



**Ministry of Administration  
and Interior**



**Central Unit for  
Public Administration Reform**

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**4th Quality Conference for Public Administrations in the EU  
2006**

**A MODERN TOOL  
FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ROMANIA  
- Best Practice Long Description -**

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### **1) Title of the case**

A modern tool for public administration in Romania

### **2) General description of the organisation and/or project**

The Central Unit for Public Administration Reform (CUPAR) is a General Directorate within the Romanian Ministry of Administration and Interior. CUPAR was established in 2002 as the answer for the co-ordination of the public administration reform process in Romania. CUPAR mission is to co-ordinate the reform process in the public administration in Romania through:

- implementation and monitoring the regulations foreseen into the public administration reform strategy and programmes, elaborated on the basis of the Government Programme;
- proposing instruments, mechanisms and procedures of public management to be introduced/implemented at the central and local public administration level;
- identifying, programming, elaborating, co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the programmes with external financing in public administration;
- providing technical assistance to the public administration institutions in the process of implementing CAF and monitoring the entire process.

Since 2002, CUPAR has been co-ordinating several projects with external financing from the European Union and others international donors/organizations, as well as projects financed by the Romanian Government. The projects had as main goal to improve the quality of the public services delivered, as well as to strengthen CUPAR capacity to carry on the reform process in public administration (twinning projects, grants for the development of the local public administration, PHARE projects on instruments of strategic planning, strengthening the CUPAR administrative capacity, etc).

The CUPAR motto is: "Progress through common effort"

### **3) The main content of your case**

Since 2005, the Central Unit for Public Administration Reform (CUPAR) has started the process of introducing this modern instrument - Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - in Romanian public administration, both at the central and local level (Ministries, Prefectures and County Councils). Therefore, a CAF team was established at CUPAR level and its overall objective is to introduce CAF in the public administration common practice as the main self-assessment instrument.

A way to find out which are the problems that a public institution needs to adjust/improve is through implementing adequate evaluation mechanisms. A correct evaluation is essential in helping the institution to establish realistic goals and a strategic planning for achieving the targets set.

Our approach consisted in a two stages process:

- firstly raising the awareness of the benefits CAF brings separately for the strategic level and the operational level (civil servants). In this respect, a series of presentations and trainings were developed for both levels. The project was also supported by providing additional information via our website and the newsletter. The presentations and trainings were delivered using power point presentations and a CAF brochure, combining lectures with practical exercise for the participants. There were differences in the way of delivering the information about CAF for the two mentioned levels. The different approach of the presentations and trainings were intended to provide a self-assessment tool at the use of the management level, in order for their strategic planning carried out to focus on achieving the targets set. The civil servants, on the other hand, needed to gain the insight, knowledge and the ability to use the self-assessment tool, since they were expected to become the main actors in the future implementing phase.
- secondly, after the first phase, the implementation phase could become operational by providing support, on site, for the central and local government. An implementation guide was developed and will provide the main support for the CAF team members and also for implementing organizations.

CAF easy seen as an answer to the challenging effort of changing the way of thinking and acting within public institutions in Romania, making them focusing on real important problems in relation with their missions.

#### **4) The reasons behind the case**

Modernisation of the public administration is an essential part of CUPAR work.

To achieve our objectives a series of tools were developed and introduced in the public sector, essential for limiting the gaps between the private sector practice and the public sector one. The public administration has to continuously improve the delivery of public services and better respond to the demands of its customers in order to stay competitive and reliable.

One of these instruments relies on the principles of strategic management and provides a bottom-up approach to the modernisation process. It means that public authorities identify the areas that need to be improved, find the appropriate manner for implementation and constantly monitor the process. Still, establishing realistic goals is one of the main challenges in the whole process.

Several other evaluation mechanisms and analysis tools had been used with different results by the public organisations, each providing a different set of criteria and outcomes. The methodology of the evaluation is also different in terms of using the results. Internal audit procedures are in place along with other legal analysis tools, but used separately and the results are not put together as to provide a comprehensive picture of the activities carried out in relation to the organisation's mission.

CAF is an answer to a critical need of providing an easy to use, non expensive self-assessment instrument, in the programming phase, that could fill in the gap in the common practice of the public administration as a complete evaluation mechanism, having well structured criterions and a clear defined implementation procedure, including the advantages that brings with it, giving the possibility for a future benchlearning process. It can increase the degree of awareness and responsibility of all the personnel within an organisation in relation with the need for change and continuously improve the activity in the organisation.

A common practice within the public administration relates to the incomplete PDCA Cycle in dealing with objectives. The planning phase is basic and the implementing phase remains focused on activities carried out rather than on the targets achieved.

CAF team thought of this instrument which would not only evaluate the activity and the results of an institution, but which could also help the personnel to better understand the importance of performance management and measurable results through performance indicators.

The monitoring, adjusting and evaluating steps are not properly dealt with in the modernization strategies in the relation with the results achieved; also the performance indicators remain underdeveloped and need to be properly defined.

## **5) The actors behind the case**

The Ministry of Administration and Interior through CUPAR was the main actor who steered the case with the help of National Institute for Public Administration (NIA) and its Regional Centres, as well as the National Modernisation Network (composed of civil servants from local and central level in charge with modernisation issues within their institutions).

Therefore, all the responsibility for developing and managing the process (disseminating and making the civil servants aware of the modern and easy to use self-assessment instrument, in order to improve their activity) was attributed to the CAF team, within CUPAR.

The CAF team had all the necessary support from the CUPAR management level – both the Secretary of State and the General Director - to handle the process in the most appropriate manner.

There has been a very good collaboration between CUPAR and NIA in order to combine the training session on CAF dedicated to high civil servants with the specific training courses organized by NIA, for the high civil servants from all 42 counties in Romania.

NIA itself and its regional bodies had no financial or coordination contribution in this project, all these being the exclusive responsibility of CUPAR.

The national Modernisation Network helps CUPAR to disseminate, analyse, implement and monitor the local level activities related to the public administration reform process.

CAF team started the actual process by sending a newsletter to all the National Modernisation Network members, announcing them about the CUPAR initiative on CAF training sessions in order to be able to farther implement it within public administration institutions. CAF team sent them both before and after each training session newsletters keeping the network members informed on the status.

External consultants were not needed for our project.

## **6) The process leading to success**

In September 2005, the CAF team established the CAF implementation plan, stipulating clearly the tasks for each member of the team, the deadlines, the results and the performance indicators for each phase.

CAF team started, according to its plan to draw up a CAF brochure, structured on questions and answers, thus to be easier to read, dedicated to all the persons in public administration who want to understand what CAF is all about. It was published in 500 exemplars.

We decided to deliver training both for the top management level (Prefects, Sub-prefects, County Councils Presidents, General Directors, Managers) and for the civil servants within public administration institutions, thus to be sure of the success of our actions related to CAF dissemination.

Therefore, in order to obtain the needed support for our future actions, the preliminary information for the decision-making persons (top management level) regarding CAF was essential. The first planned action had as target the high civil servants from the Prefectures, respective Prefects and Sub-prefects. In this respect, we contacted the National Institute for Public Administration to propose a CUPAR training session on CAF and to identify, together with them, the best module where it could be properly fit, as NIA was responsible to manage special training courses organised for the high civil servants, the Prefects and Sub-prefects from all the counties in the country (42 counties).

Afterwards CUPAR had a whole module at its disposal called “The management of the Prefects’ action” when the CAF team has the opportunity to present the modern self - assessment instrument for the public administration institutions. The training sessions for the Prefects and Sub-prefects, as well as for the civil servants from ministries took place in the National Institute for Public Administration locations in Bucharest.

This action happened during 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005 and there were two presentation sessions for all the Prefects and Sub-prefects, separated in 2 groups (Prefects and Sub-prefects from 21 counties first and then the others from the rest 21 counties). The presentation had a theoretical and a practical part. For the theoretical part the CAF team, prepared a power point presentation structured on history of CAF, its structure with criterion and sub-criterion, the advantage of its using as well as its limits, the methodology that has to be followed when they implement CAF. The presentation was accompanied by handouts and the CAF brochure. This part was a very interactive session. The practical part was an exercise consisting of evaluating a sub-criterion selected from the 9 existing criterions. All participants, understanding the process of implementation itself, considered this simulation part very useful.

After we had finished the training sessions with the high civil servants we sent official letters to the Prefectures and to the County Councils and asked them to appoint, at least 2 civil servants within their institutions to attend the CAF training sessions. Moreover these persons had to be able to disseminate the information within their institutions and to be part of the CAF team during the implementation.

The training sessions dedicated to the civil servants were held within the 8 Regional Centers of the National Institute for Public Administration (NIA), around the country and within the National Institute for Public Administration itself in Bucharest. They provided logistical support, consisting of a training room fully prepared. Each of the 8 Regional Centers was considered the most appropriate location for the training sessions dedicated to the civil servants within the respective county (the Prefectures and the County Councils).

Work on providing relevant information via the CUPAR internet site and keeping the members of the National Modernisation Network informed continued, from the office, throughout the entire project.

## **7) Results indicating the success**

In order to measure the quality of our training sessions, after each training session the participants were handed an evaluation form, through which we asked them to write about the things they liked best during the training, the things they appreciated less at the presentation as well as what they want to do within their institutions in relation to this instrument. Starting from these evaluation forms we tried to improve the delivering of the following trainings on CAF.

Analyzing the evaluation forms, the CAF team found out the following:

- all participants considered very useful the simulation of CAF implementation

- the majority of the participants expressed their expectation in receiving a positive feedback, from the top management level, related to CAF implementation

We used both qualitative and quantitative indicators in order to monitor the process:

- 280 persons have been trained on CAF, of which 84 prefects and sub-prefects and 176 civil servants from the local level and 20 civil servants from the central level
- The trainees are able to disseminate the information related to CAF and most of them will take part in the auto-evaluation process as project managers or members in the evaluation team;
- 42 County Councils and 42 Prefectures are ready to implement CAF as well as 15 ministries

The outcome of the presentations and training campaign is that the CAF team within CUPAR received 24 requests to implement CAF from 24 public administration institutions (Prefectures and County Councils). This result has a greater importance if we take into account that all demands for implementing CAF are send based on **voluntary actions** from the institutions.

Our Ministry didn't impose this instrument to the public institutions, living them the possibility to choose the proper way in order to improve their activities, thus to be able to deliver quality services to their customers. In this way we succeed to change the common practice in Romanian public administration, related to the way of working and thinking – from the top –down to bottom up approach.

## **8) Main obstacles of the case**

The real challenge of CAF, after going through the whole training experience, is the trainees.

They come from different regions, counties, organisations; they have different experiences, different backgrounds, expertises, etc. Some were young and eager to learn and experience CAF, others were sceptic or reluctant about the success of the self-evaluation results.

Civil servants, at operational level, are accustomed to being the subject of evaluation rather than the other way around. It meant that being objective when performing the evaluation required a change of attitude not always easy to put into practice. Moreover, bringing a constructive but critical attitude in the process of evaluation was a challenge, too.

Providing actual facts instead of personal judgements aroused a strong issue that needed to be addressed. The trainers emphasized several times on importance of giving objective opinions on the evaluated criterion.

All these factors needed to be taken into account and thus, contributed to our success story.

The final goal of our action was to provide the civil servants with the insight, knowledge and ability to implement CAF as a first step in establishing the modernisation strategies, developing and managing processes based on performance management and performance indicators.

The final outcome of our action consisted in the official demands received from local institutions requiring support to implement CAF.

## **9) Main sources of inspiration behind the case**

In 2004, with help from PHARE 2001 project “Building Institutional Capacity for the Ministry of Administration and Interior”, Central Unit for Public Administration Reform implemented the

self-assessment tool - The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - in nine General Directorates within the Ministry of Administration and Interior and the National Agency for Civil Servants. This evaluation was carried out in order to evaluate their activities, both at the ministry and in each separate division level.

In order to ensure the performance measures of each public authority preparing a Multi-annual Modernization Programs (a 3 years program), CUPAR decided to measure the satisfaction with the activities of the public administration of the personnel from prefectures and county councils.

Without a strong, powerful self-assessment tool at their disposal, public organisations focused on rather shallow objectives. The results were then limited.

Based on the previous experience from 2004, the decision was then obviously taken to strongly support the implementation of CAF. A team was established, a master plan put in place and resources allocated.

Best practice cases and success stories from EIPA were and still remain a strong source of inspiration and motivation.

## **10) The most important lesson learned**

In the end, the process of disseminating CAF proved to be a successful one.

The reason behind this statement is 24 voluntary demands to implement CAF. We also appreciated the participants' positive involvement during the training sessions and their enthusiasm towards this new and modern instrument.

This experience showed us that a non-imposed action can also have positive results. This is the most important lesson learned and it has its significance within Romanian public administration as there is a common practice to neglect the importance of voluntary actions in favor of legal framework actions (the top-down approach).

From here an implementation calendar was set and published. Our efforts will focus on site visits around the country, providing help and support in the implementation of CAF.