

Reforming public administration: Spain's action plan

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Speakers

- **Jaime P. Renovales**, Undersecretary of the Presidency and main coordinator for the public sector reforms
- **Íñigo Mendez de Vigo**, State Secretary for EU affairs

After a brief introduction by Íñigo Mendez de Vigo, Jaime P. Renovales presented the report elaborated by the Commission for Public Administration Reform (CORA), created with the purpose of undertaking a meticulous ex-ray examination of the Spanish public sector in recent decades.

The Spanish sector is small in comparison to the other European States, accounting for 44% of GDP in 2012 (the Eurozone average is 49.9%). Nearly half of public expenditure is managed at a regional and local level. The Reform of Spanish Public Administrations started in 2011 and is based on four main principles:

- Budgetary discipline and public transparency

The fundamental novelties are the application of individual budget targets at all levels of administration, improved transparency through monthly/quarterly reports and right to access information for citizens, a rationalisation of public sector companies and foundations, a plan to eradicate late payments in the public sector.

- Public sector rationalisation

This part of the reform consists of a plan to eliminate overlaps between State and Regional governments, a rationalisation of institutional administrations (e.g. some regulatory bodies), a clarification of municipal powers in order to avoid duplicated functions.

- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government

The measures adopted in 2012 consist of a public sector recruitment freeze, a new civil servant career model (including better mechanisms for internal and inter-administrative mobility) and the import of best practices from the private sector.

- Administration at the service of citizens and businesses

The fundamental measure is the Market Unity Guarantee Act, which ensures the free circulation of goods and services throughout the Spanish territory. The act is inspired to the European legislation that allows free circulation of goods across the Member States.

As of 26th February 2014, 58 out of the 219 measures included in CORA's report are completed, and the remaining ones are in process of execution.

Q&A session

- How can the government obtain and maintain the political and public consensus to the reform?

The key is to create working groups with the Regions. It is important to convince the regional governments that there is no political issue behind the reform, but it is a win-win process that will allow them to get savings and reduce their burden.

- How can the reform process be kept alive after the crisis?

CORA is still alive: the Commission is still working to elaborate new proposals. Moreover, most of the measures are structural.

- How can the government be sure that the reform is implemented?

A responsible person has been designated: she is in charge of writing a monthly report that is presented to the Prime Minister, while a quarterly report is presented to the Council of Ministers.