



Public administration characteristics and performance in EU28:

Bulgaria

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April – 2018



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This publication has been developed for the European Commission with the technical assistance of the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), the Hertie School of Governance and Ramboll Management Consulting. It reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Editors: Nick Thijs and Gerhard Hammerschmid

Manuscript completed in August 2017

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

ISBN: 978-92-79-90566-7
doi:10.2767/969353

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1 SIZE OF GOVERNMENT

Bulgaria is a country with a relatively low level of public expenditure, ranking 22nd in the EU. Public expenditure has increased in the last five years to 40.69% at present. The lion's share of public expenditure is accounted for by central government, though a decrease of that share by almost 5% to 68.59% at present has been noted. Bulgaria ranks second in terms of public investment as a percentage of GDP and prides itself on having low debt and deficit as a percentage of GDP, ranking second and eighth respectively in the EU. Looking at the 2016 budget priorities, welfare and social expenditure constitutes 35.2%, a long way ahead of the second priority – economic activities – which accounts for 16.6%. Health care, defence and education constitute 11.6%, 9.9% and 9.2% respectively, whereas infrastructure, construction and environment account for 7.2%. Public services, i.e. public administration, constitute 6.1%. Tourism, culture and religion are at the bottom of the priority list with 1.7%. Despite the low level of individual pensions, pensions account for the largest share of welfare and social expenditure – a share that is likely to further increase given the demographic situation in the country.

Bulgaria has a highly centralised public administration with 76.1% of the general government employment being within central government. However, the Ministry of Interior accounts for almost half of employment within the central administration. The territorial administration constitutes less than a quarter of general government employment, with local government (municipal and district administrations) accounting for 17.8% of government employment. In addition to public employment in the administrative structures, there is public employment in government-owned and/or subsidised sector, such as hospitals, schools, universities, etc. The exact figures of public employment in these sectors are not available.

Table 1: General government budget data

BULGARIA	2010	EU 28 Rank	2015	EU 28 Rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Total expenditures (in % GDP)	36.17	28	40.69	22	+4.52	+6
Central government share (%)	73.36	10	68.59	14	-4.77	-4
State government share (%)						
Local government share (%)	19.89		25.56			
Public investment (in % GDP)	4.59	11	6.57	2	+1.98	+9
Debt in % GDP	15.32	3	26.02	2	+10.70	+1
Deficit in % GDP	-3.1	6	-1.7	8	+1.4	-2

Sources: AMECO, Eurostat

Public sector employment*

BULGARIA	2015**
(1) General government employment*	137 693
• share of central government (%)	104 833 (76.1%)
• share of territorial government***	32 860 (23.9%)
- share of regional government (%)	930 (0.68%)
1 share of local (municipal and district) government (%)	24 495□ (17.8%)

- share of special territorial administrations (%)****	7 435 (5.4%)
(2) Public employment in social security roles	n/a
(3) Public employment in the army	n/a
(4) Public employment in the police (Ministry of Interior)	50 100
(5) Public employment in employment services	n/a
(6) Public employment in schools	n/a
(7) Public employment in universities	n/a
(8) Public employment in hospitals	n/a
(9) Public employment in core public administration Calculation: (1) minus (2-8)	82 593
(10) Core public administration employment in % of general government employment (9)/(1)	59.98%

Source: 2015 State Report on the State of the Public Administration

*According to the OECD, general government employment excludes public companies.

**As of December 2015.

*** Territorial government includes 28 regional, 265 municipal and 35 district administrations. Only the three largest cities – Sofia, Varna, Plovdiv – have district administrations.

**** A total of 145 special territorial administrations. A full list is available at:

https://iisda.government.bg/ras/adm_structures/special Terr_administrations

Central Administration break-down

Administrative structures	2015
Ministries	57 343
State agencies	2 737
State commission administrations	407
Executive agencies	12 651
Structures created by law*	23 569
Structures created by means of a regulation of the Council of Ministers	363
Structures reporting to parliament	7 290
Total	104 374

* A total of 43 structures. A full list is available at:

https://iisda.government.bg/ras/adm_structures/adm_structures_with_law

Ministries break-down

Ministry	2015
----------	------

Foreign Affairs	1 344
Interior	50 100
Health	279
Agriculture and Food	614
Economy	575
Energy	191
Tourism	100
Culture	147
Education and Science	460
Environment and Water	413
Defence	831
Justice	250
Regional Development and Construction	651
Transport, IT and Communications	334
Labour and Welfare	301
Finance	568
Youth and Sports	185
Total	57 343

2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

2.1 State system and multi-level governance

Bulgaria has a unitary system of government with three government levels – central, regional and local. The structure of the public administration reflects the three-level governance, with a clear distinction between central and territorial governance, the latter of which comprises both regional and local government structures. The central administration consists of the administration of the Council of Ministers (CoM), which includes the Chief Inspectorate, Ministries (currently 17 and varying with each government), State Agencies (currently 11 and varying over time), Executive Agencies (currently 29 and varying over time), the administrations of State Commissions (currently five and varying over time), as well as any administrative structures created by law (currently 43 and varying over time) or by means of a decision of the Council of Ministers (currently 19 and varying over time).

Territorial administrations have three levels – regional, municipal and district. Bulgaria has 28 regions and regional administrations which oversee policy coordination. Regional governors are political appointees and regional administrations report to the Council of Ministers. There are 265 municipalities and municipal administrations in the country, constituting the essence of local government. Local government in Bulgaria is based on the council model, with an elected mayor serving as the local chief executive and an elected council serving as the local legislative body. In addition, the three largest cities –

Sofia, Varna and Plovdiv – have district administrations: 19 in Sofia, five in Varna and six in Plovdiv. District administrations follow the same model of local government with elected mayors and councils. Lastly, there are six state public advisory commissions and 92 councils whose function is to provide policy expertise and advice to the Council of Ministers in specific areas, as well as 145 special territorial administrations overseeing national parks, water catchment areas, etc. which report to specific ministries or executive agencies.

According to the Constitution (Art. 105), the Council of Ministers (CoM) governs and implements internal and external policies in compliance with the Constitution and the laws. It also secures public order and national security, and governs the public administration and the armed forces. The Council of Ministers is the chief executive body overseeing all policy areas.

In order to pursue regional policy and regional development, the country is divided into regions. According to the Constitution (Art. 142), regional governments oversee the implementation of regional policies and coordinate national and local interests. Each region is governed by a Regional Governor, appointed by the Council of Ministers, who is responsible for implementing state policies within the region, protecting the national interest, the rule of law, public order and exerting administrative control. Regional Governors are supported by Regional administrations (Art. 143).

Municipalities are the basic administrative territorial units of self-governance. Citizens take part in municipal governance through the structures of local government as elected by them, through referendums or through general meetings of municipal residents (Art. 136). The municipal council is the body implementing self-governance at the municipal level. The council is elected for a four-year term (Art. 138). Executive power at municipal level is exerted by the Mayor, who is elected for a four-year term (Art. 139).

Policy-making in the various policy areas are carried out by the respective ministry, overseen by the CoM. The Regional Government coordinates national policy at regional level and serves as an interlocutor between national and regional interests. Local government assures the principle of self-government with greater autonomy over certain areas such as social policy, education, health care and transport. In addition, municipalities can engage in economic activity and levy taxes. This gives them partial financial autonomy and an opportunity for policy experimentation at local level.

Government level:	Legislation	Regulation	Funding	Provision
Central government (CG)	The Council of Ministers approves draft laws and has legislative initiative; Ministries draft laws and have legislative initiative	Issues decrees, ordinances, regulations and decisions	State budget; EU funds	Implements and applies national laws; Implements and applies acts deriving from EU and other international memberships; Exclusive provision in some policy areas, shared with

			regional and local government in some policy areas
Defence	Yes	Yes	In coordination with regional level
External affairs	Yes	Yes	Exclusive
Internal affairs including police	Yes	Yes	In coordination with regional and local levels
Justice including courts and prisons	The Minister of Justice chairs the Supreme Judicial Council (the governing body of the judiciary); Legislative initiative	Yes	Coordinates with judiciary branch; Provides training for judges; Governs prisons and penitentiaries
Finance / tax	Yes	Yes	Exclusive for the state budget and national monetary and fiscal policy
Economic affairs	Yes	Yes	National policy; Trade agreements
Environmental protection	Yes	Yes	In coordination with regional and local levels
Public utilities: water, electricity, transport	Regulatory Commission, an independent governing body, regulates the utility sector. The Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications has legislative initiative	Determines electricity, gas and water prices. Yes	No Yes

Social welfare	Yes	Yes	Social insurance model funded by state, employer and employee contributions	In coordination with regional and local levels
Health	Yes	Yes	Single-payer model funded by state, employer and employee contributions	In coordination with local government
Science and research including universities	Yes	Yes	Grants for state research institutions	Bulgarian Academy of Science and research-focused universities.
Education	Yes	Yes		In coordination with local government
Regional government Regional Governor General powers	No	Issues regulations for the regional administration and public services provision.	State budget	Regional administration; Policy coordination with CG; Administrative control
Defence	No	No		Coordination
Internal affairs including police	No	No	-	Coordination
Justice including courts and prisons	No	No		Monitors local governments
Finance / tax	No	No		Control and financial management
Economic affairs	No	No		Coordination
Environmental protection	No	No		Disaster management; Coordination
Public utilities: water, electricity, transport	No	Approves regional transport charts		Public transport and road safety

Social welfare	No	No	Coordination; Social dialogue
Local government Mayor and Municipal Council	Self-governance (municipal council is the local legislative body)	Issues acts, regulations and decisions at municipal level.	State budget; Municipality budget (local taxes and fees); EU funds
Internal affairs including police	No	Yes	Provision of local services in some policy areas; Cooperation with central and regional government in some policy areas
Finance / tax	Defines local taxes and fees	Yes	Cooperates with regional and central government
Economic affairs	Yes	Yes	Collects local taxes and fees
Environmental protection	Yes	Yes	Municipal companies and property
Public utilities: water, electricity, transport	Yes	Yes	Municipal programmes and initiatives
Social welfare	No	No	Own infrastructure
Health	Yes	Yes	Municipal social services in addition to central government
Education	Yes	Yes	Municipal hospitals and clinics
	Yes	Yes	Municipal childcare facilities, nursery schools and schools

Multi-level government in Bulgaria is well-defined by the relevant laws, with a clear distribution of powers and responsibilities. The communication and collaboration between the different levels is also well-established within the legal framework, as is the devolution of power from central government to local authorities. Municipalities have sufficient autonomy, including financial autonomy, to take initiatives and compete for resources. The biggest problem in multi-level governance is the uneven development of the country and the depopulation of many rural areas. The north-eastern part of Bulgaria, for example, is extremely backward in terms of economic development. This presents great challenges to the regional government, which is largely dependent on

funds and initiatives from central government. In turn, municipalities are unable to generate revenue from taxes or economic activities and are also largely dependent on funding from central government. Such a situation creates political as well as financial dependencies, thus undermining the very idea of self-governance. By contrast, rich municipalities like Sofia generate a lot of revenue from taxes and engage in a wide range of economic activities. They are able to attract labour and investments and to develop areas such as culture and tourism. Multi-governance functions very well in such cases, with the quality of services significantly improving in the last decade. Nevertheless, the large regional disparities result in an overall poor administrative capacity and service provision at local level in the majority of municipalities.

State structure (federal - unitary) (coordinated – fragmented)	Executive government (consensus – intermediate – majoritarian)	Minister-mandarin relations (separate – shared) (politicised – depoliticised)	Implementation (centralised - decentralised)
unitary, coordinated	consensus	separate, politicised	mostly centralised

Bulgaria's state structure is unified and coordinated, with a pronounced top-down character from the central to the regional level of government. There is more diversity in local government with some municipalities enjoying greater independence due to their greater financial autonomy. Government is consensus based due to a PR electoral system and the inability of any party to gain a majority of the seats in Parliament. An exception to this was the 2009-2013 minority government, which relied on parliamentary support from several other parliamentary represented parties, but included no other party representatives in the cabinet. There is a clear distinction between the political cabinet and the civil servants. However, frequent restructuring of the system allows ministers to dismiss politically disloyal civil servants and staff ministries with party loyalist or people from one's network. As a result, politicisation is high, especially among senior civil servants. Implementation is mostly centralised, flowing down from the respective ministry. Some decentralisation is observed at the municipal level, as municipalities are allowed to engage in economic activities and to apply for EU funds.

The central government, motivated by EU pressure, has been the key driver of administrative reform. Decentralisation has been a top priority for administrative reform in the 2000s, which has resulted in more effective self-government structures. Digitisation and service delivery improvement initiatives have significantly improved administrative services at local level and e-government has optimised and improved access to administrative services at local level. However, improvements have been uneven, with great disparities across regions and municipalities. Rich municipalities have been much better positioned to take the lead in administrative reform at local level and introduce their own improvements in service delivery. Poor municipalities, by contrast, have remained dependent on funding and directives from the central government, within a structure that is very much top-down. Nevertheless, there are some small-scale success stories as well with some municipalities being able to attract a large investor or

develop tourism, which has enabled them to escape the larger-scale regional trend. Improvements in infrastructure and road construction have been key to such success.

2.2 Structure of executive government (central government level)

The structure of government in Bulgaria changes with every new government (Zankina 2016). Article 48 of the Bulgarian constitution gives power to the Prime Minister to create, restructure and close ministries, government agencies, executive agencies and state commissions with the approval of parliament. In a parliamentary system, such approval is almost guaranteed as voting in parliament takes place along party lines (and coalition lines). This leads to the frequent and major restructuring of government with every new cabinet. There has been 'remarkable discontinuity' in the structure of government in the 1990s (Toshkov 2003), which remains the case today, though to a lesser extent. Some policy areas have enjoyed greater stability than others. The more stable ministries include the ministries for internal affairs (Interior), foreign affairs, defence and justice. Most of these ministries are under external scrutiny and control – the Ministry of Justice due to the EU monitoring mechanism; Finance again due to EU obligations, as well as the currency board under which Bulgaria has operated since 1997; and Defence and Foreign Affairs due to NATO membership and the need to integrate military structures. The ministries that have been subject to some instability include Transport, Agriculture, Culture and Environment. We see the inclusion of tourism in the Ministry of Culture, which has been growing in importance and has been moved between the culture and the economy ministries, and is currently a ministry in its own right. Similarly, Communications has been moved in and out of the transport ministry. The greatest instability is seen in the field of the economy. In this sector, we see the appearance and disappearance of ministries including the ministries for trade, industry, foreign economic relations and other fields. Tourism and energy are also frequently moved in and out of this ministry. We also see some areas that have made brief appearances such as Public Administration, European Integration and Emergency Situations, and are now being overseen at an agency level (Zankina 2016).

As of April 2017, Bulgaria has 17 ministries (see the list above) and two ministers without portfolio – one responsible for EU funds and one for the preparations for the Bulgarian EU presidency. This structure is subject to changes as a new parliament and government step into office. Ministries have a unified structure with a minister and deputy-ministers (in some cases experts, in some cases political appointees), a political cabinet and a secretary general (chief of staff). The lower level of the ministries is divided into common administration and specialised administration. In addition, every ministry has an inspectorate, internal auditors and financial controllers. Ministries oversee second level budget spending units such as agencies, centres, institutes, etc., as well as administrative units implementing specific policies and providing outsourced public services. Some ministries have more centralised structures than others and ministries have some autonomy to centralise and/or decentralise, though this is often a decision at the CoM level. For example, the health and agricultural ministries established territorial units in order to deconcentrate power. Overall, central government and the ministries are highly centralised. Ministers have management autonomy within their ministry as stipulated by the Administrative Act. They can change internal statutes and regulations, manage personnel and establish or abolish lower-level units.

In addition to ministries, there are councils, state agencies, executive agencies and state commissions. Councils are created by and report to the CoM. Their role is to secure

coordination and collaboration in a specific policy area between the central, regional and local government, as well as with other horizontally-positioned units. State agencies report to the CoM and usually cover an area in which there is no separate ministry. Executive agencies are in charge of implementing specific policies and regulations. State commissions exercise monitoring and control over specific policy areas. All of the above-mentioned units are responsible for coordinating policy implementation and securing the collaboration of the various levels of government. In terms of agencification, we can argue that units enjoy some degree of autonomy and ability to focus on policy implementation. However, the high degree of centralisation and high level of politicisation (discussed below) pose serious challenges to agencification and overall outcome and policy focus.

Every new government, i.e. the CoM, develops its own strategic programme, outlining objectives and priorities for the duration of its expected term (four years). Lower-level units are expected to align their objectives and priorities to the strategic programme. Consequently, agencies, commissions, committees, regional governments define early objectives and are expected to periodically report on their progress. Strategic management is therefore exercised by the CoM, which cascades priorities and objectives to lower units. Government control is also the responsibility of the CoM which is the main executive body. Administrative control over the different ministries and other central government bodies is delegated to the General Inspectorate, which reports to the CoM. Financial control is exercised by the Public Financial Inspection Agency (PFIA), created in 2006 and reporting to the Minister of Finance. The PFIA was a result of significant reform in the area of public finance control and management. The main objective of PFIA is to protect the public financial interest by carrying out ex post financial inspections and ensure adherence to state budget regulations. The PFIA can examine any and all financial and accounting activities or administrative units and employees in these units. The National Audit Office (NAO) exercises budgetary control. NAO is an independent entity that controls the implementation of the budget and management of public funds.

At the ministerial level, control is exerted by the minister, who bears the overall responsibility for the management, coordination and control of the specific policy area and policy implementation. The minister is aided by the political cabinet, which has control functions over policy implementation; the secretary general, responsible for administrative management, coordination and control; the ministry inspectorate, responsible for administrative control; internal audit, which exercises financial control with the help of financial controllers.

The CoM is the main decision-making body. The CoM has legislative initiative, and can issue decrees, regulations, decisions and ordinances. The CoM coordinates cooperation between the ministries, agencies and other central government units. The CoM establishes permanent consultative Councils, which are deliberative bodies that coordinate policy-making between the central government, local government institutions, NGOs and other civil associations. One such body is the trilateral commission, which brings together trade unions, employers' organisations and government bodies to negotiate agreements in a number of policy areas, including minimum wage, health-care provisions, etc.

The strength of the central government is very much a function of political factors and coalition politics, as well as the personality and leadership style of the prime minister. The 2014-2016 Borissov government, for example, was characterised by continuous internal conflicts due to the large number of coalition partners and their ideological

incompatibility. As a result, decision-making was slow and inefficient and the government digressed into silo structures with some ministries moving ahead with reform efforts and programme priorities, while others were stuck in an impasse. Moreover, coordination at the CoM level was poor which led to various ministers pulling in different directions. By contrast, the first Borissov cabinet (2009-2013), which was a minority one-party government, was characterised by horizontal cooperation and a more unified overall policy direction. However, lack of communication between institutions was assessed as a substantial problem by Bulgaria (Report on Centres of Government in the EU Member States, 2015).

The Bulgarian public administration follows the traditional administrative model of a hierarchically-based and operating entity. Although administrative reform has introduced some elements of New Public Management in some units, the overall *modus operandi* is based on a strictly hierarchical principle. Internal regulations are the main governing principle of administrative units. Every unit has its own handbook of Regulations for Organisation and Work, which defines the structure, hierarchy, interdependencies, main functions and operation procedures of the unit. In some specialised administrations, i.e. units responsible for managing EU funds, there are additional procedural handbooks that supplement the internal regulations.

Management of public employees is carried out by the Secretary-General of the corresponding Administration. Day-to-day management is exercised through the distribution of tasks with set deadlines. Performance management and performance-related pay were introduced in 2002, and a new remuneration model for civil servants was adopted in 2012. A new appraisal model linked performance to individual goals as well as organisation goals, and it included self-evaluation and peer review (Structure of the Civil and Public Services of the EU Member States, 2013). However, the amount of performance-related pay fails to motivate civil servants and is often a source of tension. Overall, performance management is poorly applied and bureaucratic control exists predominantly on paper. Ex-ante control is well-developed in some areas, such as public procurement. All government entities are obliged to submit procurement tender documentation to the Public Procurement Agency. Ex-post control is exercised by the units in charge of financial control such as the PFIA and the NAO.

The Chief Inspectorate and the inspectorates in each ministry are the main units exercising internal administrative control. In addition to the regular monitoring exercised by the NAO, there are regular internal audits. The Ombudsman is an institution that has grown in terms of visibility and importance. However, the Ombudsman has no control functions. They can request an investigation, but cannot carry out their own examination and investigation. They can exercise public pressure, but cannot sanction administrative units. The Ombudsman serves primarily as a channel for voicing citizen's concerns in regard to the quality of administrative services and operations.

Inspectorates have the following functions:

- Controlling structures, activities and processes;
- Assessing corruption-related matters;
- Checking for wrongdoing and inefficient work;
- Checking for compliance with the legislation and regulations;
- Carrying out disciplinary proceedings and proposing sanctions for administrative violations;
- Checking for conflicts of interests;

- Alerting the Prosecutor's office in the event of discovering breaches of the law.

Internal audits are carried out in line with the Internal Audit as set out in the Public Sector Act, and have the following functions:

- Planning and carrying out financial audits;
- Informing the minister on the status of the audited systems for financial management and control;
- Assessing the risk management process;
- Checking and assessing compliance with legislation, regulations and contracts, work processes and activity efficiency;
- Offering consultancy to the minister and making recommendations for improvement.

There is a specialised agency that audits EU funds. The 'Audit of EU Funds' Executive Agency implements audit activities in compliance with the internationally adopted audit standards and provides independent and objective assessment regarding:

- The effectiveness of the systems for financial management and control of the EU funds;
- The reliability of the expenditure declarations submitted to the European Commission and consequently a reasonable assurance that the main transactions are legal and regular.

Following the closure of the Ministry of Public Administration and Reform in 2009, reform in the public administration is overseen by a consultative council at the CoM. That council, comprising a dozen employees, is ill-equipped to carry out comprehensive reform measures. It can coordinate activities across units, given that the various units take their own initiatives. Its functions are largely focused on annual reporting and drafting of proposals:

- Reviewing the structure, organisation and work of the state administration and proposing policies for its improvement;
- Submitting to the Council of Ministers proposals for the establishment, transformation or closure of administrative structures;
- Interacting with executive power entities and proposing measures for administrative improvement;
- Proposing the reduction or closure of activities or functions extrinsic to the administration;
- Proposing legislative amendments;
- Coordinating the policies for administrative services;
- Coordinating the implementation in Bulgaria of the global initiative 'Partnership for open governance' in Bulgaria.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

The Bulgarian civil service is characterised as belonging to the East European tradition (Kullmann and Wollmann 2014), the South-Eastern tradition (Demmke and Moilanen 2010) and the Balkan tradition (Eurostat Academic Study 2010). These various classifications emphasise two main features of the Bulgarian civil service – its Ottoman legacy that translates into inefficiency and a high level of corruption, and its communist legacy that translates into highly centralised system, strong control of the former nomenklatura and a great degree of politicisation. The Bulgarian civil service represents

a mixed system of unified and departmental recruitment with an overall decentralised character and different assessment methods.

HR system (Career vs position based)	Employment status (civil servant as standard; dual; employee as standard)	Differences between civil servants and public employees (high, medium, low)	Turnover (high, medium, low)
Mixed	Dual	High	High

3.1 Status and categories of public employees

The Civil Service Act (1999) established the framework for a professional, merit-based system. There are two types of employee in the public administration – civil servants and public employees. According to the Act, a civil servant is a person who is permanently appointed to a paid position in the state administration, and supports the state governing body in the implementation of its authority. The rest of the employees in the public sector are not civil servants and are covered by the general Labour Code. The Bulgarian civil service has two career tracks (management and expert). Civil servants are divided in two categories – junior and senior, with five levels each. The senior levels are (from highest to lowest): Secretary-General, Director-General, Director, Head of Department and Head of Unit.

As of December 2015, 68.1% of public administration employees are civil servants protected under the Civil Service Act. Of those with the status of civil servants, 2 568 are in the top senior level positions, 5 722 in management positions and 36 162 in expert positions. Public employees not covered by the Civil Service Act are divided as follows: 245 in political cabinets, 305 in management positions, 5 862 in expert positions with analytical and control functions, 18 876 in expert positions with assisting roles, 4 353 in technical positions, and 3 994 with a status equivalent to that of a public employee according to Art.19 of the Administrative Act. The share of public employees, as opposed to civil servants, is higher in the territorial administrations compared to the central administration. For example, 32 municipal administrations do not have senior level civil servants; 62 municipal administrations do not have management level civil servants.

All civil servants are supposed to be appointed following an open competition. In reality, there are many loops to bypass the process as outlined below. Junior civil servants are appointed following a centralised exam that is organised by the Institute for Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI) – an agency established in 2000 with the Council of Ministers that is also responsible for all civil servant training. Those who pass the exam can then be appointed at any junior level position in any of the governmental structures. In addition, individual ministries, agencies, and other governmental organisations carry out their own open competitions for specific positions both at the junior and senior levels. Senior level positions are filled only through this departmental approach. This allows greater political control over appointments, including over the specific internal commission, which is to hold the competition. Furthermore, there are specific appointments that do not require an exam or an open competition, such as reappointment in the same administrative unit, appointment in a newly created administrative unit until an open competition is organised, a permanent or temporary transfer to another administrative unit, etc. Hiring procedures thus allow for some political control, particularly in the case of senior civil servants. Reorganisation and the creation of new units allows for the greatest degree of political control, as civil servants could be initially hired without an open competition. Civil servants up to the level of secretary general are not political appointees, yet the above-mentioned loopholes in the system allow for politicisation, which remains a major problem in the Bulgarian civil service (Zankina 2016).

The Civil Service Act has been amended several times. Amendments made in 2006 by the BSP introduced a new category of senior civil servant which allows a distinction between administrative and political appointments, increased funds for civil service training, improvements to the competitive hiring process, mobility of civil servants across units, the introduction of part-time work and a new regulation on job descriptions. Amendments made in 2010 by GERB expanded the category of civil servants to include additional government units (including the police in the category of civil servants) and introduced a new remuneration model. Civil service training courses have been held by the Institute for Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI). A strategy for civil servants' training was adopted in 2002 and amended in 2006. Performance evaluation regulations were introduced in 2002.

There are two avenues for the career development of civil servants: promotion in rank and promotion in position. Promotion in rank can take place following a positive performance evaluation. Promotion in position can happen either after success in a competition for a higher-level position or after reappointment in compliance with specific regulations and criteria (education, experience, skills, knowledge, taking special tests, etc.).

Civil servants have a long list of obligations and rights, in line with best practices. Among those are the obligation to carry out duties precisely, in good faith, impartially and in compliance with the job description; to be polite with citizens, to inform them duly of their rights and to protect their interests; to be bound by confidentiality and to protect confidential information and state secrets; to declare financial and other assets; and to behave publicly in a way that does not erode the prestige of the civil service. Rights include: to be paid and have paid vacation; to have career development opportunities; to be promoted; to have social security (civil servants in Bulgaria do not make social security and health-care contributions, but are entitled to those benefits); and to work in a safe and healthy environment. Civil servants have the right to form trade unions and be members of trade unions. With the exception of some categories such as the police, they also have the right to strike. The core principles of civil service include abiding by the law, loyalty, accountability, stability, political impartiality and hierarchical subordination. Civil servants are protected against unregulated and politically-motivated dismissal. They are bound by the Conflict of Interest Act.

Key PA Values	Managerial vs Procedural (Managerial. Mixed, Procedural)	Red tape (regulatory density) (very high to very low)	Discretion/autonomy (high, low, medium)
Rule of law Loyalty Accountability Stability Political impartiality Hierarchical subordination	Procedural	High	Low

3.2 Civil service regulation at central government level

The Civil Service is regulated by the Administrative Act (1998) and the Civil Service Act (1999) both of which have been amended numerous times. The largest and most significant reform initiative was the Operational Programme 'Administrative Capacity' 2007 – 2013 (OPAC), Priority Axis II – Human Resource Management. OPAC has five priority areas:

- Modern human resource management in the state (improving recruitment and human resources management systems, including motivation, work placement opportunities, certification of public servants' skills and mechanisms for mobility).

- Competent and effective state administration (training programmes and training for public servants of the central, district and municipal administrations).
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations in policymaking (training for organisational development, strategic planning, etc.).
- Competent judicial system and effective human resource management (introducing new human resources management systems and the provision of training to magistrates and administrative staff).
- Transnational and interregional cooperation (projects for exchange of good practices in the field of human resources management.)

Other relevant initiatives in administrative reform include

- Public administration development strategy 2014 – 2020;
- E-governance development strategy 2014 – 2020;
- Human resources management in the public administration strategy 2006 – 2013;

Although civil service reform has made great progress, mostly due to the OPAC programme, serious problems remain. The salary gap between the public and private sector continues to be very large, which results in high turnover and lack of expertise and continuity. Evaluation mechanisms have been criticised for failing to provide an objective assessment of performance and create incentives for improved performance. Training has also been far from optimal, with discretionary selection of people for the more attractive programmes. Overall, civil service reform in Bulgaria has a mixed record. Senior positions remain highly politicised. Restructuring of ministries and state agencies continues to be used for political ends, bypassing the legal protection of civil servants (Zankina 2016). Performance-related pay (vaguely regulated by the law) has been used to reward political loyalty rather than merit. In comparative perspective to Central and Eastern Europe, civil service reform in Bulgaria can be characterised as belated, externally-driven, and with a poor implementation record.

3.3 Key characteristics of the central government HR System

HR management is carried out by HR departments in each unit and they belong to the general, as opposed to the specialised, administration in ministries and other administrative units. As such, HR departments are part of the centralised administrative structure and use a unified HR management system. Their core functions include:

- Selection and appointment of the personnel;
- Personal files database management;
- Management of all documentation related to appointments, dismissal, remuneration, leave, illness, length of service, etc.;
- Maintaining the e-system for HR management;
- Maintaining job descriptions and positions;
- Preparation of professional development plans;
- Support of training and professional development activities;
- Support of staff evaluation process.

The training of civil servant is centralised and organised by the Institute for Public Administration. Each administration presents a training plan for its civil servants each year. Training is compulsory at the beginning of public service and for civil servants appointed to managerial positions for the first time. Senior civil servants must successfully complete a training programme organised by the Public Administration Institute at least once a year.

Remuneration is determined by the Internal Regulations of the particular administration and varies across units. However, the lowest level is set by the state budget and no ministry can pay wages lower than those determined in the budget. Aside from that, there is a great degree of variation. For example, the wage for a position in the Ministry of Finance will be much higher than the equivalent position in the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition to the basic salary, civil servants are entitled to performance-related pay which can be a maximum of 15%, with various additions for overtime, holidays, etc. Through membership of trade unions, civil servants have some ability to negotiate wages and overall working conditions. There are two main trade unions in the country – the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions and the Confederation of Labour Podkrepa. The trade unions take part in the determination of wages, working conditions, holidays, etc., for public employees. Around 25-40% of civil servants are members of a union. Negotiations take place within the tripartite National Council, which consists of two representatives of the Council of Ministers, two representatives of the trade unions and two representatives of the employer. It is presided over by the Deputy Prime Minister. The results of collective bargaining must be implemented, and they therefore take the form of a legal text or political agreement. There are no differences in the institutional framework between employment relations in the public and private sectors, but civil servants do not pay social security and health-care contributions. Wages in the public sector remain significantly lower than in the private sector, which is one of the most important reasons for the high level of corruption.

Coherence between different government levels (high, medium, low)	Remuneration level vs private sector (much higher, higher, same, lower, much lower)	Formal politicisation through appointments (high, medium, low)	Functional politicisation (high, medium, low)
Medium	Much lower	High	High

Politicisation has been a recurring issue in the Bulgarian public sector since its early establishment in the late nineteenth century. While there is no index of politicisation that covers Bulgaria, some indicators do exist. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators examine a number of aspects such as government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and control of corruption that can be related to politicisation (World Bank 2012). We have noticed some improvement in government effectiveness following the adoption of the public administration and civil service laws, followed by a drop in values in the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators during the 2005–2009 socialist-led coalition. At the same time, there has been a noticeable increase in regulatory quality following the adoption of these laws. Control of corruption has similarly improved since 1998 with a slight decline again during the 2005–2009 government. If we compare Bulgaria to Hungary, where politicisation has been proved to be high (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012), we notice much lower values in the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators in the Bulgarian case for all three indicators, which can lead us to think that politicisation in Bulgaria is on a much larger scale than in Hungary.

Another proxy indicator of politicisation is the recently compiled patronage index. Party patronage in Bulgaria is characterised as 'pervasive' with a score of 0.42 (following the party patronage index developed by Kopecký, Mair, and Spirova 2012). Hungary and Germany have similar scores on that index, but in the case of Germany, patronage is of different type – control-driven rather than reward-driven (more on this below). By contrast, party patronage in Bulgaria is to a large extent reward-driven and is focused

mostly within the ministries (Spirova 2012, 58). According to Spirova, patronage is widely practiced by Bulgarian parties across the board and is an important organisational resource for those parties. We can conclude that despite continued EU monitoring and ongoing reforms, politicisation remains a major problem in the Bulgarian public administration.

4 POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

4.1 Policy-making, coordination and implementation

Bulgaria is a unitary state with a high degree of centralisation. Executive government is consensual with weak and unstable coalitions and a lot of bargaining going on behind closed doors. Coordination and fragmentation depends on the quality of the coalition government. During the 2009-2013 Borissov minority government, coordination was high and fragmentation was low. Since then, there have been a series of unstable coalitions resulting in a divided Council of Ministers and leading to poor coordination and high fragmentation. Policy implementation is shared among the central, regional, and local governments. At the same time, ministries have strictly divided functions and budgets.

Politicisation is high at all levels with some policy areas being more politicised than others. There are strong links between business and politics, especially in the energy sector. At the same time, trade unions are an important factor with high bargaining power engaged in a regularised consultation with government typical for a corporate model. Citizen participation outside the two largest trade unions is much lower, but has been increasing in recent years. There are open consultations that engage a growing number of NGOs in various policy areas.

Distribution of powers	Coordination quality (high, medium, low)	Fragmentation (high, medium, low)
Shared	Low when weak coalition government, high when stable coalition government, recently mostly low	High when weak coalition government, low when stable coalition government, recently mostly high

Party patronage is of the reward type with a greater reliance on party loyalists than on experts. A high degree of politicisation contributes to high turnover in ministries and reliance on political cabinets rather than administrators. External experts are frequently used, but again based on their political loyalty. Every party has its own cohort of experts who move in and out of government and who provide advice as appointed advisors or subcontracted entities. Frequent changes in government give rise to frequent restructuring and a lack of stability in administrative structures. The NATO and EU memberships have greatly contributed to a much high policy consistency and sustainability, especially in areas closely linked to these memberships – external affairs and finance for example. Public service bargaining is primarily reward-based, with frequent changes in loyalties and a great degree of opportunism.

Sources of policy advice (mandarins, cabinets, external experts)	Administrative autonomy (high – medium – low)	Patronage & politicisation (formal, functional) (merit – patronage) (high – medium – low)	Public service bargaining (Agency – Trustee)	Stability (high – low – no turnover after elections)
Mixed, mostly cabinets and external experts	Low	Patronage, formal and functional politicisation		High turnover

4.2 Administrative tradition and culture

The administrative tradition in Bulgaria is defined by the Ottoman and the communist legacies. Bulgaria falls within the category of *Rechtsstaat* (state based on justice and integrity) administrative culture. Yet, the dichotomy of *Rechtsstaat* vs public interest is ill-equipped for the post-communist contexts and countries. Such countries have the legacy of an omnipresent and omnipowerful state, rotten from within with corruption and clientelistic networks. Therefore, while the principle of government organisation and functioning is that of a *Rechtsstaat*, in practice government power is constrained by corruption and inefficiency. The Bulgarian state provides a wide array of social welfare provisions typical of a social democracy. While benefits are broad and encompass large groups of the population, they are very low in terms of standard of living and purchasing power. Bulgaria exhibits a fairly closed yet large-scale administrative culture. Rule evasion is widespread and procedural logic is pervasive, with a lot of red tape. Reform in public administration has shown some improvements in terms of reducing red tape, decentralising, and introducing greater openness and transparency. Nevertheless, legacies and cultural traditions counter such efforts and progress is slow.

Administrative culture <i>Rechtsstaat</i> (state based on justice and integrity), public interest	Welfare state (liberal, conservative, social-democratic)	Public sector openness (open, medium, closed)
Ill-functioning <i>Rechtsstaat</i>	Social-democratic	medium

Bulgaria shows a very high value and ranking in terms of Power Distance which indicates a hierarchical culture and can be linked to little use of whistle-blower mechanisms and the ability to challenge superiors. Bulgaria has a relatively ranking on the individualism scale, which supports the notion of a conformist mentality and a lack of respect for individual success, making it hard to establish a merit-based system. Indulgence is also very low, pointing to a tendency to blame others for one's own failure and to view oneself as having little control over one's environment; this undermines efforts to establish a performance-based culture. Masculinity and uncertainty avoidance rank around the average, indicating a lack of directness, avoidance of conflict and mixed feelings about the rule of law. There is a very strong focus on the longer term, indicating flexibility and adaptability.

Hofstede's indicators paint the kind of picture that would be expected of a post-communist country with a troubled and prolonged transition to democracy. We see indications of a culture of dependence on a paternalistic state, a lack of initiative, a fear of confrontation, and a hierarchical mentality, coupled with flexibility and adaptability,

often leading to opportunism and frequent changes of political loyalties. This picture indicates that there are some persistent legacies that underline problems with corruption, rule of law, and the very idea of meritocracy. It also explains the importance of social policy and its large share of budget expenditure. The population expects the state to deliver and is accepting of what is delivered regardless of the quality. There is therefore little stimulus for accountability to the population. There is little bottom-up initiative to improve or innovate, in line with the overall hierarchical mentality. Such a culture supports a traditional top-down administrative culture rather than new public management models.

Hofstede national culture dimensions		
Dimension	Value	Average EU28
Power Distance	70	52
Individualism/Collectivism	30	57
Masculinity/Femininity	40	44
Uncertainty Avoidance	85	70
Long-term Orientation	69	57
Indulgence/Self-restraint	16	44

Sources: Geert Hofstede's national culture dimensions, <https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>.¹

Political economy (liberal – coordinated)	Interest intermediation (corporatist – pluralistic)	Citizen participation (strong – weak)	Policy style
Fluctuating depending on the ruling party ideology; generally moving away from highly coordinated to more liberal	Corporatist	Weak, but growing in recent years	Lack of continuity and change of direction with change in government

Policy-making has improved compared to the 1990s, largely due to NATO and EU memberships that place constraints on domestic policy choice in a number of areas. Nevertheless, we see a fluctuation between a liberal and a coordinated economy every time the social democrats (formerly the communist party) move in and out of power. Similarly, the foreign trade and foreign policy focus shifts between pro-Russian and pro-EU, with social democrats and nationalists strongly supporting a pro-Russian view. There is growing citizen participation, especially through NGO input and participation in public consultations. However, intermediation still follows a primarily corporatist model through the two large trade unions and the trilateral commission.

¹ Interpretation: power distance (high value = higher acceptance of hierarchy and unequal distribution of power); individualism (high value = stronger individualist culture); masculinity (high value = higher masculinity of society); long-term orientation (high value = stronger long-term orientation); indulgence (high value = indulgence)

5 GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE

Bulgaria performs significantly below the EU average on the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators and ranks around the average among countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of policy formulation, the implementation of policy and the credibility of public servants' commitment to such policies are considerably below the EU average. In addition, Bulgaria's scores have remained virtually unchanged since 2006 (OECD 2014).

5.1 Transparency and accountability

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Access to government information (1-10)	7.00	15	7.00	16	0.00	-1
	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Transparency of government (0-100)	38.29	19	33.57	24	-4.72	-5
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Voice and accountability (-2.5,+2.5)	0.52	26	0.39	28	-0.13	-2
Control of corruption (-2.5,+2.5)	-0.21	27	-0.31	28	-0.10	-1
TI perception of corruption (0-100)	36.00	27	41.00	28	+5.00	-1
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Gallup perception of corruption (%)	79.00	20	86.00	24	+7.00	-4

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, European Commission, World Bank, Transparency International, Gallup World Poll.

Note: The ranking of the Gallup perception of corruption is based on 27 countries, and on the 2009 values for Estonia and Latvia.

Corruption has been a persistent and serious problem in Bulgaria and has been a key focus of government policy and initiatives. Most government initiatives in the past decade have been focused on or related to anti-corruption efforts, transparency and accountability. Despite that fact, the results of the counter-corruption efforts have been dubious at best. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Bulgaria scores 41 out of 100, ranking 69 out of 168. Control of corruption is in the 52% percentile rank and the Open Budget Index gives Bulgaria a score of 56 (Transparency International). More importantly, control of corruption has not improved; in fact, it declined in recent years. Bulgaria continues to rank highest in the EU in terms of perceived level of corruption, and corruption is considered the main obstacle to doing business in the country. As is evident from the table above, Bulgaria ranks bottom of the EU countries in TI perception of corruption, control of corruption, and voice and accountability. The Gallup index of corruption gives Bulgaria a slightly better ranking and Bulgaria ranks much better in terms of access to information due to progress in the implementation of e-government. Most importantly, however, all indicators show a decline in performance and ranking in recent years. Such rankings are accurate and do not exaggerate the situation in any way. Despite the intensified rhetoric and growing number of anti-corruption policies, no officials have been convicted in court of corrupt practices, and the latest attempt to pass a new anti-corruption law was blocked in parliament. Corruption remains a persistent problem in Bulgaria at all levels of government with no prospects for improvement.

5.2 Civil service system and HRM

Indicator	Value 2012	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Impartiality (1-7)	4.37	28	4.26	26	-0.11	+2
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU26 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Professionalism (1-7)	3.37	25	2.98	26	-0.39	-1
Closedness (1-7)	5.03	18	4.82	16	-0.21	+2

Sources: Quality of Government Institute (Gothenburg).

Bulgaria shows poor performance in civil service rankings as well, ranking bottom for professionalism and impartiality. Politicisation is high and in fact has been increasing in recent years. Civil servants' motivation levels remain low despite the introduction of performance-related pay and a new remuneration model. The pay gap between the public and private sectors remains large and the public sector has failed to attract highly competent employees. There has been some improvement in introducing more objective and competition-based recruitment and attestation of civil servants. However, the skills and motivation levels of civil servants are significantly lower than in the private sector, politicisation and nepotism are high, and the overall efficiency of civil servants is poor.

5.3 Service delivery and digitisation

Indicator	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
E-government users (%)	8.47	26	9.11	9	+0.64	+17
Pre-filled forms (%)	21.67	23	22.67	21	+1.00	+2
Online service completion (%)	62.71	21	64.43	23	+1.72	-2
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Online services (0-1)	0.41	20	0.57	24	+0.16	-4
	Value 2013	EU27 rank				
Barriers to public sector innovation (%)	43.35	3				
			Value 2015	EU28 rank		
Services to businesses (%)			48.00	15		
	Value 2011	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Ease of Doing business (0-100)	68.07	19	73.51	20	+5.44	-1

Sources: European Commission Digital Economy and Society Index UN e-government Index, EU Scoreboard Public innovation, Eurobarometer no. 417, World Bank ease of doing business index.

Improving the quality of services and introducing e-government has been a key priority in public administration reform for almost two decades. Progress in this area has been much greater than in other areas. Service delivery has significantly improved in the past decade, particularly in terms of ease of access, and the growing expansion of e-government has contributed both to improved service delivery and greater transparency. Services to business have also improved with a reduced length of time for setting up a business or obtaining permits. As is evidenced by the table, most of this progress is due to the expansion of e-government and the increased use of e-government services by citizens and businesses. The expectation is that digitisation could also improve transparency and therefore lead to reduced corruption, which is not evident at present. Nevertheless, public sector information has become widely available and is the area in which Bulgaria shows its highest ranking.

5.4 Organisation and management of government

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Strategic planning capacity (1-10)	5.00	15	5.00	16	0.00	-1
Interministerial coordination (1-10)	4.83	25	4.50	26	-0.33	-1
SGI Implementation capacity (1-10)	5.29	22	5.00	23	-0.29	-1
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU27 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
QOG Implementation capacity (1-7)	4.68	18	5.46	6	+0.78	+12

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Quality of Government Institute (Gothenburg).

The key problem in the organisation and management of government has been the high level of institutional instability and frequent restructuring of government units. Institutional instability contributes to a fragmented institutional framework, characterised by a lack of coordinated and integrated operational structures. This harms the ability to establish standard operating procedures and routines and to foster a culture of cooperation. Political factors also play a major role in the government's capacity for coordination and cooperation. Coalition politics in recent years have resulted in silo structures with each ministry belonging to a specific party, high turnover of personnel with every new government, and compartmentalisation of government activities. This is corroborated by the low ranking in inter-ministerial capacity. SGI implementation capacity ranks slightly better and strategic planning capacity ranks average. This can be explained by the relative success of recent governments to absorb EU funds and complete EU-funded projects. In other words, strategic planning and implementation monitoring are outsourced to some extent to specially created structures due to their specific EU-related character, which shows a positive result.

The QOG implementation capacity ranking is unusually high, which may be a function of methodology used for this indicator, i.e. expert surveys. My interviews with civil servants indicated a lot of excitement and enthusiasm regarding work on European projects and cooperation with EU structures. For some long term employees, this enthusiasm is coupled with a comparison with the administration at the beginning of the transition. Undoubtedly, overall government capacity and implementation capacity has significantly improved compared to the 1990s. At the same time, comparison with the EU-28 shows that Bulgaria has still a long way to go.

5.5 Policy-making, coordination and regulation

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Societal consultation (1-10)	5.00	15	5.00	17	0.00	-2
Use of evidence based instruments (1-10)	3.67	20	4.33	17	+0.66	+3
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Regulatory quality (-2.5,+2.5)	0.65	25	0.55	26	-0.10	-1
Rule of law (-2.5,+2.5)	-0.10	28	-0.12	28	-0.02	0

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, World Bank.

Bulgaria has serious and persistent problems with regulatory quality and the rule of law, which have resulting in a fall rather than a rise in ranking despite the continuous focus on corruption and judicial reform. Although Bulgaria has an excellent record in transposing EU legislation and a large volume of strategies adopted in every area, implementation is seriously lagging. The rankings accurately reflect the reality. While in many cases laws and regulations are in place, they are being bypassed or not applied. Bulgaria ranks much better in societal consultation. This is due to the fact that Bulgaria has inherited a very strong labour union tradition from its communist past and has a

corporate model of interest group-government relations. The trilateral commission is the main venue for consultation of societal stakeholders. The commission meets regularly and every government makes great efforts to reach an agreement via this forum. Bulgaria also ranks favourably in the use of evidence-based instruments, which is a result of recent reforms in public administration and strict requirements for annual reporting. However, even when such evidence produces good-quality policies, implementation and enforcing compliance with laws and regulations are lagging behind.

5.6 Overall government performance

Indicator	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Trust in government (%)	43.00	8	24.00	19	-19.00	-11
	Value 2011	EU27 rank				
Improvement of PA over last 5 years (%)	9.00	10				
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Public sector performance (1-7)	3.01	28	3.08	28	+0.07	0
Government effectiveness (-2.5,+2.5)	0.11	27	0.22	27	+0.11	0

Sources: Eurobarometer 85, Eurobarometer 370, World Bank, World Economic Forum.

Overall government performance is consistently below the EU average according to almost all indicators. There has been a sharp decline in the overall performance indicator in recent years and most indicators similarly show a decline in performance. Bulgaria ranks bottom in government effectiveness and public sector performance. E-government and digitisation represent the area in which Bulgaria ranks best. This is an area that could address the persistent problems of transparency, corruption and regulatory quality. At the same time, there is great political resistance to reform of the judiciary and efforts to improve the rule of law. Given the prolonged political instability in the country, such indicators are not likely to improve.

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