive whilst 14 per cent were against. For the Lithuanian public, the main argument for changing such a negative attitude would be the creation of new jobs in those enterprises sold. If Lithuanians were sure that new jobs would be created for local people, then 68 per cent of them would agree to the sale of large enterprises.

Amongst the Lithuanian elite, the majority think that only the railway and energy sector should remain mainly state-owned. In other sectors it was felt that a mixture of private and state ownership should dominate (e.g. health care, mass media, banking) otherwise private ownership should dominate (e.g. public catering, light industry, heavy industry, agriculture). Amongst the general public, public catering, retail and agriculture were perceived as the most suitable industries for private ownership. Railway, energy, airways, oil refining and telecommunications should remain state-owned, whilst the other sectors were mixed.

The results of this survey were presented to the Phare Programme and Lithuanian authorities. They are being used to prepare and execute a public relations campaign in order to explain to the people, the government's policy on privatisation.

In 1996, Central and Eastern Eurobarometer started to include the elite. Baltic Surveys conducted the study in 1996, when 150 elite members were interviewed and their opinions on Lithuanian membership of the EU and NATO were studied. The same questions were examined in the mass public study. The data from these studies show that the political elite are much more in favour of membership of both the EU and NATO, whilst the general public more often have no opinion on this matter.

The findings of Central and Eastern Eurobarometer are published and distributed widely. However, the survey conducted under this project also attracts a lot of criticism from politicians. As this project is sponsored by the European Commission and published by Brussels, Lithuanian politicians are sensitive to the findings. The findings are published with a comparison of the findings in other countries in the region, therefore politicians criticise the pollsters if Lithuania appears in an unfavourable light. For instance, in 1995 over 70 per cent of Lithuanian residents said that they were not satisfied with the level of respect for individual human rights in Lithuania. This level of dissatisfaction was higher than in the neighbouring countries. Some Lithuanian politicians criticised the findings, saying that Lithuanian neighbours have more ethnic problems than Lithuania, therefore the public in Lithuania in general cannot be more critical. Such comments have illustrated the differences in the understanding of the concepts of "individual human rights" by politicians and the public at large.

On the other hand, Central and Eastern Eurobarometer is one example of how public opinion studies can stimulate public debate with results that can be used. On the basis of the results of the study conducted in November 1996, Lithuanian politicians concluded that the Lithuanian public is neither sufficiently informed of the possible outcomes of Lithuanian membership of the EU nor about the policies and set-up of the EU. Thus, a public relations and information campaign was initiated by the Lithuanian authorities in order to improve the level of knowledge on European matters.

The Central and Eastern Eurobarometer project is the best known example of the international comparative projects on EU integration. Since 1992, there were many other domestic studies examining public opinions on Lithuanian foreign policy and priorities. Both Baltic Surveys and Vilnius have conducted such public opinion studies sponsored by the Baltic Assembly, the Lithuanian Parliament, the Foreign Office and the media. The findings of these studies showed that in 1991-1992 a euphoric reaction towards the then believed rapid integration into the EU was prevalent amongst the Lithuanian public. However, after five years it became clear that membership of the EU is a matter for the future and that integration is a rather long and difficult process. The Lithuanian public became less emotional and more rational. The number of EU membership opponents has not changed in the six years since 1991 (it is a stable 6-8 per cent of the total population). However, the number of strong supporters decreased from 60 per cent to 35 per cent. Approximately one in three Lithuanians became “undecided” and required more information on the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership (see “Public Opinion About the European Community” 1992-1997).

The results of these surveys are reported to Lithuanian decision-makers, EU decision-makers and the public at large. They help to assess the needs of the public and design the information campaigns.

7. Use of Public Opinion Surveys in Policy Circle

7.1. Policy Initiation

Whilst the reform of the public administration system started in 1990, both the public and officials started to discuss the directions of the reform and the process of its implementation. In spite of the importance of the topic, only a few empirical studies on this issue were undertaken.

In 1990-1991, the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of Lithuanian Academy of Science conducted 6 studies amongst the Lithuanian public. National representative samples of 1 000 respondents were interviewed face-to-face. Amongst those topics surveyed was the public attitude towards the reform of the retail system in Lithuania (five studies in 1990-1991). One study conducted by the Institute dealt with the public attitude towards the social changes in Lithuania. Public evaluation of the social welfare system, education and health care was measured. The results of this study were reported to the Government. They enabled a better understanding of which social groups were the most vulnerable during the implementation of economic reform and which type of assistance was the most desired. The results of this study showed that contrary to the widespread view, not only pensioners are affected by the decline in the standard of living, but also young families with small children are in a difficult economic situation. The study also revealed the need for changes in the government’s policy on housing — a strong need for loans and credits for young families and students to be able to rent or buy an apartment.

In 1991, the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University conducted a study on the reform of the Prime Minister’s office. Members of the cabinet, as well as public servants in the Prime Minister’s office, were interviewed. The study was sponsored by the Government and the results were used when preparing the

reform. The structural changes were made using the recommendations of this study, assisting more efficient flow of information between various levels of hierarchy. Communications between the various departments and inter-institutional communication has also improved as a result of the structural and functional changes.

In 1990-1991, the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University also conducted several studies sponsored by the Department of National Defence (later known as the Ministry of Defence) in order to study the public's and officials' attitudes towards the establishment and set-up of the national armed forces and the structure of the Ministry. The findings of these studies were applied by the Ministry.

With regard to administrative reform, the Ministry of Interior has commissioned and conducted a number of studies for its own use. The studies dealt with the image of the police as well as employee satisfaction. These studies were conducted by the Ministry itself or the Academy of Police.

Baltic Surveys conducted several studies examining the attitudes and preferences of the general public and public administration towards health care reform (in 1992, 1994, 1995), social security system reform (1995) and labour market management reform (1994-1995). However, the majority of these studies were *ad-hoc* studies (see Box 3 below for an example). The findings and conclusions are usually used by the institution which commissioned the study (see Alisauskiene and Bajaruniene, 1993).

In 1995, Vilmorus conducted a study amongst the general public on the attitudes towards health care reform; 1 000 respondents in a national representative sample were interviewed on various issues related to that reform. The results of this study were presented to the Ministry of Health and used by the group preparing the outline for reform. The results of this study showed that many Lithuanians are not satisfied with the structure of the health care system, the concentration of the secondary medical assistance in major towns and the ineffective functioning of the medical institutions in countryside. The study also emphasised the need for the development of a social work system in Lithuania which at present is being introduced.

7.2. Policy Implementation

One example of this type of study is the project sponsored by the UN Development Programme in Lithuania. It was conducted by Baltic Surveys in 1994 amongst the elite including ministers and deputy ministers in all Lithuanian ministries, together with the general public. This study is a good example of how studies are used to examine the general context and priorities before reform was implemented. It is described in Box 4.

7.3. Policy Evaluation

The survey on public administration reform described earlier is one example of the application of opinion studies in the reform process.

Another example of this type of survey are the studies organised to monitor public opinion on the reform during its implementation. Such studies were sponsored by the Government in 1992 and in 1995. In 1995, Baltic Surveys conducted the monitoring of changes of public opinion during the Cabinet and banking crises in Lithuania. This was conducted amongst urban dwellers, with 200 residents interviewed each week by phone. The weekly set of indicators was designed by researchers and officials in the Prime Minister's Office. The data were reported to the Prime Minister's Office the day after the end of the

interviews, and possible adjustments of day-to-day decisions and public relations were discussed. This type of study is important and useful when implementing unpopular decisions. Where an extensive public relations campaign is ongoing in order to persuade the public to accept reform, such monitoring provides quick feedback on public reactions and allows for any adjustment of the activities as well as within the public relations PR campaign. However, such types of studies also require significant funding and are difficult to continue in the long term.

BOX 3: THE STUDY ON THE REFORM OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The aim of the study was to find out what the leaders of public administration in Lithuania see as the most important problems of the current situation: what are their perceptions and needs in regard to public administration reform in Lithuania and professional training of civil servants.

All ministers and deputy ministers had in-depth interviews with Baltic Surveys. The main findings of the study with the ministers showed that the most important problems, related to public administration reform, were perceived as the following:

- personnel problems: lack of highly qualified professionals and specialists;
- huge amount of day-to-day administrative work;
- ineffective communication, horizontal, vertical and internal.

Amongst the possible solutions to the problems highlighted, the leaders of public administration mentioned the following:

- Funding: This problem was hard to solve in the difficult economic situation prevailing. Nevertheless, the interviewed leaders suggested several possible ways of improving the performance of the institutions they manage. Means should be taken to establish priorities for Lithuania's development; to develop a computerised information exchange network between the ministries, the Prime Minister's Office and the *Seimas*; to expand the education of all public administration employees at all educational levels; and to introduce the Law on the Civil Service which would describe the responsibilities and rights of civil servants.

One other factor mentioned by the majority of the leaders was related to the negative public opinion towards civil servants as a social group. Leaders emphasised that public opinion should be informed and formed by showing not only negative (especially, generalised) but also positive examples of the professional activities in that field. A negative public attitude to the whole social group makes it difficult to recruit the best specialists in government institutions or to persuade the best people to stay. It is also a real threat for the stability of the recently re-established Independent State.

At the same time, the general public was surveyed in order to establish their attitudes towards public administration. The survey was conducted amongst the adult population of Lithuania (aged 15 years and over with a national sample of 1 000 respondents). The findings from that study dealt with the Lithuanians' opinions of people working in public administration; their personal experiences of dealing with those problems which are within the competence of civil servants; and their main reasons for complaints about public administration.

Results from the mass public survey showed that the attitude towards people working in public administration was not as negative as had been expected judging from publications in the mass media. The general opinion was polarised: 40 per cent of the public had a positive opinion and 50 per cent had a negative opinion of this social group.

During administrative reform, senior officials in the executive bodies as well as politicians are inclined to use public opinion polls for keeping in touch with the public's reactions. Public administration employees,

especially at the middle level, are much less accustomed to using opinion polls during the reform. Such neglect is closely related to the prevailing type of training which rarely includes social or human science topics.

BOX 4: STUDY ON THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN LITHUANIA

The aim of the study was to find out what foreign investors in Lithuania think about the political, legislative and economic climate there, what they perceived as the main problems and what can be done in order to solve them.

Since 1995, this study has been carried out every year. Approximately 50 major foreign investors answered the questionnaire and evaluated the main obstacles for their business in Lithuania. The results obtained in these studies showed that investors are satisfied with business conditions and if they had to choose again, they would re-invest in Lithuania. The main obstacles for developing their business in Lithuania were perceived as being overly frequent changes in legislation, bureaucracy and a lack of close relations with decision-makers.

A practical result of this study in 1996, was the establishment of a working committee of representatives of foreign investors and the Lithuanian authorities. Regular meetings are organised and problems discussed. Opinions and suggestions made by foreign investors are taken into consideration and practical decisions in such spheres as taxation, better circulation of information and functioning of customs were made by Lithuanian authorities.

One positive feature of the use of public opinion surveys by Lithuanian politicians and public administration is the fact that researchers not only report their findings, but also work as team members during the preparation of the reform projects and tools for the implementation of the reforms. Such co-operation might be attributed to personal relations amongst researchers and users of the service as well as to the fact that many decision-makers were recruited from academic institutions and therefore had worked in research teams themselves. For example, in 1993 a Professor of Sociology was appointed Adviser to the President of Lithuania. Other researchers took part in the work of groups of specialists preparing the social welfare system reform and the establishment of the ministries, etc.

The internal and external images of the Government are extensively studied in the various projects conducted in Lithuania. All surveys in which the elite and mass public were studied measured opinions on institutions, including the Government and Parliament. The experience of 1991 to 1996 shows that these images do not differ significantly: both the mass public and elite are somewhat critical of the performance of central government.

During the period of transformation, public expectations relating to the performance of the government almost always exceed the ability to meet them. The findings of studies conducted by public opinion institutes in Lithuania from 1990 to 1997 clearly show such tendencies. After each general election, the public level of confidence in government increased but less than six months later it had again declined.

7.3.1. Satisfaction Measures

This type of study is most often commissioned by the ministries or local administration. The majority of studies of this type, conducted in Lithuania, dealt with the reform of the education, social welfare and health care systems.

From 1991 to 1997, the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University conducted several studies amongst the students of schools and universities together with teachers to examine the level of satisfaction with education and structure and programs of the educational institutions. The results of these studies were used to assess and adjust curricula as well as training programs offered by schools and universities (see Box 5 below for an example). In particular, students were asked to give their opinion on the programs offered for academic exchange with foreign institutions. The results of these studies were used to revise information policies at the universities and enabled them to meet the expectations of students and staff.

BOX 5: LITHUANIAN YOUTH STUDY

This study was conducted in 1997 by the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University on behalf of the State Youth Issues Council; 1 000 Lithuanian young people, aged 15-29 were interviewed face-to-face. The study covered a wide variety of topics: political, economic, social, the cultural life of young people, the main problems and obstacles perceived by young people in today's society, their life plans and perspectives, etc. One section of the study was devoted to an evaluation of the activity and performance of various institutions dealing with young people.

The results of this study concluded that the most important problems Lithuania is facing at the moment as far as young people are concerned are a low standard of living, crime and unemployment. Young people in Lithuania think that the main priority in Lithuania should be economic development.

One out of every four young people recognised that there are institutions which concentrate on those problems which are important to them; 50 per cent of them did not know that such institutions existed. Their conclusion was that the performance of these institutions is not very satisfactory, that they lack initiative and make little effort to communicate with young people. These institutions, young people felt, supply them with very little information. At the same time, only 3 per cent of young Lithuanians are members of any organisation. They would like to have more international contacts with young people abroad, but the main obstacle is financial.

Young people were sceptical about the quality of teaching in secondary schools. They consider it to be too low for anyone who wants to continue his or her studies. The relationship between teachers and students was also evaluated as being unsatisfactory. Young people think that the evaluation of their level of knowledge in school is rather subjective. On the reform of the Lithuanian education system, young people emphasised the need to adjust the curriculum and methods to the suit the development of an independent and thinking student (see *The Portrait of Lithuanian Youth—1997*).

The results of this study were summarised in a report and presented to the Lithuanian Parliament and media and used by the Youth Issues Council in order to prepare projects for educational reform and a state programme on a young people policy.

During health care reform, a number of public opinion surveys were sponsored by the Ministry of Health in order to assess the problems existing in this sector. The studies were conducted by Vilnius University, Baltic surveys and the Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University. In particular, public attitudes towards the plans to privatise some health services were studied. Once more, the findings of such studies are rarely reported in the media and are not well known to the public at large.

Some issues related to the elite and staff satisfaction thereof are examined in the elite studies described earlier in this report. The majority of such studies, especially those dealing with public administration employees' satisfaction are conducted internally and are not made available to the public.

One example of such a study was conducted by Baltic Surveys, amongst the elite on behalf of the European Commission (see Box 6 below).

BOX 6: ELITE SATISFACTION WITH THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION

This study was conducted in 1996 by Baltic Surveys on behalf of the European Commission. It surveyed those in the public administration, politicians, business leaders and media people dealing with European integration. The aim of the study was to find out the level of awareness of these groups about the activities of the European Union, channels of information and their needs for the information. The majority of the surveyed elite expressed a high interest in receiving more information about the EU and supported the idea of publishing a magazine about the EU in Lithuanian.

As a result of the implementation of the findings of this study, the Lithuanian language magazine *European Dialogue* was launched by the European Commission and since 1996, it is regularly distributed amongst the 2 000 members of the Lithuanian elite.

This project is ongoing as is the regular monitoring of the magazine's recipients. The level of satisfaction with the publication was measured in 1996 and the study was continued in 1997 by Baltic Surveys. This project is part of the central and eastern European project, sponsored by the European Commission (see *Public Opinion About the European Community*, 1992-1997).

8. Images and Perceptions of Public Organisations

The majority of studies measuring the perceptions of social institutions concentrates on the Government. Few studies were conducted to establish the images and perceptions of public organisations. One such study was conducted by Baltic Surveys in 1996. Lithuanian residents were surveyed about the image of the Youth Psychological Assistance Centre. The level of awareness of the Centre and its services was measured. The results of this study showed what kind of assistance was most required, what existed gaps in the information on the services and what types of stereotypes and prejudices should be confronted in order to improve assistance. The results of the study, which was carried out free of charge, were reported to the Centre.

One of the main reasons why this type of study is underdeveloped is the low level of awareness in public organisations about public opinion studies, as well as a lack of financial resources to conduct them. However, with the rapid development of the non-governmental organisations sector in Lithuania, this type of survey could be expected to increase in the future.

9. Location of Survey Knowledge in the Administrative System

This is the weak point in the whole system. Regardless of the fact that public opinion surveys are well established and extensively used in Lithuania, there is no central archive or publicly available storage of the survey data. Each research institute is responsible for the storage of its own data.

The data from those surveys sponsored by foreign institutions are stored within these institutions and are not available for use in the country.

The few examples of survey data which are publicly available are the data of Central and Eastern Eurobarometer, stored in western European archives. These can be accessed by contacting the European Commission Directorate General X. Some survey data which were collected in the projects and which were sponsored by American organisations, are stored in U.S. archives. One such example for Lithuanian data is The Gallup Organisation in the U.S.

In the case of the studies commissioned by the Lithuanian government or public institutions, the data are stored and kept by these institutions, often in the form of printed reports. Therefore, they are not easily accessible to other public institutions. Worse still, these reports often disappear when staff changes occur.

10. Conclusions

The overview of the development of public opinion surveys in Lithuania and the application of their findings enable us to draw the following conclusions:

- public opinion surveys in Lithuania have rapidly developed since 1987;
- the first national representative surveys of public opinion were conducted in Lithuania in 1989 and soon became an integral part of social and political life;
- in the first period of post-communist history, prior to 1992, Lithuanian society was faced with the possibility of openly expressing individual opinions and was very much in favour of polls. At that time, public opinion studies were used extensively by politicians and government in all stages of the administrative and economic reform;
- during the second period in recent history, from 1992 and still ongoing, the public mood in Lithuania became more pessimistic; the level of confidence in social institutions decreased and public attention became focused on social issues. Public authorities became more critical of the reported findings of public opinion surveys. At the same time, the funding for such studies has changed: the share of Lithuanian Government funding decreased, whilst the share of international organisations and the Lithuanian media, increased;
- the analysis of the usage of public opinion surveys in Lithuania over the six years of administrative reform shows that they are one of the important tools used to assess the needs of the various groups in society, measuring their preferences and satisfaction. The post-communist history of Lithuania gives many examples of successful applications of public opinion surveys in the course of administrative reform;
- in order to make the use of surveys more widely accepted and more efficient, the efforts of both researchers and decision-makers are crucial. Only by informing decision-makers about the possibilities of the surveys, their applications and effectiveness can researchers become more involved in the planning and implementation of the reforms in post-communist society;
- much more emphasis should be placed on projects which are continuous in order to monitor the process of the reform, as well as publishing the results of the surveys;
- the methodology of public opinion surveys should be taught at universities – the social sciences are still a weak point in the general education system in Lithuania.

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Annex. Addresses of Main Public Opinion Survey Institutions in Lithuania

Baltic Surveys Ltd.: Lithuanian-British joint venture, member of Gallup and ESOMAR
47 Didlaukio str., LT-2057 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel. (370 2) 76 27 90; Fax (370 2) 76 26 81
e-mail: baltic_surveys@post.omnitel.net
Director: Dr. Rasa Alisauskiene

Vilmorus: Member of ESOMAR
4, Tiltos str., LT-2001 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel. (370 2) 62 40 83; Fax (370 2) 61 09 89
Director: Dr. Vladas Gaidys

Sociological Laboratory of Vilnius University
3, Universiteto str., LT-2600 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel. (370 2) 76 24 62; Fax (370 2) 65 21 02

Sociologija Fund
47, Didlaukio str., LT-2057 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel./Fax (370 2) 65 21 02
President: Dr. Laima Zilinskiene

Lithuanian Free Market Institute
56 Birutes str., LT-2004 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel. (370 2) 72 25 84; Fax (370 2) 72 12 79
President: Dr. Elena Leontjeva

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