Are Public Administration Institutions Willing to Disclose their Performance through Data Portals?

The Case of the Portuguese Directorates-General

INTRODUCTION

Assessing the performance of public sector organizations is essential to evaluate the results of public policies and to analyze the adequacy of the resources used to deliver such results (Jackson, 1993), to promote accountability, to drive improvement and to encourage stakeholders' involvement in policy making.

With such purposes in mind, and despite important variances and nuances among countries with different administrative traditions, governments worldwide have therefore designed and imposed some guidelines and rules to be followed by public organizations on what to measure and when and how to give account on their performance. In Europe, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was launched in 2000 by the EU, the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) and the Speyer Academy, as an 'adaptation' of the well-known European Business Excellence Model (EFQM/BEM) to the public administrations context, thus becoming the main model used in performance assessment exercises. Almost twenty years on, one would therefore expect the CAF model to be somehow embedded in the public administrations performance systems implemented in each EU-country.

Additionally, over the last couple of decades, transparency and accountability claims have been pushing public administrations to disclose information on the way they are using their resources and how well public services are performing (Armstrong, 2005). The more recent influence of Open Government principles further reinforces the need to make such information easily available and ready to be used and re-used (Linders & Wilson, 2011).

There is some evidence that performance measurement has significant value to all stakeholders, including citizens and legislators (Sanger, 2008). Reporting performance in an open way might, as Harris et al. (2011) suggest, enhance government's reputation for competency and efficiency, thus contributing to a better government-citizen relationship. When mature stages of performance disclosure are reached, citizens become true owners, co-producers and evaluators of government (Sanger, 2008).

The current research analyses to what extent the Portuguese Public Administration, at the highest level (which corresponds to the Directorates-General), is in fact conveying information on its performance through data portals (thus complying with the first requisite for being transparent) and whether such information covers the main areas of the CAF. To achieve this goal, a systematic analysis of the webpages of all Portuguese Directorates-General (PDGs) and of the GeADAP portal (where such data should be integrated and made available to all) was conducted in the first semester of 2015. The aim was to identify the goals, measures and final results that were part of the performance evaluation system – QUAR – for the year 2013. A content analysis of such indicators was then carried out to understand how they fitted into the CAF criteria.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Next, in the background section, a brief overview of the literature is given on the main requirements of performance assessment in Public Administration, together with a short description of the Common Assessment Framework. A subsection is specifically

dedicated to the new Open Government trend, particularly with the emphasis on promoting transparency and accountability through the release of open data. Then, the essentials of the Portuguese public administrations' performance measurement system, that entities are required by law to implement, are described followed by an explanation of the methodological approach used in the empirical study. The main results are presented and discussed in the subsequent section. The chapter concludes with some final remarks, calling attention to some implications that can be derived from the study.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Performance measurement in public administration

The performance management concept essentially refers to the process of setting goals for an institution and managing effectively its resources and competences to achieve such goals and bring about the desired outcomes (Poister, 2010). Performance measurement is a core element of performance management. Performance measurement systems have different purposes, which have been summarized by Speklé and Verbeeten (2014) as: operational (operational planning and process monitoring); incentive and rewards setting (motivating and controlling managers and employees); and exploratory (priority setting, double loop learning and policy development).

At the core of any performance measurement system is the identification and selection of adequate performance indicators. These correspond mainly to quantitative measures of the inputs, outputs, throughputs, and outcomes of government work, often expressed in the form of targets, rankings, or intelligences (Hood, 2007).

Performance management literature highlights that measurement is more difficult when objectives are ambiguous, outputs are not measurable, activities are not repetitive and the effects of management interventions are unknown (Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014). Accordingly, there is considerable consensus around the idea that public service organizations face particular challenges when designing performance assessment systems (Boland & Fowler, 2000; Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014).

In fact, public organizations are more complex than their private counterparts, since they typically face multiple goals and purposes and are accountable to a broader set of stakeholders, being particular dependent upon social and political factors. As Speklé and Verbeeten (2014, p. 136) stress, "in public sector organizations, means-end relations are often ill-understood, and managers may be unable to predict the likely outcomes of alternative courses of action". It must be noted, as Gao (2015) stresses, that performance measurement is neither apolitical nor technical: "Questions such as what to measure, whose performance to measure, and measure for what purpose, are largely political decisions" (Gao, 2015, p. 92).

The emergence of performance assessment in Public Administration was clearly linked to the New Public Management (NPM) movement (Jackson, 1993; Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014). A main purpose of NPM reforms was the separation of policy and administration, with contracts being set between governments and agencies/organizations responsible for policy implementation. Input management was thus replaced by a results-based orientation (Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002). The definition and implementation of a set of indicators was expected to enable politicians to measure and evaluate the performance of public and private policy-implementing organizations while promoting accountability.

Under the influence of NPM, public organizations have therefore started to dedicate significant efforts to the collection, report and assessment of performance indicators (Boland & Fowler, 2000).

Despite such efforts, the literature shows, in many cases, that the implementation of performance assessment systems fails due to their incorrect design (Cuganesan, Guthrie, & Vranic, 2014; Gao, 2015). As Cuganesan et al. (2014) point out, inadequate performance systems can hinder creativity and innovation and jeopardize inter- and intra-organizational relationships.

In the public administration context, as Kanji and Moura e Sá (2007, p. 50) note, the emphasis of performance measurement "is traditionally on budgetary performance, simply regarded as the adherence to the annual budget, usually established according to the practice of incrementalism, and on the

compliance of financial statements with legal requirements". Often, some performance indicators are used but they tend to be almost exclusively focused on "costs, volume of service, utilization rates, time targets and productivity, while measures of service quality, customer satisfaction, and goals achievement are uncommon" (Kanji & Moura e Sá, 2007, p. 50). Similarly, Speklé and Verbeeten (2014) criticise the mechanistic perspective associated with the use of performance measurement under the influence of NPM, leading to dysfunctional consequences by making organizational actors focus on target achievement rather than organizational goals. This is particularly visible when employees become more interested in achieving some performance indicators in order to benefit from some kind of incentive than in contributing to the overall fulfilment of the organizational goals.

Moreover, current systems for measuring performance in the public sector tend to rely only on efficiency, effectiveness and economy indicators and fail to measure the fulfilment of other public sector purposes, especially those related to environmental and social objectives.

In what concerns the features of a good performance system, several important recommendations have been proposed in the literature (Bourne et al., 2003; Gao, 2015; Kanji and Moura e Sá, 2007; Kennerley and Neely, 2004; Neely et al., 2000)):

- To have the mission/vision at the core of the system and ground it on the critical success factors;
- To take into account a wide range of stakeholders;
- To adopt a citizen-driven government perspective;
- To be contextually specific (i.e. to comprise composite indicators tailored to the particular context);
- To combine both financial and non-financial indicators;
- To focus on a relatively limited number of performance goals;
- To use an adequate number of measures (too few do not capture the complexity of operations, while too many may become an obstacle to improvement);
- To combine an internal and external perspective;
- To incorporate feedback mechanisms with the aim of encouraging organizational learning and improvement (rather than being short-term and control-oriented);
- To allow for some degree of negotiation and participation;
- To be dynamic and adaptable to new circumstances.

In this context, the appealing of TQM models (and business excellence frameworks in particular) as basis to develop organizational performance assessment systems is noticeable, since they address many of these concerns. Among such frameworks, the CAF should be regarded with special care.

In fact, the CAF was developed to be implemented by public administrations across the EU at all levels (national, regional and local). It is based on a set of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and was launched in 2000 with the main purpose of being a guide to comprehensive self-assessment exercises. It facilitates *benchlearning* among public sector organizations and follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) logic. Therefore, improvement efforts tend to be sounder and the collaboration of key change agents easier to achieve.

As Figure 1 shows, the model comprises nine criteria, including five related to enablers and four to results. It is "based on the premise that excellent results in organizational performance, citizens/customers, people and society are achieved through leadership driving strategy and planning, people, partnerships, resources and processes" (www.eipa.eu).

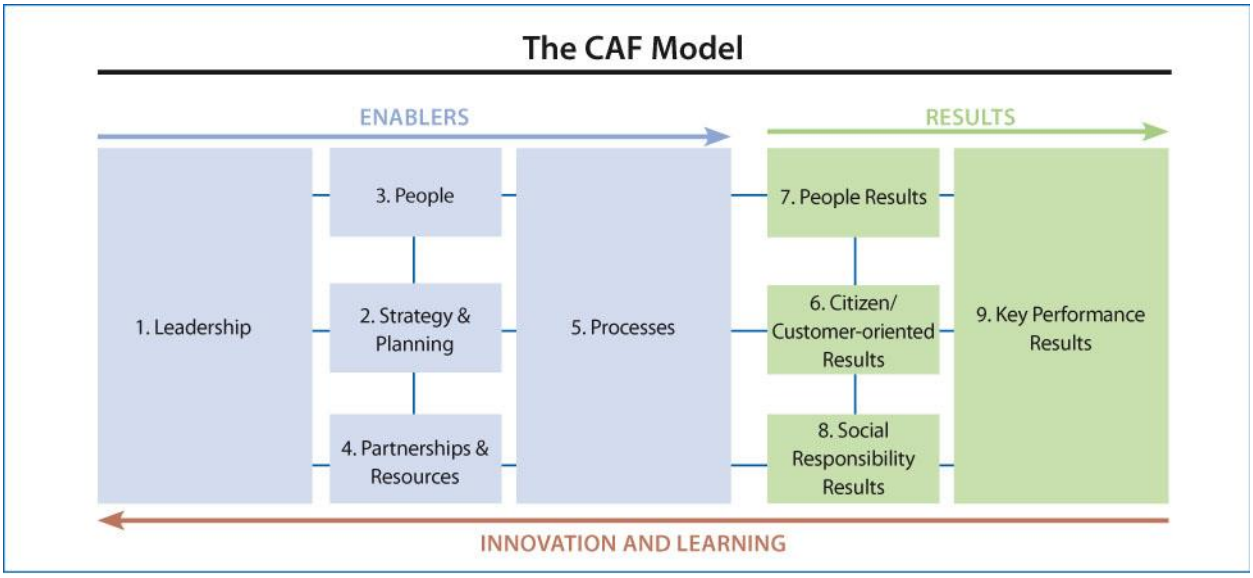

Figure 1. The Common Assessment Framework
Source: www.eipa.eu

The potentialities of the CAF as a basis for implementing appropriate performance measurement systems are noteworthy. When analyzing it against the 'good' performance requisites listed earlier in this section, it becomes rather evident that the CAF calls for performance to be measured from a multi-stakeholders perspective. Moreover, it incorporates feedback mechanisms embedded in an implicit PDCA cycle, which foster innovation and learning. Within its nine criteria, there is room for a multitude of performance indicators to be adopted (financial and non-financial, internal and external, etc.). Last, but not least, the CAF criteria aim to reflect the critical success factors that drive organizational performance. The framework has also potential to be context-specific and dynamic, since it is flexible and adaptable. According to the latest statistics (EIPA, 2017), there are currently 3.895 organizations registered as CAF users in 53 countries. At the top, we find countries like Italy, Poland, Germany and Belgium, while Portugal lays on the seventh position (198 users). CAF users come from all sectors of public administration, while the most prominent sectors are education and research (1084 users), local administration (921 users) and social services and social security (413 users).
Stressing the potentialities of TQM-based models does not mean ignoring (or even neglecting) the popularity of other performance tools, notably the Balanced Scorecard (BSC). In fact, since the nineties, the BSC has been extensively used by public sector organizations. As Gao (2015) notes, the BSC identically enables the selection of multiple performance measures related to strategic goals and integrates traditional financial measures and non-financial measures from different perspectives: customer, internal process, and learning and growth. However, it does not clearly show the interactions that exist among the various perspectives and therefore does not explicitly call attention to the drivers of superior performance. Moreover, with the exception of (external) customers, the importance of other key stakeholders is not clearly addressed in the BSC.

Open Government, transparency and public accountability

The principles underlying the Open Government trend are not new, but they were not fully embodied in official public policy both in the US and the EU until 2009. In the EU, the 5th Ministerial eGovernment Conference (European Commission, 2009) clearly established as shared objectives to be achieved by 2015:

> *Citizens and businesses are empowered by eGovernment services designed around users needs and developed in collaboration with third parties, as well as by increased access to public information,*

strengthened transparency and effective means for involvement of stakeholders in the policy process. (European Commission, 2009)

In the same year, President Obama signed the "Transparency and open government. Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies" (Obama, 2009) which laid out three policy principles to be adopted by the US Administration: "Government should be transparent", "Government should be participatory" and "Government should be collaborative".

Then, in 2011, eight founding governments, including the US, launched the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and endorsed the Open Government Declaration stating their commitment to "Increase the availability of information about governmental activities", "Support civic participation", "Implement the highest standards of professional integrity throughout our administrations" and "Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability"[1]. Since then, 67 more countries have joined OGP and signed the corresponding Declaration. By signing it, all adhering governments agree to develop, implement and monitor an individual National Action Plan, always in a co-creation and participatory process with civil society institutions, to execute a set of actions to advance Open Government.

Despite the nuances between these different approaches about what actually is meant by Open Government, it is possible to affirm that the idea is now highly influential in public administrations. Nevertheless, again, none of this is completely new. Already in 1969, Arnstein (1969) proposed the rather influential "ladder of citizen participation" while Macintosh (2003) made a systematic proposal on how ICTs might be used to further advance citizens' engagement in public policy making.

Also, in what concerns *government transparency*, Meijer (2015) traced it back to more than 250 years ago, where it started as "a cornerstone of representative democracy to allow the people to monitor their representatives and evolved into a fundament of participatory democracy that allows people to participate in the public domain." Heald (2006), on the other hand, unpacked the varieties and complexities of the concept using four directions (*upwards*, *downwards*, *outwards*, and *inwards*) and three dichotomies (*event* versus *process*, *in retrospect* versus *in real time*, and *nominal* versus *effective*).

In the *Open Government* context, the *transparency* principle adopted in the Obama Memorandum (Obama, 2009) and Directive (Orszag, 2009) was influenced by movements such as the Free Open Source Software (FOSS) (Linders & Wilson, 2011). Therefore, *transparency* is closely associated with releasing data held by or about government, in an open format (Open Government Working Group, 2007; Verma & Gupta, 2012) serving mainly two purposes: allowing for public officials to be held accountable by citizens; and giving citizens and companies the opportunity to re-use such data in order to create social and economic value by producing new products and services. This, in practice, led to the emergence of open government data portals including Data.gov, "The home of the U.S. Government's open data", which also catalogues more than 200 similar portals all over the world[2].

In what concerns *accountability*, Bovens (2007) defines it as "a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences." In this process, transparency is mainly about the first step in the accountability process: "the actor is obliged to inform the forum about his or her conduct, by providing various sorts of data about the performance of tasks, about outcomes or about procedures." In the context of this work we were mainly concerned with this transparency for accountability goal and, in particular, with the possible role of data portals in open data driven public accountability (Lourenço, Ingrams, & Piotrowski, 2017).

THE PORTUGUESE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS' PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

The implementation of a performance assessment system on a wide-basis in the Portuguese Public Administration is a relatively recent event. The so-called SIADAP (Integrated System for Performance

[1] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration (last visited the 24th of April 2017)
[2] https://www.data.gov/open-gov/

Assessment and Management in Public Administration) was legally imposed by the publication of the Law 66-B/2007. The system adopts a top-down approach whereby individuals' and subunits' targets and goals derive from the overall goals of the public entity.
The SIADAP system incorporates the following principles (Law 66-B/2007, art. nº 5):

- Coherency and integration;
- Responsibility and development;
- Self-regulation;
- Universality and flexibility;
- Transparency and impartiality;
- Effectiveness and efficiency;
- Orientation towards the quality of public services;
- Comparability (internal and external);
- Publicness; and
- Participation.

According to these principles, the indicators and the main results of performance assessment exercises should be made available to all. The use of internet channels to disclose online such information is essential to promote comparability, publicness and transparency.
Under this system, every year, every public entity is expected to develop a set of goals, with targets and metrics, producing what is known as a QUAR (the main assessment instrument of SIADAP). Thus, the QUAR incorporates the organization/service mission, the multi-year strategic objectives, the annual goals, the performance indicators (including the methods to verifying them), the existing resources, the degree of accomplishment of the goals, the identification of possible deviations and potential causes and, lastly, the final assessment of the organization/service (Law 66-B/2007, art. nº 10). Figure 2 depicts the two main stages of the performance assessment cycle.

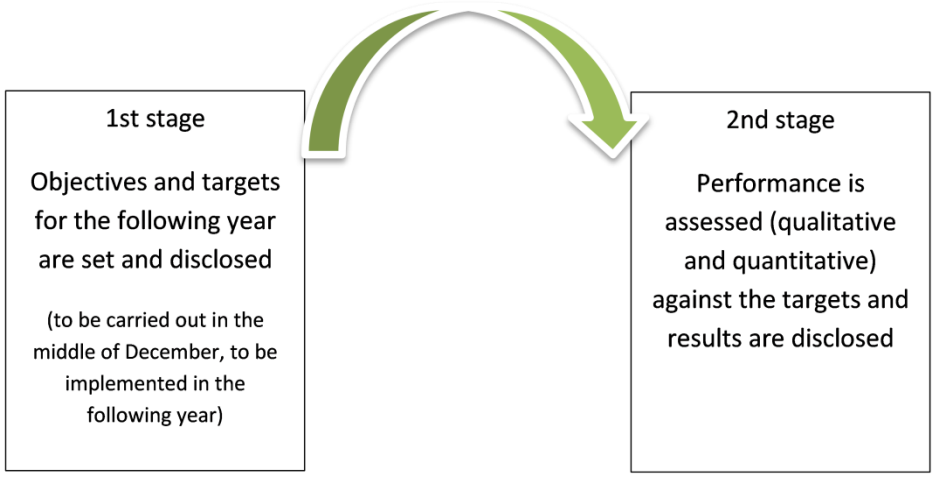

Figure 2. Stages of the performance cycle

To comply with information disclosure imperatives, the key elements of both stages should be made accessible to citizens through data portals. Unless the results of performance assessment are made available, transparency claims are jeopardized.

A remark must be done regarding the second stage of the performance cycle. In order to be fully accomplished, the performance assessment must, according to the Law, indicate:

- whether each goal was accomplished, outperformed or unattained;
- the qualitative performance mention proposed (good, if the service as reached all targets and outperformed a few; satisfactory, if the service as reached the most relevant targets; or insufficient, if the service has not reached some relevant targets); and
- the final quantitative assessment.

If one of these elements is missing, the performance assessment stage should be regarded as 'incomplete'. Moreover, as stated in the Law, performance goals are organized into three categories: effectiveness, efficiency and quality. As described in Law 66-B/2007, effectiveness refers to the extent to which the service accomplishes its goals and reaches or surpasses its expected results. Efficiency goals relate to the relationship between the goods and services produced and the resources used. Finally, quality goals, according to the Law, correspond to the set of features of goods and services that are needed to satisfy the stated and implicit needs of its users.

As mentioned before, and in line with an Open Government perspective, organizations should make their QUARs accessible to anyone who might be interested. In line with article 10, n. 5, of the Law 66-B/2007, public entities are required to publish their QUARs in their institutional webpages. Therefore, one would expect full disclosure in this regard. Furthermore, to alleviate the effort required to collect information from many institutional webpages if a comparison exercise is to be conducted, the GeADAP web portal[3] was developed to gather all assessment information (QUARs) in a centralized repository. The interface lists all public entities (organized by ministry) and allows users to choose a particular year to access the corresponding QUAR. The GeADAP portal was therefore developed as an important tool to promote transparency and public accountability.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Portuguese public administration provides the setting for this empirical study. As it happens in most countries, public administrations at the local and central level have been required to adopt a model for organizational assessment (typically the CAF) and to set goals, targets and indicators regarding their performance on a yearly basis (i.e. developing their QUAR).

Central government in Portugal is organized in Ministries (see Table 1[4]). Each Ministry comprises several Directorates-General (PDGs) which are the top structures responsible for the implementation of public policies and the delivery of public services.

[3] https://www.siadap.gov.pt/PaginasPublicas/Servicos.aspx

[4] Table 1 reflects the PDGs structure according to the XIX Government. Each time the Government changes, the number and designation of the PDGs that belong to each Ministry are likely to change as well.

Table 1. Directorates-General analyzed

Ministries	**Number of PDGs analyzed**
Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministério da Administração Interna) - MIA*	2
Ministry of Agriculture and Sea (*Ministério da Agricultura e do Mar) - MAS*	5
Ministry of National Defense (*Ministério da Defesa Nacional) - MND*	5
Ministry of Economy (*Ministério da Economia) - ME*	3
Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministério da Educação e da Ciência) - MES*	6
Ministry of Justice (*Ministério da Justiça) – MJ*	4
Ministry of Health (*Ministério da Saúde) – MH*	2
Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security (*Ministério da Solidariedade, Emprego e Segurança Social) - MSESS*	3
Ministry of Finance (*Ministério das Finanças) - MF*	8
Ministry of Environment, Territory and Energy (*Ministério do Ambiente, Ordenamento do Território e Energia) – METE*	2
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros) – MFA*	3
Presidency of the Ministries Council (*Presidência do Conselho de Ministros) – PMC*	11
Total	54

A systematic analysis of all Portuguese Directorates-Generals' (PDGs) webpages and of the GeADAP portal (where all data was expected to be integrated and made available) was conducted in the second semester of 2014 with the aim of identifying the goals, measures and final results that were part of the performance evaluation system – QUAR – for the year 2013. That was at the time the most recent year for which the performance cycle was completed. A content analysis of the performance indicators used by the PDGs was also carried out with the main purpose of understanding how they fitted into the CAF criteria.

KEY FINDINGS

Disclosure of QUAR elements

As mentioned earlier, the Integrated System for Performance Assessment and Management in Public Administration (SIADAP) requires public entities to disclose information regarding their goals, indicators and targets (stage 1 – Figure 2) and concerning the final self-assessment (stage 2 – Figure 2). In an Open Government perspective, such information needs to be easily available to all. Therefore, both the institutional webpages of the PDGs and the GeADAP portal were analyzed.

Even if internet pages have been acknowledged as important communication channels between public administration and citizens for quite some time, it was not possible to get access to the intuitional webpages of five PDGs. Besides, in three cases, there was a link to QUAR elements, but such link was not working. Table 2 reports the main results of this assessment.

Table 2. Level of QUAR disclosure

Elements disclosed	Only in the institutional webpage	Only in the GeADAP portal	In both of them	In either of them
Objectives and indicators	28 (52%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	29 (54%)
Performance assessment results	18 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (33%)
Complete performance measurement cycle	17 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17 (31%)

The analysis showed that the GeADAP portal is not delivering its promises, as virtually no PDG has its QUAR elements in the portal. On the other hand, the level of disclosure in the PDGs institutional webpages was considerably higher, with 29 of the 54 PDGs providing some information on the QUAR. Yet, since the publication of the QUAR in the webpages is compulsory, this score is far from acceptable. Moreover, only about a half of PDGs was giving information on the objectives and goals for the year 2013 in their webpages. The percentage was considerably lower when the results of performance assessment were at stake. The scenario is aggravated by the fact that four PDGs that reported their results in the webpages were doing so in an incomplete way, since at least one of the elements established by law was missing (see previous section).
Overall, the results in Table 2 give an indication of a modest level of online transparency of the performance measurement systems adopted. These results are somehow in line with previous studies (see, for example, Smith (2008) and Smith and Schiffel (2009), cited in Harris et al (2011), which noted that was difficult to find online performance reports for many state and city agencies in the United States).

Performance indicators used

Looking at the QUAR indicators for the year 2013, available for 29 PDGs (see Table 2), it is possible to observe that, on average, each PDG used 14 performance indicators, but also that there was a considerable degree of variation around such number (see Table 3). Parsimony requirements call for a limited number of indicators. Yet, having one indicator per category, as it happens in one of the PDG analyzed, sounds far from adequate.

Table 3. Number of performance indicators used

	Number of indicators used by PDG
Average	14.4
Maximum number	36
Minimum number	3
Total number of indicators collected: 418	

As explained earlier, the QUAR instrument requires organisations to define indicators in three categories: effectiveness, efficiency and quality. Figure 3 shows that effectiveness indicators dominated (192 out of the 418 indicators collected from the QUARs). Efficiency, on the other hand, had the smallest number of indicators.

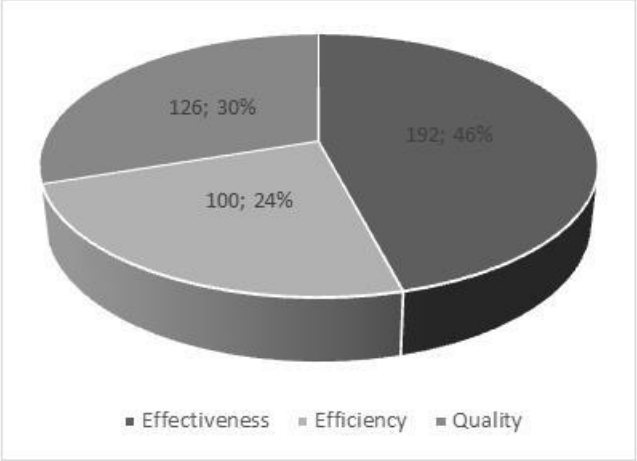

Figure 3. Performance indicators by category

Degree of integration between the QUAR and the CAF

The QUAR indicators were systematically extracted and analyzed to understand whether they were in line with the CAF. Each indicator was associated with the CAF criterion that closely reflected its content. Making such association was not always straightforward, not only because it demands having a good idea of the nature and activities of the corresponding PDG, but also because the designation of many indicators is rather confusing and/or vague. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Performance indicators by CAF criterion

PDG	CAF Criteria									
	Leadership	**Strategy and Planning**	**People**	**Partnerships and Resources**	**Processes**	**Citizen/Customer-Oriented Results**	**People Results**	**Social Responsibility Results**	**Key performance Results**	**TOTAL**
MAS										
MAS1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	7	**11**
MAS2	0	0	2	1	1	4	0	0	13	**21**
MAS3	0	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	5	**12**
MND										
MND1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	4	**8**
ME										
ME1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	5	**9**
ME2	0	0	1	1	11	4	0	0	9	**26**
MES										
MES1	0	0	1	1	5	4	0	0	3	**14**
MES2	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	3	**9**
MES3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	5	**8**
MES4	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	**6**
MJ										
MJ1	0	3	1	4	12	2	0	0	5	**27**
MJ2	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	8	**16**
MH										
MH1	0	3	2	3	9	1	0	0	18	**36**
MH2	0	2	1	1	3	1	0	0	12	**20**
MSESS										
MSESS1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	**4**
MSESS2	0	2	1	1	5	0	0	0	6	**15**
MF										
MF1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	**7**
MF2	0	1	3	3	4	5	0	0	5	**21**
MF3	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	0	5	**13**
MF4	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	0	4	**9**
PMC										
PMC1	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	7	**13**
PMC2	0	2	5	1	9	0	0	0	9	**26**
PMC3	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	7	**15**
PMC4	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	3	**9**
PMC5	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	2	**8**
PMC6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	**3**
PMC7	0	4	2	2	2	2	1	0	5	**18**
PMC8	0	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	7	**15**
PMC9	0	0	3	3	4	1	0	0	8	**19**
TOTAL	**0**	**25**	**37**	**39**	**95**	**41**	**4**	**1**	**176**	**418**

Figure 4 presents the distribution of all indicators across the different CAF criteria.

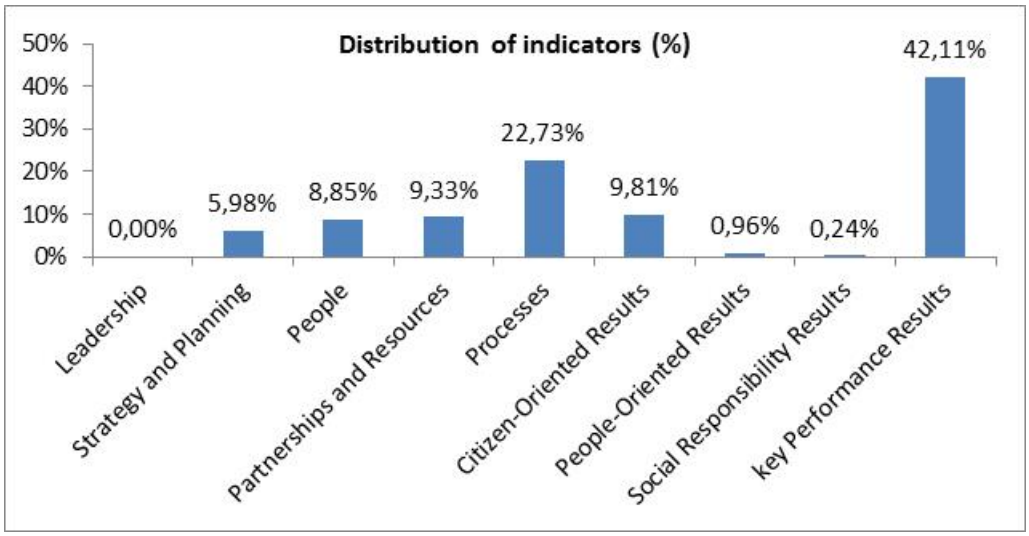

Figure 4. Distribution of indicators by CAF criterion

When looking at Figure 4, it becomes clear that some CAF criteria were underrepresented, namely in the case of People Results, Social Responsibility Results and Leadership.

For instance, in what concerns People Results, only one PDG was using an indicator derived from the application of an employee satisfaction survey. The PDGs were not paying enough attention to the monitoring of the impacts of their activities on their employees, since with few exceptions they were not measuring employees' satisfaction or participation in improvement efforts. If measuring service users' satisfaction is already a routine for many public entities, the same does not seem to be the case when it comes to assessing their own staff satisfaction levels.

Similarly, in all PGDs considered, only one indicator was defined to enhance social responsibility. Given the nature of public administration entities, it is possible to assume that many key performance indicators should reflect the measurement of social value created to the citizens they serve (directly or indirectly). Some aspects should deserve more attention, such as the measurement of how PDGs are contributing to environmental targets, in terms, for example, of paperwork reduction or carbon emissions reduction through energy efficiency.

Perhaps even more worrying is the fact that no PDG was measuring leadership performance. Several reasons might be contributing to this, including the lack of an accountability culture and the fear of public administration managers to show publicly some degree of potential failure in meeting the established targets.

On the other hand, organizations had the large majority of the indicators (i.e. 64.8%) concentrated in two criteria: Processes and Key Performance Results. Apparently, the PDGs find it easier to measure these performance dimensions, probably because they have a more internal focus.

Finally, it must also be stressed that within some criteria only a limited number of aspects was being considered.

The overall list of the 418 indicators is not presented here due to obvious length restrictions (a sample is given in Table 5, along with some observations on their possible drawbacks). Yet, for instance, when looking at the 37 indicators used to assess People issues it was possible to observe that the vast majority of them related to training. The measurement of other aspects concerned to participation, delegation of responsibilities or mechanisms to promote employees' well-being was completely absent. As a further example, in what the Strategy and Planning is concerned, few indicators related to the monitoring and assessment of the strategic planning process, with the exception of some budgetary issues.

Table 5. Examples of performance indicators in the QUAR

CAF Criteria	QUAR Indicator	Obs.
Strategy and Planning	Production and diffusion of a code of ethics within a planned deadline	Two different stages – production and diffusion - in the same indicator, which can be difficult to evaluate globally when one of them does not run according to the plan. Additional specification might be needed to evaluate diffusion (To whom? To what extent?)
	Presentation date of a report analysing the results of a survey	Technically, the indicator is poor. It does not mention explicitly any deadline. What kind of report? External stakeholders have no means to assess its pertinence.
People	Rate of employees that have participated in training events	The indicator assumes that it is relevant to establish a single rate for all staff (regardless of their role, competencies, etc.) and does not specify which training events are eligible (theoretically any, independently of its duration)
Resources and partnerships	To reduce the costs with consumables	This is a good example of a straightforward indicator that measures something relevant and clear.
	Number of partnerships established	The indicator is vague. Any partnership counts? What is the purpose? Without mentioning the purpose, the relevance is unknown. Is it enough to establish a partnership? The indicator might lead to an undesirable behaviour of looking for partnerships to meet the target with no care about their potential.
Processes	Rate of execution of the planned activities to reformulate the PDG site	The indicator is somehow imprecise. Does it refer to an average rate of execution? Are the planned activities clearly listed? It relates to the innovation of a communication process, but, in order to be effective, it must be ensured that the goals of the reformulation of the web site were clearly established from the beginning, so that rate of progress can be measured.
	Number of new instruments created	The indicator is too broad. What kind of instruments? Does it matter if they are to be adopted or not? Volume in this case is not sufficient and might be counterproductive
Citizen-oriented results	Users' satisfaction level with the customer service provided (1 to 5 scale)	This is a typical perception indicator. Further specification of how the customer service is measured is needed. It is possible to infer that a survey is administered. It is necessary to specify the administration process (when, how) and sample size.
	Average waiting time	It is a relevant performance indicator, but it is too ambiguous. Does it refer to all activities and services provided? Are all kinds of users at stake? It would be better to be more precise.
People-oriented results	Employees' level of satisfaction	This is a typical perception indicator. Further specification of how is measured is needed. It is possible to infer that a survey is administered. It is necessary to specify the administration process (when, how) and sample size.
	Percentage of individuals that reveal at least three evidences of the practical application of the skills acquired	The indicator shows an effort to measure competencies development, but the way it is formulated is confusing and doubtful. Is it possible to count the evidences of the skills acquired in such a simple way? Who is going to make the assessment? Does it refer to all individuals in the organisation?
Social responsibility results	Time taken to organise a seminar dedicated to the citizens' with disabilities access to the media	The indicator clearly refers to a social responsibility concern of the PDG. Yet, by measuring the time taken to organise the event, is too internally-focused. Is the time taken really the relevant aspect to be assessed? It does not reflect to what extent the goal of the initiative was attained.
Key performance results	Number of pilot projects implemented within the network of mental long-term care	The indicator is clear and measures something that is of unquestionable relevance to the corresponding PDG.
	Number of new studies published	This is a typical example of an output indicator. It has the advantage of being rather straightforward to measure. Yet, there is a risk of driving behaviour to the production of many studies, regardless of their quality and relevance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last couple of decades, transparency and accountability claims have been forcing public organizations to disclose more information regarding their goals, resources, what they deliver and how they operate.

With reference to the Portuguese context, this research assesses whether the top-level institutions of the Public Administration hierarchy – the Directorates-General (PDGs) – publicly disclose key elements of their performance system and to what extent these elements adequately cover the CAF criteria, commonly regarded in Europe as an appropriate basis to conduct performance assessment exercises.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the current study. From a transparency point of view, it is interesting to notice that PDGs have little aptitude to disclose the core elements of their performance evaluation systems through the electronic channels, especially when it comes to the self-evaluation results. The role of the integrated GeADAP portal was particularly discarded. What was created as a means to provide quick access to a multitude of entities in a single point was, at the time this study was carried out, a confusing and non-used tool. The way the portal works, by following a departmental or hierarchical model in which citizens need to know the correct designation of each PDG and to which ministry it belongs, is a signal of the bureaucratic paradigm that still prevails in many instances. Information is organized primarily according to the administrative structure of the government, in clear opposition to the e-government paradigm that strongly recommends a portal website design that reorganizes information according to the users' perspective and interest (Harris et al., 2011). Taken together, findings indicate that there is still a lot to be done in terms of convincing the top levels of Public Administration that performance reporting is an essential tool in managing the government-citizen relationship. Citizens also need to be trained in the use and value of performance indicators.

Furthermore, there are important evidences that the performance assessment systems in place in the PDGs do not comply with some important requirements of a 'good performance system', as suggested in the literature. In the Portuguese case, the lack of measurement on dimensions such as leadership, strategy and planning, and people results might well be a sign of a prevailing bureaucratic culture that is too much focused on internal procedures and legal compliance and that does not foster strategic thinking on the part of top managers. Under these circumstances, having the obligation to publicly disclose information on key performance goals and indicators tends to lead to a defensive attitude, where organizations prefer to select easy-to-accomplish objectives and express them in either a vague or a too technical way. This defensive attitude might also be an indication of a culture that rather than fostering learning and improvement, has a tendency to use performance measurement to find agencies' "mistakes" and then blaming them for unsatisfactory work. This is also typically linked to 'sort-term accountability' (Gao, 2015).

The implications of such drawbacks are very significant. There is a large consensus in the literature around the idea that the way in which performance is measured directly affects how an organization acts (Kanji and Sá, 2007). If goals are complex and ambiguous, as it happens in most Public Administration contexts, performance metrics tend to provide a partial representation of the organizations' ultimate objectives (Speklé and Verbeeten, 2014). Incomplete measures, on their turn, lead managers and policy makers to pay too much attention to results that are being measured, while unduly neglecting areas for which performance is not assessed, notably inter-organizational collaboration (Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002). This phenomenon is usually known as 'measurement myopia' (Cuganesan et al., 2014).

Although the study takes the case of the top public administration structures of a single country and therefore findings cannot be easily generalized, some common risks and lessons can be derived.

The Portuguese case shows that, in order to fulfil transparency and public accountability goals, it may not be sufficient to establish generic legal requirements for public disclosure of assessment results. Performance assessment systems legal frameworks need to include a mandatory disclosure of such information within each organization webpage (which is easily recognizable when searching for a specific organization). A unique, centralized, web portal for all public administration organizations provides a

complementary and integrated way to disclose such information. However, such portal needs to be properly organized according to the ever-changing organizational structure of Public Administration and Government in order to simplify the process of finding a particular entity. Once the online disclosure requirements are legally established, it is important to monitor whether or not such requirements are being met.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia through national funds to the Research Centre in Political Science (CICP) [grant number UID/CPO/00758/2013] and to INESC [grant number UID/MULTI/00308/2013].

REFERENCES

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *8*(4), 216–224.

Boland, T., & Fowler, A. (2000). A systems perspective of performance management in public sector organisations. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *13*(5), 417–446. http://doi.org/10.1108/09513550010350832

Bourne, M., Neely, A., Mills, J., & Platts, K. (2003). Implementing performance measurement systems: a literature review. *International Journal of Business Performance Management*, *5*(1), 1–24. http://doi.org/10.1504/IJBPM.2003.002097

Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework. *European Law Journal*, *13*(4), 447–468.

Cuganesan, S., Guthrie, J., & Vranic, V. (2014). The riskiness of public sector performance measurement: a review and research agenda. *Financial Accountability & Management*, *30*(3), 279–302. http://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12037

EIPA. (2017). *CAF Users Overview, Report issued in the 9th of January 2017*. Retrieved from http://www.eipa.eu/files/File/CAF/CAF Users Overview 9 January 2017n.pdf

European Commission. (2009). *Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment*. *5th Ministerial eGovernment Conference "Teaming up for the eUnion" of the Swedish Presidency, 18 November 2009*. Malmö, Sweden.

Gao, J. (2015). Performance measurement and management in the public sector: some lessons from research evidence. *Public Administration and Development*, *35*(2), 86–96. http://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1704

Harris, J. A., McKenzie, K. S., & Rentfro, R. W. (2011). Performance reporting: assessing citizen access to performance measures on state government websites. *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management*, *23*(1), 117–138.

Heald, D. (2006). Varieties of Transparency. In C. Hood & D. Heald (Eds.), *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?: Proceedings of the British Academy* (Vol. 135, pp. 25–43). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hood, C. (2007). Public service management by numbers: Why does it vary? Where has it come from? What are the gaps and the puzzles? *Public Money and Management*, *27*(2), 95–102.

Jackson, P. M. (1993). Public service performance evaluation: a strategic perspective. *Public Money &*

Management, *13*(4), 9–14. http://doi.org/10.1080/09540969309387783

Kanji, G., & Moura e Sá, P. (2007). Performance measurement and business excellence: The reinforcing link for the public sector. *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence*, *18*(1–2), 49–56. http://doi.org/10.1080/14783360601043096

Kennerley, M., & Neely, A. (2004). Performance measurement frameworks: A Review. In A. Neely (Ed.), *Business Performance Measuremente: Theory and Practice* (pp. 145–155). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805097.010

Linders, D., & Wilson, S. C. (2011). What is Open Government? One Year after the Directive. In *12th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research (Dg.o'11)* (pp. 262–271). College Park, MD, USA: ACM. http://doi.org/10.1145/2037556.2037599

Lourenço, R. P., Ingrams, A., & Piotrowski, S. (2017). Open Data Driven Public Accountability. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, *11*(1). http://doi.org/10.1108/TG-12-2015-0050

Macintosh, A. (2003). Using Information and Communication Technologies to Enhance Citizen Engagement in the Policy Process. In *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement* (pp. 19–142). Paris: OECD. http://doi.org/dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264019492-3-en

Meijer, A. J. (2015). Government Transparency in Historical Perspective: From the Ancient Regime to Open Data in The Netherlands. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *38*(3), 189–199. http://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2014.934837

Neely, A. D., Kennerley, M. P., & Adams, C. A. (2000). *The new measurement crisis: the Performance Prism as a solution.* Cranfield: Cranfield School of Management.

Obama, B. (2009). Transparency and open government. Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment

Open Government Working Group. (2007). 8 Principles of Open Government Data. Retrieved from http://www.opengovdata.org/home/8principles

Orszag, P. (2009). Open government directive. Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/documents/open-government-directive

Poister, T. H. (2010). The future of strategic planning in the public sector: Linking strategic management and performance. *Public Administration Review*, *70*(s1), S246–S254.

Sanger, M. B. (2008). From measurement to management: Breaking through the barriers to state and local performance. *Public Administration Review*, *68*(s1), S70–S85. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2008.00980.x

Speklé, R. F., & Verbeeten, F. H. M. (2014). The use of performance measurement systems in the public sector: effects on performance. *Management Accounting Research*, *25*(2), 131–146. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.mar.2013.07.004

Van Thiel, S., & Leeuw, F. L. (2002). The performance paradox in the public sector. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *25*(3), 267–281. http://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2002.11643661

Verma, N., & Gupta, M. P. (2012). Open Government Data : More than Eighty Formats. In *9th International Conference on E-Governance (ICEG 2012)* (pp. 207–217). Cochin, Kerala, India.