Public administration characteristics and performance in EU28:

Ireland

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1. SIZE OF GOVERNMENT

The figures for the size of the Irish public sector as a share of GDP, as displayed in the table below, have to be treated with some caution, given the limitations of using GDP in the case of Ireland (Fitzgerald, 2015). In particular, the figure for 2010 of 65.27 per cent is way out of line with figures for other years, where it is consistently below the EU average. The particularly large percentage figure in 2010 is mostly explained by the impact on government expenditure of specific government support to banks during the financial crisis, in the form of capital injections.

Ireland has a relatively low level of public spending compared to many other European countries. Apart from the GDP percentage, data on government expenditure per head of population is consistently below the EU28 average (Boyle, 2016a). Given the relatively young age profile of Ireland and limited spending on defence, amongst other matters, this is not an unexpected finding. The very centralised nature of spending is illustrated by the fact that central government share of expenditure, at around 96 per cent, is the second highest in Europe.

Table: General government budget data

IRELAND	2010	*EU 28 Rank*	2015	*EU 28 Rank*	Δ Value	*Δ Rank*
Total expenditures (in % GDP)	65.27	*1*	29.44	*28*	-35.83	*-27*
Central government share (%)	96.70	*2*	96.23	*2*	-0.47	*0*
State government share (%)						
Local government share (%)	8.27		7.77			
Public investment (in % GDP)	3.33	*21*	1.70	*28*	-1.63	*-7*
Debt in % GDP	86.30	*17*	78.62	*24*	-7.68	*-7*
Deficit in % GDP	-32.1	*18*	-1.9	*8*	+30.2	*+10*

Sources: AMECO, Eurostat

There was a slight growth in public sector employment as a percentage of the total labour force between 2005 and 2011 (see table below) largely due to the effects of the recession being harder in terms of employment on the private sector than on the public sector (though it affected both). The share has remained relatively steady since 2011. The central government share of general government employment, at 90 per cent, is the highest in Europe.

Table: Public sector employment*

IRELAND	2005	*OECD EU18 rank*	2011	*OECD EU12 rank*	Δ Value
Total public sector employment in % of total labour force	17.10	*15*	18.30	*9*	+1.20
	2005	*OECD EU21 rank*	2011	*OECD EU19 rank*	Δ Value
General government employment in % of total labour force	14.90	*10*	16.40	*9*	+1.50
			2011	*OECD EU17 rank*	
Central government share of general government employment			90.22	*1*	

Sources: OECD- Government at a Glance

According to the OECD, public sector employment includes public corporations, while general government employment excludes public corporations.

Two out of every three people employed in the public sector in Ireland work in either health or education. Compared to the mid-2000s, employment levels in all sectors bar education have fallen. From its peak in 2008, the number of people employed in the public sector dropped by about 10 per cent to 2013, through a combination of an embargo on replacement and recruitment of staff, incentivised early retirement (available to staff over 50 years), and the use of employment control frameworks in respect of each organisation, all tightly controlled and coordinated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Since 2013, numbers have been rising again slowly. In 2015, public employment in the core public administration (civil service) accounted for 12.2 per cent of general government employment.

IRELAND[1]	2015
(1) General government employment (in mio.)*	.298
thereby share of central government (%)	91
thereby share of state/regional government (%)	
thereby share of local government (%)	9
(2) Public employment in health (in mio.)	.104
(3) Public employment in education (in mio.)	.096
(4) Public employment in local authorities(in mio.)	.027
(5) Public employment in justice (in mio.)	.013
(6) Public employment in defence (in mio.)	.010
(7) Public employment in non-commercial state agencies (in mio.)	.012
(9) Public employment in civil service (in mio.) calculated (1) minus (2)-(9)	.036
(10) Core public administration employment in % of general government employment (10)/(1)	12.2

Sources: *National statistics*
According to the OECD, general government employment excludes public corporations.

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[1] Please note, the table has been adapted from that requested, as the data is not available to provide the information in the form requested.

2. SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

2.1. State system and multi-level governance

2.1.1. The state/government system

Ireland has a written constitution, which came into operation in 1937. The President of Ireland is the head of state. But despite the fact that the President has a popular democratic mandate, his role is largely symbolic and relatively powerless compared to that of directly elected heads of state elsewhere. The Irish parliament has two chambers: Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. Dáil Éireann is the most important political institution in the state. Seanad Éireann (the Senate) has limited functions mainly concerned with debating and amending legislation, and deliberating on motions. The government, elected by Dáil Éireann is granted executive power.

Apart from the Dáil and the President, local authorities are the only other entities directly elected by the people in the state. Ireland has 31 city and county councils. Compared to systems of local government in other EU states, the Irish system is one of the most centralised. Ireland also has three non-elected regional assemblies, whose main function is to draw up regional spatial and economic strategies. Each regional assembly is composed of councillors from the county and city councils operating in the region. There is no regional administration as such, though the assemblies have some administrative support.

2.1.2. The distribution of powers between different levels of government

Most of the main public services such as policing, education, water services and health are controlled and largely administered by central government (see table below). The main local government functions include housing and building, local roads, planning and development, environmental protection and recreation and amenity. In recent times, local government has also been given more of a coordinating role in local economic and community development.

The civil service administers a wide range of policy areas, from health to foreign policy, education, agriculture and defence. The civil service assists members of the government in making policy and carries out policy. Increasingly in recent years it has also been tasked with other duties, such as regulating the distribution of resources

Government level:	Legislation	Regulation	Funding	Provision
Central government	Defence; External Affairs; Internal Affairs; Justice; Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities; Social welfare; Health; Science and research, Education	Defence; External Affairs; Internal Affairs; Justice; Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities; Social welfare; Health; Science and research;	Defence; External Affairs; Internal Affairs; Justice; Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities; Social welfare; Health; Science and research;	Defence; External Affairs; Internal Affairs; Justice; Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities; Social welfare; Health;

		Education	Education	Science and research; Education
State/regional government				
Local government		Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities	Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities	Finance/tax; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Public utilities

2.1.3. Capacity and power of different levels

An independent review commissioned by the government of the role of the Department of Finance in the lead up to the financial crisis found weaknesses in operations and with regard to the availability of specialist skills and in multi-annual expenditure planning (Wright, 2010). Many of the weaknesses found were seen as common across government departments. The Wright Report also identified problems with the budgetary process in Ireland. The executive was dominant, parliament was not a major player in the process; nor was independent advice given sufficient prominence. As part of the response to this, central government capacity issues are being addressed in the context of a Civil Service Renewal Plan published in 2014. There are plans to significantly develop strategic human resource capacity, open up recruitment and a re-emphasis on learning and development which was largely in abeyance during the recession. There are also plans to reform the budgetary process, including the creation of a Parliamentary Budget Office to provide oversight of government expenditure, revenue raising, and associated performance.

A review of local government capacity found a number of priority areas for capacity development: entrepreneurship; innovation, research and analysis, resource management; human resource management; and the maintenance of traditional skills (Boyle and O'Riordan, 2013).

There is a low level of interaction overall between central government and regional and local government officials. Almost half of senior officials surveyed as part of the EU COCOPS survey said they never interact with local and regional government and a further quarter interact only yearly (Boyle, 2014). These levels of interaction are lower than in many other European countries. There is also a much lower perceived level of coordination between national and local and regional government in Ireland (18 per cent seeing coordination as rather good versus 40 per cent for the COCOPS sample). This probably in part reflects the relatively higher status and range of functions carried out by local government in many other European countries.

2.1.4. Role of levels with regard to public administration reform

The Minister and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is responsible for public expenditure and the modernisation and reform of the public service. As such the Department has the coordinating role for public administration reform across the whole of the public service in Ireland. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in 2011 in order to more closely align public spending and reform. The

Department has produced public sector reform plans in 2011 and 2014, with a further plan expected in 2017. They have a particular focus on cross-cutting objectives aimed at achieving a greater focus on the service user, greater efficiencies, and rebuilding the trust in government through reforms concentrating on working in a more open, transparent way.

Local government reform is coordinated by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community, and Local Government. Reform initiatives, whilst substantial, have not addressed changes to centre/local relationships in terms of devolution of functions. While local government itself has a voice in the reform process, through fora such as the County and City Managers Association at administrative level and the Association of Irish Local Government at political level, the main authorship of reform lies at the central level.

State structure (federal - unitary) (coordinated – fragmented)	Executive government (consensus – intermediate – majoritarian)	Minister-mandarin relations (separate – shared) (politicized – depoliticized)	Implementation (centralized - decentralized
Unitary	Intermediate	Separate Depoliticised	Centralised

2.2. Structure of executive government (central government level)

2.2.1. Machinery of government

The Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924 provided a statutory classification of the functions of government. The Constitution, enacted in 1937, provided that the government shall consist of no fewer than 7 members, but not more than 15. A ministry (known as a government department in Ireland) can be described as the area of government administration assigned to a minister of the government, although one minister may be responsible for more than one government ministry. The minister may be assisted by one or more ministers of state. At present, there are 16 ministries (departments) in Ireland.

A high-profile element of the administrative reform agenda has been a 'rationalisation' of the Irish administrative system's organisational structuring, especially with regard to state agencies. The post-2008 period witnessed the first reductions in the number of public organisations in the history of the state. As at the end of 2015 there were 257 national non-commercial agencies, down from 294 in 2010 (62 agencies were terminated since 2010 [though only 10 ceased to exist altogether] and 25 new agencies created of which 11 are completely new) (Boyle, 2016b). At regional and local level, the number of agencies reduced from 236 in 2007 to 96 in 2016 (mainly due to city and county enterprise boards and development boards being replaced and incorporated into local authorities) (Shannon, 2016). Dommett et al (2016) find that agency governance in Ireland now exhibits far greater levels of regulation than before the crisis, including a shift away from periodic to more sustained engagement in ministry-agency relationships. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was centrally involved in these changes, including an emphasis on critical reviews of each agency's mandate, performance-based agreements between agencies and parent ministries, and the need for more robust business cases for the creation of agencies than previously existed.

Local government reform is overseen by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Local authorities were not immune from rationalisation, with associated budgetary cuts that were large compared to other sectors, with many sub-national agencies being amalgamated or closed, with their functions absorbed into local authorities. Local authority mergers also occurred and the lower tier of Irish local government – a network of 80 small municipal town and borough councils – abolished in 2014. Each council administrative area, apart from the 3 Dublin county councils and the 3 city councils, put in place a system of municipal districts based on electoral areas. 95 municipal districts have been created. Municipal district members perform a range of statutory functions in respect of their own district. Other matters of wider strategic application are generally decided at county level by the elected members from all the municipal districts meeting in plenary formation. In total, the 114 elected sub-national authorities that existed prior to the crisis reduced in number to just 31 by 2015, with a reduction in the number of elected officials at local authority level from 1,627 to 949 (Shannon 2016).

2.2.2. Centre of government coordination

The global financial crisis that hit Ireland particularly badly in 2008 and 2009 led to an increase in centralisation of power and authority in what was already a highly centralised state. Horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms involving the centre of government were strengthened. For example, in 2011, the establishment of a new ministry, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), combined the functions of expenditure control, industrial relations, and public service reform in one ministry. The new ministry took over functions previously managed by the Department of Finance and the Department of the Taoiseach (prime minister). DPER, alongside the Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance, are the main organisational actors at the centre of government in terms of coordination and control. It should, however, be noted that while the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance, and Public Expenditure and Reform occupy a prominent position, in practice, each ministry has a great deal of autonomy. Conflicts and disagreements between ministries have to be resolved at cabinet level. At an administrative level, a civil service management board, composed of secretaries general of government departments and equivalent heads of offices plays a co-ordinating role.

2.2.3. Key management, budgeting and monitoring mechanisms

A review by the OECD (2015) found that budget oversight by the Irish parliament was under-developed by international standards. The OECD proposed moving from what they describe as a disconnected series of annual set pieces to an ongoing engagement by parliament throughout the course of the budgetary cycle. A central aim is to re-balance away from the formal authorisation of financial allocations towards ex ante interactions on policy priorities and performance. The government accepted the OECD recommendations, and have made some changes to the budgetary process. However, some significant initiatives proposed by the OECD, such as the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office and a National Performance Framework have yet to be actioned.

2.2.4. Key audit and accountability mechanisms

Legislative change associated with the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) introduced in 1994 has altered the governance arrangements of government ministries. The Public Service Management Act 1997, the Freedom of Information Act 1997, the Committee of the Houses of Oireachtas (Compellability, Privileges and Immunities of Witnesses) Act 1997 and the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001 together have implications for how accountability is practised in government ministries. In particular, the Public Service Management Act 1997 sets out a formal structure for assigning authority and accountability. The Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act 2005 allows certain provisions contained in the Public Service Management Act 1997 to take effect. Each secretary general or head of a scheduled office is responsible under the Act for appointments, performance, discipline and dismissal of civil servants below principal officer level (senior management). Each minister is the appropriate authority for civil servants at or above principal level.

In 2014 the government introduced a Civil Service Renewal Plan. Amongst the actions in the plan was the creation of a Civil Service Accountability Board, chaired by the Taoiseach and with ministerial, civil service and external expertise, with a governance role across the civil service, and to provide advice and support on the capacity and capability of the civil service, performance management, and the implementation of crosscutting priorities set by the government. However, the Accountability Board meets relatively infrequently, and its precise role and status is unclear at this early stage in its development.

Ireland has relatively strong mechanisms for audit and oversight. A peer review of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General carried out in 2008 found that it is highly regarded across the system for its professionalism and independence (Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, 2008). Ireland has had an ombudsman to investigate complaints in respect of the civil service since the early 1980s (and an Ombudsman for Children's Office was set up in 2004). In 2007 a separate independent agency, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) was established to deal with matters involving possible misconduct by members of the Irish police service. In 2012, the Ombudsman (Amendment) Act was introduced. This extended the power of the Ombudsman, which previously had primarily encompassed the civil service, local government and the health services, to include a wider range of public bodies. In addition, the legislation empowers the Ombudsman to generalise the recommendations of an investigation to all public bodies under its remit.

2.2.5. Organisation/coordination of administrative reform

There is a well thought through governance system overseeing administrative reform. At the political level, a cabinet committee on social policy and public service reform, chaired by the Taoiseach (prime minister) oversees the administrative reform agenda. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has particular responsibilities, and oversees the work of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, coordinating across a range of reform issues. The Department is tasked with driving increased capacity and capability for change, centrally and across the various sectors of the public service. Within the Department, a Reform and Delivery Office has prime responsibility for overseeing and driving the reform agenda. The activities of the Office are centered around five main areas: public service reform programme management; alternative

models of service delivery: business consulting; government reform; and civil service renewal.

At a managerial level, a Civil Service Management Board composed of the secretaries general of all the ministries meets monthly, and is charged with oversight of civil service renewal, including coordination. The management board is an important innovation and appears an effective mechanism for improving cooperation and coordination across ministries.

At the sectoral level, reform programme boards staffed by senior managers from the sectors (local government, health, education and justice) oversee the sectoral reform plans.

3. KEY FEATURES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

3.1. Status and categories of public employees

3.1.1. Definition of civil service and different types of employees

The Civil Service Regulation Act 1956 states that 'the Civil Service means the Civil Service of the Government and the Civil Service of the State'. Civil servants who staff the Houses of the Oireachtas (parliament) are civil servants of the state. The civil service of the government comprises those individuals who work within government ministries, as well as a number of related bodies established to carry out specific functions, such as the Office of the Attorney General, the Central Statistics Office, and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. In Ireland, only staff of the ministries and some state agencies are classified as civil servants.

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)
Hybrid	Employee as standard	Low	Low (though medium to high in certain specialist categories)

3.1.2. Configuration of the civil service system

The Civil Service Regulations Act, 1956, determines that the Minister for Finance is responsible for the terms and conditions of civil servants. It provides that civil servants hold office 'at the will and pleasure of the government'. In other words, civil servants could only be removed from their position by government decision. This situation was somewhat revised in the Public Service Management Act 1997 which gave secretaries general (administrative heads of ministries) power to discipline and dismiss civil servants up to principal officer (senior middle management) level. However, this would only be in cases of serious misconduct. The de facto position in the Irish civil service remains one of security of tenure.

Apart from security of tenure, public service pensions are the other key distinction between public service employment and private employment. Public pensions are defined benefit pensions, and are paid for out of current government revenue. However, in 2009, in response to the financial crisis and in order to reduce the public service pay and pensions bill, a pension levy averaging 7 per cent of annual pay was introduced for all

public servants. There has subsequently been some small easing of this measure through an increase in the threshold of earnings that are exempt from the levy. In 2010 a number of changes to public service pensions were announced. The pension age was raised from 65 to 66 and pensions based on career average earnings rather than final salary. The latter change only applies to new entrants.

Traditionally, the Irish civil service was a career-based system, with almost no external recruitment above graduate level. However, over the past decade, and in particular in the last two years since the relaxing of the public service recruitment moratorium in place in response to the financial crisis, the Irish civil service has evolved towards a hybrid system. Senior civil service positions, where not filled internally, are now open to non-civil servants. In 2015, 20 per cent of senior positions advertised were filled by candidates from outside the civil service (TLAC, 2015). Open competitions have also been held for clerical, specialist and general management positions within the civil service. However, numbers being recruited at present remain relatively small. Also, those successful in these competitions are frequently serving civil servants who use the open competitions as an alternative route to promotion.

Values for the civil service have recently been reviewed and are set out in the Civil Service Renewal Plan of 2014. These are:

- A deep-rooted public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, equality, fairness and respect
- A culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money
- The highest standards of professionalism, leadership and rigour.

With regard to mobility, in 2008, at the request of the then Irish government, the OECD (2008) carried out a review of the Irish public service. A central recommendation of the report was the need for greater 'connectivity' between different sectors of the Irish civil service to enable 'more collaborative, horizontal approaches to policy development and greater agility in identifying and responding to societal needs'. The Public Service Agreement of 2010 reinforced the idea of greater integration across the public service. The agreement notes that 'public bodies and individual public servants will have to increase their flexibility and mobility to work together across sectoral, organisational and professional boundaries'. Initiatives aimed at achieving this objective have included the introduction of standardised annual leave arrangements, progress being made in respect of standardised sick leave arrangements and a new single pension scheme for all new entrants to the public service. Specific commitments with respect to staff mobility were made in the Civil Service Renewal Plan (2014). Mobility is regarded as desirable from a business perspective and also from an employee engagement and developmental perspective. Initiatives in this regard commenced with a mobility programme for assistant secretaries general and principal officers. An initiative for staff at lower levels is being piloted in spring 2017.

Recruitment into the civil service for most personnel is through a centrally administered competitive examination. The Commission for Public Service Appointments regulates public service recruitment and appointment. Action has been taken in recent years to increase the use of external recruitment for all grades. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) operates as a shared recruitment service for the Irish civil service (and for local authorities, the health service, police and other public bodies). The hiring ministry make the final hiring decision. Individual ministries can also, if they have successfully applied for the relevant license showing they adhere to good practice, conduct their own

recruitment. Most civil servants are recruited to permanent positions. An exception is secretaries general, who are appointed on seven-year contracts.

Appointment at secretary general and assistant secretary general level has long been a distinctive process within the Irish civil service, organised and managed separately from general recruitment and promotion, by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC). TLAC recommend one candidate for appointment to the relevant minister in the case of posts below secretary general level. For secretary general posts TLAC can recommend up to three names, in alphabetical order, to the government, of those candidates considered to be of the standard required for the post. The government then has discretion to choose from amongst those put forward, resulting in a high level of political discretion for countries with a civil service based on the Westminster model. TLAC (2013: 8) note that 'Open recruitment is resulting in greater access at all stages of the TLAC process increasing to 25% of appointments in 2012, primarily from the private sector. Private sector candidates appointed to TLAC posts increased from 4.5% in 2010 to 21% in 2012'.

Since January 2017, in TLAC competitions where there is more than one candidate deemed to be of the required standard, if there is a woman candidate she must be appointed, if the management team of the organisation for which the appointment is being made has an under-representation of women.

3.2. Civil service regulation at central government level

Irish civil servants have public law status under the Civil Service Regulation Acts 1956 - 2005 which set out their terms and conditions and means of recruitment. Employment is also governed by the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 and Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) (Amendment) Act 2013. All civil servants recruited to a permanent position have the same terms and conditions, rights to tenure, pensions etc. Employment of staff on fixed-term contracts, while it does occur on occasion, is not a particular feature of the Irish civil service.

All secretary general appointments (administrative head of a ministry) are made on a contract basis for a period of seven years. This is to ensure turnover and consequently new ideas at senior management level. Senior management appointments are made by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) and ratified by government.

3.3. Key characteristics of the central government HR System

3.3.1. Organisation and core functions of HRM

Ireland's civil service HRM practices are amongst the most centralised of all OECD countries. The Human resources management (HRM) unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform holds a wide range of responsibilities and is actively involved in managing the majority of HRM issues. Ministries are delegated some responsibility, for example to manage employee numbers within centrally agreed limits, but are usually subject to centrally defined principles. Regarding industrial relations, base salary, the employment framework, the code of conduct and the right to strike/minimum service rules are negotiated centrally. Bonuses, work conditions and the introduction of new management tools are negotiated at both central and delegated levels. Most public employees are granted the right to join unions and strike.

Ireland makes slightly more use of performance assessment in HR decisions compared to the average OECD country. Assessment is mandatory for almost all employees, using a

standardised performance management development system (PMDS). However, implementation levels vary. PMDS has gone through several iterations since its introduction in 2000. The most recent scheme, introduced in 2016, is aimed at simplifying the process and at promoting an emphasis on future development rather than retrospective assessment. There is a two-point rating scale which reflects whether or not the job-holder has performed to a satisfactory level. Pay and advancement are not linked to the PMDS.

Promotions are decided both through restricted, internal competition and through open competition. For internal competitions, interview is the traditional selection mechanism, whereas open competitions use a combination of aptitude tests and interviews. The aim is to increase the proportion of open competitions.

All civil servants have an induction period upon entry to the civil service and other training is dependent on the needs of the organisation. Employees identify their training and development needs as part of the PMDS. Training and development needs are increasingly being coordinated centrally, through a "Learning and Development Centre" established in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016/17.

3.3.2. Senior executive system

Training and development needs for senior civil servants are coordinated through the Senior Public Service (SPS) introduced in 2011. Initially, the SPS was limited to senior managers in the civil service (all serving and newly appointed civil servants at secretary general, deputy and assistant secretary general and director levels and related departmental and professional grades). The espoused policy is to eventually include senior managers in the wider public service, but this appears not to be a priority issue. Some action on this front has only recently taken place, with chief executives of local authorities gaining access to some services, almost six years after the SPS was formed.

3.3.3. Social dialogue, remuneration and the role of trade unions

The recession and associated austerity programme set the scene for social dialogue. Social partnership, which had been the model in place for over twenty years, was replaced by a more robust bargaining relationship between government and public service unions. The Public Service Agreement of 2010 between the Government and public service trade unions, set out a series of measures for reducing staff numbers and pay in the public service; for securing significant savings and efficiencies and for reforming the public service. This agreement was followed by two more agreements, the Haddington Road Agreement and the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The latter makes provision for the phased restoration of public service pay. In general, a more robust bargaining relationship has been established between the government and public service unions. Pressures are currently building from public service unions for pay and conditions improvements, as the economy improves.

The forum for collective bargaining in the Irish civil service is known as the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme (C & A). This is a voluntary system of engagement on industrial relations matters between the civil service employers, represented by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the recognised trade unions (of which there are four). The objective is to reach consensus at C & A. However, if this is not possible an independent arbitration board will make a decision. At ministerial level, some organisations, in particular the large service delivery ministries have local councils

(department conciliation and arbitration schemes). As a result of the participation of their representative trade unions in the C & A scheme, civil servants do not have access to the traditional Irish industrial relations infrastructure (the Labour Court and Workplace Relations Commission) in respect of grievances not covered by employment legislation. In respect of other parts of the public service, education and defence have their own C & A scheme. However, the health and local government sectors have recourse to the State dispute resolution infrastructure of the Labour Court and the Workplace Relations Commission.

3.3.4. Degree of patronage and politicisation

The professionalism index, set out in the Quality of Government Expert Survey run by the University of Gothenburg, assesses the extent to which the public administration is professional rather than politicised. Ireland is ranked as the most professional and least politicised public administration of the countries examined. The centralised control of recruitment through the Public Appointments Service acts as an effective deterrent to patronage. In general, there is very little evidence of patronage and politicisation with regard to public service employment.

However, as mentioned earlier, there is political involvement in the final choice of secretaries general of government departments. And one area where patronage has been raised as an issue is with regard to appointment to the boards of state agencies. Appointments are at the minister's discretion, and the appointments process has been described as opaque, with a lack of clarity regarding the expertise or experience needed to justify an appointment (Clancy and O'Connor, 2011). Steps have been taken to address this issue, with the creation of Stateboards.ie which is run by the Public Appointments Service and, from November 2014, is the primary portal through which appointments to vacancies on state boards are advertised. Successful candidates must meet the specific and detailed criteria determined by the relevant minister as necessary for a member of the particular board.

Coherence among different government levels (high, medium, low)	compensation level vs. private sector (much higher, higher, same, lower, much lower)	Formal politicization through appointments (high, medium, low)	Functional politicization (high, medium, low)
Medium (mixed in practice; high in some areas low in others)	Higher overall but varies (higher for more junior staff and lower for senior managers)	Low	Medium

4. POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

4.1. Policy-making, coordination and implementation

4.1.1. State system

The vast majority of political and governing power is vested in Dáil Eireann (the lower house of Parliament) and more particularly in the Cabinet and the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). Ireland has what Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) would call a highly centralised

unitary state. Coalition governments are the norm. With regard to horizontal coordination within government, the central ministries of Taoiseach, Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform play an important role.

An independent civil service and the separation of powers are long standing traditions in Ireland and are seen by many as critical pillars of our democracy. But at the same time there has been an expressed lack of confidence in some quarters with the capabilities of those who were at the helm in recent years which has surfaced a new sense of frustration around the appointment, tenure, capacity and remuneration of those at the top in the civil service.

Ireland is amongst those countries that does not have political control over senior level appointments. However, for the top (secretary general) administrative posts in ministries there is political involvement. TLAC can recommend up to three names, in alphabetical order, to the government, of those candidates considered to be of the standard required for the post. The government then has discretion to choose from amongst those put forward.

An account of determining a new mission, vision and values statement in 2014 for the civil service noted that with regard to the relationship between the political level and the administration 'the civil service has a dual mandate, where the government of the day is advised and supported but where the civil service is also expected to keep a weather eye on the longer-term interests of the state and its people' (Barrington et al., 2014) It is recognised that this is a challenging reality, and there is a need for constant scrutiny of the extent to which it is practiced.

4.1.2. Policy decision making

A critique of policy decision making in the lead up to the recession in 2008 is that the government's budget process was completely overwhelmed by two dominant processes: programmes for coalition governments and the social partnership process (Wright 2010: 23). Social partnership (formal multi-annual agreements between the social partners of Government, the main employer groups, the trade unions and representatives of the voluntary and community sector on pay and key social policy issues) had been widely praised as a pre-eminent reason for Ireland's recovery from the recession of the 1980s and the creation of the 'Celtic Tiger'. Government programmes were seen as important in providing stability. However, as the economic situation deteriorated, the process of social partnership was seen as accelerating the momentum for spending and contributing to the consequent deterioration of competitiveness of the Irish economy.

It has also been argued that the predominance of these various agreements limited, and to some extent marginalised, the impact of parliament in its scrutiny role (O'Cinneide 1999). The contention here is that all the major policy decisions were made outside of parliament, with the role of parliament reduced to that of commenting on commitments made elsewhere, and that this limited the engagement of parliamentarians in the process.

Reform efforts since 2008 in this area have focused on replacing social partnership with a more traditional approach to industrial relations, and the development of a government reform agenda aimed at developing a more open policy process. Initiatives such as restrictions on lobbying, protected disclosures (whistle blowing), freedom of information, and open government are aimed at creating a more transparent policy decision making process.

Distribution of powers	Coordination quality (high, medium, low)	Fragmentation (high, medium, low)
Power concentrated in central government	Medium	Medium

4.1.3. Relationship between political level and administration

As mentioned earlier, the Irish civil service is not politicised, and changes are not made to civil service staff arising from changes in government.

One commentator has noted the view that official policy-advice and decision-making processes in Ireland are overly secretive and cartelised, with too much power lying with vested interests, including elements of the political establishment and the bureaucracy itself (Barry, 2009). Another commentator describes ministers, junior ministers, senior civil servants and special advisers as constituting the 'proximate policy makers' with a central influence over policy making (Connaughton, 2012).

Recent reform efforts noted at 4.1.2 above are aimed at opening out the sources and diversity of policy advice. One particular initiative of the Civil Service Renewal Plan (2014) is the development of open policy debates involving policy networks of practitioners, academics and experts in a range of policy issues.

4.1.4. Public service bargains

Reduction in numbers employed in the public service, reductions in pay, and changed terms and conditions of employment outlined earlier in the paper have resulted in significant changes to the public service bargain. The Public Service Agreement and Public Service Stability Agreement in particular have changed the nature of the public service bargain. But at the same time some traditional characteristics of public service employment (security of tenure, a common grade and pay system, defined benefit pension) have remained intact. With regard to competencies and skills there is an increasing trend away from the generalist public servant working in a relatively closed environment to more use of specialist staff with more open recruitment. But at the same time, traditional competencies and skills in areas such as policy analysis and human resource management have been re-emphasised. The public service bargain is changing, but the extent and form of that change is still evolving.

Political economy (liberal – coordinated)	Interest intermediation (corporatist - pluralistic	Citizen participation (strong – weak)	Policy style
Coordinated	Corporatist	Medium	Incrementalism

Sources of policy advice (mandarins, cabinets, external experts)	Administrative autonomy (high – medium – low)	Patronage & politicization (formal, functional (merit – patronage) (high – medium – low)	Public Service Bargains (Agency – Trustee)	Stability (high – low – no turnover after elections)
Cabinet, mandarins, special advisers	Medium	Merit High	Hybrid based on trustee	High

4.2. Administrative tradition and culture

A Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour was published in 2004 (Standards in Public Office Commission) in accordance with Section 10 (3) of the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001. The code stated that the mission of the civil service 'is the achievement of an excellent service for Government and the other institutions of State as well as for the public as citizens and users of public services, based on principles of integrity, impartiality, effectiveness, equity and accountability'. The code also noted the importance of 'traditional' values of honesty, impartiality and integrity to serving the common good, saying they must be the 'basis for the official actions of civil servants'.

The Irish administrative culture could best be characterised as towards the public interest end of the Rechtsstaat/public interest continuum (Rhodes and Boyle, 2012). However, while in a formal sense, Ireland can be seen as exhibiting a public interest culture as it inherited the Westminster tradition of government from the UK, on the other hand it is possible to see elements of neo-Weberian culture of the northern European kind, with the proportional representation electoral system supporting an emphasis on consensus building.

Using Hofstede's culture dimensions, Ireland displays a low power distance score, indicating a low tolerance for inequality and unequal distribution of power. Conversely, there is a relatively high score for individualism, suggesting an individualistic culture. A high score on the masculinity/femininity index suggests distinct gender roles. Ireland has a low score on uncertainty avoidance, suggesting a tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and a willingness to take risks. On the other hand the low score for long-term orientation suggests difficulties taking a long-term perspective over short term priorities, and this is combined with a high indulgence score, with an emphasis on enjoying life. This appears overall a reasonable assessment, though obviously the situation evolves over time, for example gender roles have become less distinct.

Hofstede national culture dimensions		
Dimension	Value	Average EU28
Power Distance	28	52
Individualism/Collectivism	70	57
Masculinity/Feminity	68	44
Uncertainty Avoidance	35	70
Long-term Orientation	24	57
Indulgence/Self-restraint	65	44

Administrative culture Rechtsstaat, Public Interest	Welfare state (liberal, conservative, social-democratic)	Public Sector openness (open, medium, closed)
Public interest	Social democratic	Medium (shifting from closed to open)

Key PA Values	Managerial vs Procedural (Managerial. Mixed, Procedural)	Red Tape (regulatory density) (very high to very low)	Discretion/autonomy (high, low, medium)
independence, integrity, impartiality, equality, fairness, respect, accountability, efficiency, professionalism	Mixed	Low	Low to Medium

5. GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE

5.1. Transparency and accountability

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Access to government information (1-10)	8.00	8	8.00	10	0.00	-2
	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Transparency of government (0-100)	48.17	16	53.83	15	+5.66	+1
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Voice and acccountability (-2.5,+2.5)	1.34	8	1.35	9	+0.01	-1
Control of corruption (-2.5,+2.5)	1.70	7	1.64	8	-0.06	-1
TI perception of corruption (0-100)	80.00	6	75.00	10	-5.00	-4
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Gallup perception of corruption (%)	63.00	12	40.00	6	-23.00	+6

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.*

With regard to transparency, Ireland ranks at or just below the European average. Ireland has joined the Open Government Partnership and launched a national action plan in 2016.[3] This has the potential to significantly improve Irish practice with regard to transparency. Examples include the creation of Public Participation Networks to foster wider citizen participation in local government policy determination; and the development

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[2] 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)

[3] http://www.ogpireland.ie/

of an open data strategy. Ireland also has an open data portal https://data.gov.ie/data which is covering an increasing range of data across the public service.

Ireland ranks reasonably well with regard to perceptions of corruption. However, an ongoing scandal regarding the police force and other state agencies concerning potential malfeasance on the part of very senior police officers has the potential to damage Ireland's reputation. At this stage, given new information emerging in 2017, the extent to which corruption or just poor administrative practice plays a role has not been determined[4].

5.2. Civil service system and HRM

Indicator	Value 2012	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Impartiality (1-7)	1.98	4	2.00	9	+0.02	-5
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU26 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Professionalism (1-7)	6.32	1	6.16	1	-0.16	0
Closedness (1-7)	5.84	4	5.55	9	-0.29	-5

Sources: *Quality of Government Institute Gothenburg.*

Ireland scores reasonably well with regard to indicators of the civil service system and HRM. Ireland is ranked as the most professional and least politicised public administration. The system of appointment of public servants is generally seen as fair and impartial, without political bias.

Regarding workforce capacity, public employment was reduced significantly in response to the financial crisis. At the same time, the population was growing, imposing new demands on the public service. This has placed strains on the system which are now emerging in terms of strong pressure for more public servants such as nurses and teachers, with consequent implications for the public pay bill.

Ireland ranks more towards the 'closed' end of the spectrum with regard to the extent the public sector labour market is a special case in the country's general labour market conditions (i.e. recruitment and employment conditions are more restrictive than those typically seen in the private sector). This reflects the historical career-based system. However, moves to a more hybrid system incorporating more position-based posts have accelerated in recent years.

5.3. Service delivery and digitalization

Indicator	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
E-government users (%)	35.78	5	46.05	5	+10.27	0
Pre-filled forms (%)	35.50	21	35.00	17	-0.50	+4
Online service completion (%)	86.83	4	90.33	9	+3.50	-5
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	0.22	Δ Rank
Online services (0-1)	0.50	9	0.72	17	+0.22	-8
	Value 2013	EU27 rank				
Barriers to public sector innovation (%)	33.92	8				
			Value 2015	EU28 rank		
Services to businesses (%)			63.50	4		
	Value 2011	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Ease of Doing business (0-100)	81.54	5	79.53	8	-2.01	-3

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[4] http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR17000046

Ireland scores well with regard to indicators of service delivery and digitalization, and services to business, as shown in the table. E-government approaches are being developed in line with good international practice, including 'build to share' and 'digital first'. In general with regard to service delivery, a civil service customer satisfaction survey carried out in 2015 shows that public impressions are generally favourable. 57 per cent viewed the civil service as either very or fairly efficient[5].

While it scores poorly with regard to pre-filled forms, with regard to individuals using the internet to send filled forms to public authorities, Ireland ranked 6th in Europe in 2015 based on Eurostat data.

5.4. Organization 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	6.00	11	+1.00	+4
Interministerial coordination (1-10)	7.17	11	7.33	11	+0.16	0
SGI Implementation capacity (1-10)	6.29	16	6.71	11	+0.42	+5
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU27 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
QOG Implementation capacity (1-7)	5.06	12	5.40	9	+0.34	+3

Ireland receives a middle ranking with regard to the organisation and management of government, with some improvement from 2014 to 2016. This is probably a fair assessment overall. Longer-term strategic planning remains a challenge, despite the legal requirement for all government ministries to produce three-yearly strategy statements. Some sectors, such as agriculture, seem to be better than others. Since 2014, the Department of the Taoiseach has introduced an annual national risk assessment framework, examining strategic risks facing Ireland. This was introduced following reviews of why the financial crisis had such a profound effect on Ireland.

Inter-ministerial coordination is generally reasonable, though the government elected in 2016 has faced some difficulties, as it is a coalition between a large political party and a number of independents who have formed an alliance but who, as independent parliamentarians, are not used to working together or being in government. It is a minority government, dependent on the support of the main opposition party.

More attention has been given in recent years to implementation of management reforms, with named stakeholders accountable for delivery, published timelines, and reporting on progress. This has brought more discipline to implementation, though challenges remain.

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[5] http://www.per.gov.ie/en/civil-service-customer-satisfaction-survey-2015a/

5.5. Policy-making, coordination and regulation

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Societal consultation (1-10)	4.00	21	5.00	17	+1.00	+4
Use of evidence based instruments (1-10)	4.67	13	4.00	19	-0.67	-6
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Regulatory quality (-2.5,+2.5)	1.61	7	1.81	3	+0.20	+4
Rule of law (-2.5,+2.5)	1.77	7	1.79	8	+0.02	-1

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, World Bank.

Recent reform efforts such as the introduction of open policy debates, new initiatives in citizen engagement such as a Constitutional Convention, and piloting of participatory budgeting at local government level, have put a particular emphasis on improving broader societal consultation in the policy making process, in response to criticisms of too closed a process contributing to the recession.

Whilst Ireland ranks quite low with regard to the use of evidence based instruments, some notable initiatives have been taken in this area in recent years. In particular, the introduction of a Public Spending Code and creation of an Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) across all government departments are amongst measures aimed at strengthening the use of evidence in the budgeting and management of expenditure programmes.

Ireland has a regulatory impact analysis regime, but some commentators have questioned the transparency and quality of that regime (Ferris, 2017). The OECD carried out a survey in 2014, in which Ireland recorded a mixed performance in terms of RIAs, scoring poorly with regard to oversight and accountability[6].

5.6. Overall government performance

Any overall assessment of government performance in Ireland should be set in the context that, along with a small number of other countries including Greece, Portugal and Spain, Ireland has been faced with high budgetary constraints and particularly high consolidation requirements in recent years arising from the financial crisis.

Trust in government, having dropped dramatically from 2007 to 2010 due in large part to the financial crisis and associated austerity measures, has gradually been increasing and is back at the EU28 average. Trust in local authorities is also back at the European average after being lower for some years. Trust in public administration in 2016 was slightly above the EU28 average. Trust and satisfaction in individual public services, such as the civil service and education, tends to be quite high, especially by people who have recently used such services (Boyle, 2016a).

Ireland ranks reasonably well with regard to public sector performance and government effectiveness. Business executives rank the quality of Irelands public administration highly, though with the general public the perceived quality of public services is just below the European average (Boyle, 2016a).

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[6] http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=69796

Indicator	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Trust in government (%)	21.00	22	28.00	15	+7.00	+7
	Value 2011	EU27 rank				
Improvement of PA over last 5 years (%)	5.00	20				
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Public sector performance (1-7)	5.16	8	5.40	4	+0.24	+4
Government effectiveness (-2.5,+2.5)	1.34	12	1.54	8	+0.20	+4

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

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