STUDY ON THE USE OF THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF) IN EUROPEAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

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Responsible for this survey: Dr Christian Engel and Seán Fitzpatrick

Institut Européen
d'Administration Publique

European Institute
of Public Administration

FOREWORD

The scenery that the public European administrations have to face is in continuous evolution.

Innovation in the field of public services meets the demand of users, citizens and business: a demand for quality in the services delivered, in exchange for the resources given to public administrations for their operation. Citizens and business also request improved communications and greater participation and transparency in the administrative decision-making process, both nationally and at the European level.

The European public administrations need to equip themselves with flexible and innovative tools that allow them to answer to such demands in rapid times and with more and more diversified modalities.

Anyway, the process of modernization and reform that has to be undertaken, must be jointly designed and faced, even though with different points of departure, because the direction has to be common, the ways have to be compatible and the tools have to be homogeneous.

For such reasons, the attention, during the Italian Presidency, has been focused on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), a tool of the European cooperation, realized for promoting the improvement of the services, through increasingly homogeneous performances.

Within the informal cooperation, the present study, commissioned by the Department of Public Administration to the EIPA (European Institute for Public Administrations), has the objective to analyse the experiences of CAF application at the European level and to identify the guidelines used in the different Countries to support and promote the diffusion of the CAF.

Starting from this analysis, the aim is to progressively elaborate a common plan, also suitable to the acceding and candidate Countries that further enhances the possibilities of comparison among the European public administrations performances and the exchange of experiences.

Carlo D'Orta

Head of Department of Public Administration

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Chapter I: National correspondents and resources

A network of national correspondents was set up in order to promote and provide support to their own administrations for using the CAF as a tool to improve the quality of the public service. This part of the study analyses the actions taken by the old and new Member States, focusing on two questions:

a) *Is there a clear and significant link between the amount of resources – both human and financial – put into the CAF at national level and its actual use?*
b) *Are we able to identify good practice with regard to promoting the use of the CAF and giving support to organisations?*

I.1. CAF – the current status in Member States

Attempting to reflect the differential status of the CAF in both old and new Member States, we have divided countries into five groups reflecting, in a very rough way and at this specific moment in time, the support given to CAF.

Levels of CAF support

Level	Definition	Countries
Group 1 Level 0	There is no official support for the CAF	CY - IRL - L - M - NL - RO - UK
Group 2 Level 1	The CAF is recommended as one tool (among others)	CZ - DK - FIN - GR - PL - E - N - S
Group 3 Level 2	The CAF is recommended and supported through corresponding activities	A - EST - D - H - I - P - SK - SLO
Group 4 Level 3	The CAF is recommended and promoted as main quality improvement tool and supported through corresponding activities	B
Group 5 Level 4	Using the CAF is mandatory	

I.2. The CAF – Resources and Organisational Patterns

With regard to the resources, both human and financial, devoted to the CAF we can distinguish between three groups of countries:

- the first and largest group has made little or no specific resources available for the CAF (**CY**, **EST, FIN, IRL, L, M, NL, N, RO, SLO, E, UK**);
- a second group of countries has devoted a limited amount of specific resources to the CAF (**A, CZ, DK, GR, PL, P, S**);
- a third group of countries has put a substantial amount of resources into the CAF (**B, D, H, I, SK**).

Most countries have entrusted the dissemination and promotion of the CAF to a specific organisation - either to the Ministry in charge of the civil service or to a central government agency fulfilling the same task under that Ministry. **Germany** officially assigned this task to the German University for Administrative Sciences in Speyer. For different reasons a small number of countries have not yet assigned this task to any institution (**CZ, IRL, M, UK**).

In addition, a significant number of countries have adopted a partnership approach (either territorial or organisational) in disseminating and promoting the CAF.

I.3.   Promoting the CAF – Activities and Strategies

The table below gives an overview of the different tools/ activities and the countries in which they were used:

Tool or activity	Country
Advice (to individual organisations)	A; B; EST; D; I; N
Case studies	E
CAF-based projects	DK
Database / good practice	A; B; D; H; SLO; E
E-learning	A; D; P
Electronic application tool	S
Electronic evaluation tool	A; D; S
Networks and partnerships	A; B; DK; D; I; P; SK; E
Pilot projects	CZ; EST; H; I; N; P; SK; SLO
Publications (leaflets not included)	B; D
Quality conferences	EST; H; I; N; SK
Quality awards / contests	A; B; EST; D; I; P
Questionnaires	P
Special guidelines	H; P
Special training (developed for the CAF)	A; B; DK; EST; PL; SLO; E
User Conferences	D; H; I
Worksheets	A; D; IRL; P

A first range of activities relates to the provision of information on the CAF itself.

At a second level/ stage, initiatives have been taken to actually launch the use of the CAF. Two of them are outstanding both in their frequency and in their impact:
-    pilot projects - widely used in new Member States -, and
-    the organisation of national quality awards or contests.

The third category of activities aims at providing practical support for administrations that are interested in using the CAF with the purpose of facilitating its implementation in different ways.

I.4. The CAF – its implementation to date

Based on the information received, which shows that there are far more uses (ca. 500) than those registered at EIPA (ca. 200), the following categories of countries can be distinguished.

Group 1 (no use at all)	CY; L; NL
Group 2 (1 to 5)	CZ; F; GR; IRL; M; RO; E; UK
Group 3 (6 to 10)	P
Group 4 (11 to 25)	DK; EST; H; PL; SK; SLO; S
Group 5 (26 to 50)	A; D; FIN
Group 6 (above 50)	B; I; N

Often, but not always, a significant use of the CAF in a country is linked to the greater amount of support given in these countries to the tool.

Even though the CAF is of interest in particular types of organisations, from a particular level of government or sector of activity, the situation is different from country to country. There is therefore no evidence that basic interest in the CAF in general is stronger at a specific level of government or within a particular sector of activity.

I.5. Evaluating the evidence

The following conclusions can be drawn, at this particular moment in time:

1. On the whole, there is little evidence of a "spontaneous" use being made of the CAF. The findings demonstrate the relevance of active promotion and support to the CAF and therefore underline the importance of the function of CAF correspondents.

2. There is a clear link between the extent of support given to the CAF in the various countries and the amount of initiatives taken to promote and support the CAF on the one hand and the actual use that is made of the CAF. A support at level 3 at least (see I.1.) is needed to get the CAF off the ground. Just recommending it for use will generally not encourage administrations to use it.

3. The approach to promoting the CAF has generally been a <u>bottom-up approach</u>. The most "successful" countries have generally sought to build up networks of CAF users and to convince other administrations of the usefulness of the CAF through good examples and through "CAF agents". Pilot projects have proven to be a very helpful exercise. Ideally, this may lead to a "bottom-up movement" of CAF users. Conversely, it can be said that the use of a tool like the CAF will only work by convincing, supporting and leading the way but not in any way by pushing or even forcing.

4. A minority of countries has used an approach suggested by the CAF itself, i.e. a PDCA-type approach. Most countries have instead engaged in a number of

initiatives not fully linked to a clear and sound approach, a phase of measurement and evaluation and a review phase. A sound approach might have helped a number of countries in finding the right approach to promoting the CAF.

5. A critical reflection on the organisation of quality awards or contests seems to be justified. The evidence clearly shows that countries that have used this approach have been successful in terms of the number of administrations that have used the CAF. There is, however, little evidence of these processes and events leading to a wider use of the CAF unrelated to quality awards. This leads us to the question as to whether individual administrations that have used the CAF in the context of a national quality award have actually shown a genuine interest in the tool and in a systematic improvement process or whether they have used the CAF just for the purpose of participating in an award contest.

6. There are, on the whole, not many but some interesting differences between current and future EU Member States with regard to promoting the CAF and the understanding of the tool. Future Member States have generally organised pilot projects to study the relevance of the CAF and to build up knowledge and interest. Secondly, they tend to generally speak of an "implementation" of the CAF (in individual organisations), whereas this term is more rarely used in current Member States. Future Member States seem therefore to be inclined to look for practical ways to improve "quality" in straightforward and standard ways whereas current Member States seem to share the view that each organisation finally needs to look for its own way.

7. We also find convincing evidence of the fact that in a substantial number of countries – if not the majority – an adaptation of the CAF to the national context was necessary to help get the CAF off ground (e.g. adapt the language used, develop a standard set of indicators, an even simpler version of the CAF or special guidelines for individual types of administrations); a tool developed for use in all types of public administrations across European countries seems to have limitations. Thinking further ahead, the phenomenon of a national "translation" or "adaptation" of the CAF may help to encourage administrations to use the tool in an adequate way and to understand its purpose, but it has the potential risk that the common ground with regard to the CAF will become weaker, potentially also reducing the incentives or abilities to benchmark. We see a need to discuss this development.

8. Finally, we can identify a number of good practices developed by individual countries or a set of countries to disseminate and promote the use of the CAF. Among these, the organisation of large-scale national quality conferences, the organisation of quality award contests, the organisation of user conferences and networks and the development of a sound set of partnerships can be identified as particularly relevant. Although some sceptical comments (point no. 7) need to be made, we would add the initiatives to adapt the CAF to national or even sectorial requirements.

Chapter II: Using the CAF in practice

This chapter is based on the information gathered from the 156 questionnaires returned to EIPA by individual organisations from 18 different countries:
-   106 from the CAF database at EIPA (response rate of 53 %).
-   50 received via the national correspondents (1/3 of the total number)

II.1.   Basic characteristics of the administrations

Country of origin

		Replies received		
		EIPA database	Via national correspondents	Total
EUROPEAN UNION	**10**			
Austria		**20**		**20**
Belgium		**27**	**18**	**45**
Germany		**18**	**3**	**21**
France		**1**		**1**
Finland		**1**		**1**
Italy		**19**		**19**
Portugal		**2**	**4**	**6**
Greece		**-**	**4**	**4**
Ireland		**-**	**1**	**1**
Spain		**-**	**3**	**3**
CANDIDATE COUNTRIES & NORWAY	**8**			
Czech Republic		**2**		**2**
Estonia		**6**	**2**	**8**
Slovenia		**10**		**10**
Hungary		**-**	**3**	**3**
Slovakia		**-**	**9**	**9**
Norway		**-**	**1**	**1**
Romania		**-**	**1**	**1**
Malta		**-**	**1**	**1**
TOTAL		**106**	**50**	**156**

Level of government

45	29 %	Central Government (national, federal)
12	8 %	(For countries with a federal structure) State Government
25	16 %	Regional Government
60	38 %	Local Government
14	9 %	Other

Type of administration

32	21 %	Government Ministry (central or regional government)
17	11 %	State agency
3	2 %	State-owned or state-run enterprise
55	35 %	Local or regional self-government institution ("devolved" administration)
37	24 %	State/federal or regional-state administration at regional or local level
12	8 %	Other

Sector of activity

2	1 %	Criminal Justice and Law
6	4 %	Customs, Taxes and Finances
14	9 %	Education and Research
7	4 %	Health Sector
6	4 %	Police and Security
2	1 %	Public Works and Utilities
22	14 %	Social Services & Social Security
2	1 %	Transport and Infrastructure
43	28 %	Local Government (municipalities, districts, provinces)
14	9 %	General policy and oversight / co-ordination
38	24 %	Other

Size of the organisation

3	2 %	< 10
22	14 %	10-50
25	16 %	51-100
36	23 %	101-250
40	26 %	251-1000
24	15 %	1001-5000
6	4 %	> 5000

II.2.   The use of the CAF: the context

In the following sections we have chosen not to analyse the replies to each question in detail, but rather to look for patterns and significant differences in the responses.

While the majority of respondents used the "old" CAF, the use of CAF 2002 is growing rapidly. Its application for a second time or more can be expected to grow as time passes, with a second or subsequent use being most likely after a lapse of two years.

Organisational change and restructuring or the introduction of new systems seem to have been drivers for the use of CAF quite often, but by far the majority of uses were in a normal operating context.

In more than half the cases, the use of CAF was the first experience of using a tool for quality management or improvement and indeed the first occasion that a special quality unit, team or group was convened. It is interesting to note that organisations that had previously

used other quality instruments had in several cases tried more than one. It would be interesting to explore the reasons behind adopting the CAF model after having used ISO 9000, quality circles, EFQM and/or the balanced scorecard. Conventional wisdom is that the CAF is a "starter" model which organisations can use until such time as their quality management processes become too sophisticated and require the more elaborate models for better analysis. It may well be that the other models were found to be too complex, costly and/or time-consuming. In certain cases, however, it is understood that public sector organisations already familiar with other quality management tools used the CAF to demonstrate its user-friendliness to other organisations in their country.

The reasons given for using the CAF are many and varied, but in the majority of cases, it was used to identify strengths and areas for improvement, as a quick "health check" of the administration, as an input into ongoing improvement activities, to increase sensitivity for "quality" issues and to promote the exchange of views in the organisation. While participation in a national quality conference was given as a (very) relevant reason in 39 cases, this was in addition to the other major reasons cited above. In this connection, however, the question arises as to how much willingness to change there was on the part of organisations using the CAF as a precondition to participate in a quality conference. There is scope here to explore how best to link the CAF to national quality conferences in the future. Perhaps the qualifying criteria could include the provision of evidence that some positive action had been taken as a result of using the CAF. At the very least, a demonstration of willingness to change should be a prerequisite.

The decision to use the CAF was taken in the vast majority of cases by top management or the management team. This is the recommended approach if the support of top management is to be forthcoming in the follow-up to self-assessment. Past analysis has shown that where there is strong buy-in from management and where management actively drives the process, there is much more likelihood that any action plan resulting from the exercise will be properly implemented. There is a clear need to establish a shared vision that conveys the importance of the self-assessment process to the overall organization, its personnel, and the public served. Sharing a view of the future represents the most important context for effecting change. When individuals are involved in the generation and use of knowledge, different groups of people are then in a position to act collectively based on informed decisions. A major benefit is the formation of a coalition of stakeholders, who are informed and prepared to affect and sustain change to improve the delivery of services and enabling supports. This is unlikely to occur in the absence of strong management support.

In looking at the context in which the decision to use the CAF was taken, we also examined the responses to this section against the responses given to later questions. We found that there was no discernable co-relation between the context in which the decision to use the CAF was taken and the actual use and follow-up of the CAF. The exception is that a number of organisations that used the CAF because it was a requirement for a quality conference do not intend to use it again.

The size of organisation and the area of activity does not appear to make a difference either, at least as far as obstacles encountered and benefits gained are concerned. While many of the responses received were from organisations describing themselves as "local government", this is not surprising given the total number of such organisations across Europe. In fact, given the smaller "population" of central government organisations in

Europe, a greater proportion of these have used the CAF. This may well be down to the fact that most national CAF correspondents are connected to central government.

II.3. The self-assessment process (the implementation of the CAF)

It is disappointing to note that only 92 organisations let all their staff know that the CAF exercise was to take place. In our view, this information should always be communicated to the whole staff, showing thus that staff are trusted. Failure to demonstrate trust in all the staff of the organisation is likely to have the effect of diminishing trust even within the self-assessment group. Without mutual respect and trust, it is likely that any self-assessment exercise will be seriously flawed.

With regard to the numbers taking part in the assessment group, almost half had between five and ten participants. Empirical studies have shown that groups work best when the number of participants is between seven and fifteen. It is encouraging to note that the vast majority of groups fall into this range. It is difficult to imagine how some of the very large groups mentioned were able to function using the existing guidelines. Having said that, there may well be a case for involving as many people as possible, to benefit from the resulting "buy-in" to any action plan arising from the self assessment. This is an area worthy of further examination and discussion, perhaps with a view to developing new guidelines on how to involve as many staff members as possible in the process. Could you establish special groups of between seven and fifteen to examine and assess each criterion, or even each sub-criterion? Or perhaps all staff members could be asked to do an individual assessment to be taken into account by an assessment group?

In more than half the responses, the percentage of staff participating as members of a self-assessment group was less than ten per cent. In only one case were all staff involved. It is difficult to know what the optimum level of participation should be, and we have no way of knowing which organisations did the best job of conducting the self-assessment. In this context, the best job is not the one that was conducted most extensively, or the quickest or most detailed. In our view, the true performance indicator for a successful application of the CAF should be the successful implementation of an action plan to close the gaps identified as room for improvement. Having said that, we also recognise that the process itself can be a learning experience for the participants and for the organisation as a whole. Increased awareness and better internal communication would also be positive indicators.

With regard to the type or level of staff active in the self-assessment groups, it is noticeable that top and middle management are generally well represented, while supporting staff are less well represented. While junior staff may be less well informed about the organisation as a whole, it is a fact that not all wisdom resides at the top. Furthermore, all staff in an organisation have a stake in that organisation. Perhaps there is room for improvement in the guidelines with regard to how participants are selected to join the self-assessment group. An ideal group would have a good balance between level, age, gender, expertise and work area in the organisation.

Expert assistance in preparing for and in implementing the CAF was availed of by about a hundred users and these came from a wide range of areas, with the highest number being external consultants. Explanation of the CAF and appropriate documentation were seen by many as being useful in the preparatory stage. It is worth noting that nearly half of those who felt case studies would have been useful, did not get any such case studies. For those that did not use external expert assistance, it seems from the replies received that over half were happy with the decision to do it themselves. Forty-one organisations, however, felt that using such assistance during the self-assessment would have been better. It is worth noting that several organisations that undertook the preparatory stage without external assistance engaged such assistance for the actual self-assessment. With regard to obstacles and difficulties encountered, however, the presence or absence of external assistance seems to have had no real impact. Difficulties with the CAF itself were experienced more or less equally by those organisations that used external consultants and by those that took a "do-it-yourself" approach. Since the CAF was intended to be a light and easy to use tool, it would have been unfortunate if the results indicated that external assistance was essential.

The length of time devoted to the whole process varied greatly, ranging from one working day up to eight months. In some instances the assessment, while being conducted in a few working days, was spread over periods as long as a year. Most, however, were conducted in one or two working weeks. Without more information, it is difficult to say which is best. Intuitively, it might seem that getting through the process within a week would be more productive and less disruptive; perhaps spreading the process over a longer time frame could result in a more successful application of the CAF and the generation of an appropriate action plan.

The majority of groups report that they reached consensus by engaging in intense group discussions until they reached agreement. The benefits of the process which were most highly valued by many groups were; that the sharing of information proved to be important, that people developed a better understanding of the organisation and they developed an increased level of awareness about organisational issues / problems. The intense group discussions undertaken by so many groups may have had an influence on this perception.

As far as obstacles were concerned, the most important and most often cited were difficulties linked to the CAF itself in terms of understanding the criteria, the language and the scoring system. It is worth noting that fewer users of CAF 2002 cited this as an obstacle, so we can take it that the changes made were an improvement. Having to conduct the exercise while conducting business as usual was also seen as problematic. Lack of experience in sharing views and information within the organisation was also considered to be a significant barrier to successful completion of the self-assessment. In our view, while there is always room for improvement in the CAF itself, effective training is the most effective way to overcome the difficulties linked to the CAF itself. As the most important function served by the CAF is the identification of areas for improvement under the different criteria, scoring should be seen as secondary to that objective. Difficulties encountered with the sharing of views and information will diminish as people become more familiar with participative management, in our view a necessary prerequisite to successful self-assessment.

The purpose of undertaking a CAF self-assessment is obviously to get something from it. It is reassuring to see from the replies received that benefits were identified for both the organisation and its staff. The most relevant and most frequently reported benefit was the clear identification of strengths and areas for improvement in the organisation. Identification of areas for improvement led to the identification of a number of important actions to be undertaken. On the people front, CAF was seen as leading to an increased level of awareness about organisational issues and problems, a better understanding of the organisation by staff and an awareness of the importance of good communications and the sharing of information. It also led in many instances to the generation of new ideas and new ways of thinking. The identification of communication and information problems was seen as a benefit by over fifty organisations.

II.4.   The follow-up

In line with our comments in section II.3, it is disappointing to note that only 90 organisations let all their staff know the results of the CAF exercise. Again, it is our view that this information should always be communicated to the whole staff, and for the same reasons.

The principal positive actions were: an input into running improvement activities/ actions; an input into the strategic planning process of the organisation; some individual improvement activities (but no full action plan); and a full action-plan outlining the way forward and describing the actions to be taken and that will actually be implemented.

Since only 29 organisations reported that they had developed a full action-plan outlining the way forward and describing the actions to be taken and that will actually be implemented, it could be argued that these were the only organisations to fully implement the CAF. However, any positive action resulting from its use could also be seen as positive. Nowhere is it reported that the use of the CAF had a negative outcome for the organisation or for the individuals involved.

The vast majority of users say they intend to use the CAF again. Just 19 organisations (12 - 13 %) say they do not intend to use it again. In this context, there may be scope for encouraging such organisations to think again. As the use of the CAF spreads and as awareness of it grows among the public and politicians, it is likely that organisations will in the future be expected to use some form of self-assessment process to improve the quality of public administration and the CAF is there to fill that role.

The majority of organisations that intend to use the CAF again say they will do so annually or every two years. While an annual cycle might fit well with other cycles in public administration (annual estimates, budget, performance appraisal etc.) our view is that some time should be allowed for any action plan arising from the first use of the CAF to be implemented. The second and subsequent iteration could then review the outcomes from the previous one. A two-year cycle would give more scope in this regard.

It is clear that some lessons were learned by organisations during their first use of the CAF. There is a strong demand evident for additional methodological and supporting material to be provided to support self-assessment. However, in terms of what organisations would change about how the self-assessment was conducted, most responses indicated that improvement was possible from within.

Better communication is seen as very important by most organisations. For the next use of the CAF, the most frequently mentioned improvement sought is more (or better) preparation and explanation. A significant number of organisations intend to make sure that other priorities and activities will not be in the way. Time was an issue for 35% of the organisations, who intend to set aside more time for discussions within the self-assessment team. Wider involvement of employees, management and other key persons is planned by many. More (or better) external assistance, more careful selection of the right moment for self-assessment, different composition of the self-assessment team, better clarification of why self-assessment is undertaken and more time for convincing people / colleagues of the purpose are all significant intentions for future use of the CAF.

Given that these stated intentions are the result of lessons learned during the first, and occasionally second, application of the CAF, any new users would be well advised to try to learn from others and take note of how previous users intend to apply the CAF again.

II.5.   Benchmarking

About a third of the organisations that responded to the questionnaire say they took part in a benchmarking project. This participation rate is fairly evenly spread across different countries, but nearly half of German respondents has done so.

As to the reasons given for engaging in benchmarking, the majority said they did so to learn from others, or in other words to engage in a simple exchange of experiences. Some organisations were keen to present their own system of integrated management (operational and strategic planning) to other organisations and to find good practices from other institutions to improve their own way of working. Others wished to compare their level of efficiency with organisations offering similar services in other Member States. Performance comparison was mentioned by many respondents. Benchmarking against other systems related to service evaluation was another reason given. One organisation sought to use benchmarking to help improve their Internet site, while another wished to exchange experiences about internal audit.

It is interesting, but not surprising given language barriers, that more than half of all benchmarking projects were conducted with other similar domestic administrations.

In terms of what benefits were sought from benchmarking, identifying good practices that could be taken over was the most frequently given response. Another way of putting this is that the organisation was looking for new ways to improve, or looking for alternative ways of doing things, and many organisations gave all three responses.

The main obstacles to benchmarking that were identified were: too many other priorities, a lack of time, a lack of human resources and financial resources. Another significant obstacle was the difficulty in identifying suitable partners.

Finally, it is promising that almost all respondents (93%) say that if they are contacted by another organisation interested in carrying a benchmarking project and with a concrete proposal, they would be willing to consider the idea.

Conclusions

As stated at the outset, the purpose of this study was:

1. to help develop a better understanding of the conditions under which the CAF can be a useful analytical and improvement tool for public administrations, including questions related to the type of administrations that have found the CAF most helpful and questions related to the self-assessment process itself;

2. to identify the role of national agencies in promoting the CAF and lead to guidelines for promoting the CAF in the new Member States.

In addition, it was intended to obtain information to be used to launch benchmarking projects between European administrations that have used the CAF.

The results of the study are set out in detail above and in our view they meet the objectives very well. In view of the fact that this study is also intended as an input to the CAF event organised in Rome on 17th and 18th November 2003, it is worth looking at the results carefully but without rushing to conclusions. Having said that, we believe that there are some conclusions that can be drawn immediately.

Given the total number of public sector organisations across all Member States and candidate countries, comparatively little use has been made of the potential of self-assessment using the CAF in helping organisations to explore their own strengths and weaknesses, reflect on their performance, and identify priorities for change. The CAF is a powerful vehicle for analysing organisational choices, which have a crucial influence over organisational effectiveness.

The aims of the CAF are also twofold: to build capacity in an organisation to undertake self-assessment and to build up a comprehensive picture of the factors underlying organisational effectiveness. Obviously for any organisation there are internal and external factors that influence their effectiveness. These factors, or enablers, interact in a complex and dynamic way and so it is difficult to capture them at a single point in time. The use of the CAF over a relatively short timeline should help to focus an organisation on the particular areas for improvement.

Many public sector organisations aim to achieve more or less the same things. Some work in very different contexts, some adopt different approaches and strategies to achieve their objectives. The CAF provides a vehicle for critical reflection and analysis among staff. This results in both increased capacity for organisational self-assessment in the future and valuable insights into performance now. It also opens up the possibility of benchmarking

performance against other public sector organisations. As staff become more familiar with the shared language and concepts in the CAF, benchmarking projects should become more widely undertaken.

Being honest about the motives for using the CAF from the beginning seems obvious. It is also necessary to be open and flexible in terms of timing, techniques and reporting back.

The use of the CAF in an organisation should only be contemplated by organisations that are prepared to reflect on their performance seriously and openly, and to change themselves as a result. For public administrations that are committed to putting their participatory principles into practice, the CAF can be invaluable in identifying ways forward.

With regard to resources, it is clear that conducting a self-assessment process can be resource intensive. No matter how light the CAF may appear, it requires a dedicated budget and level of effort from participants within the organisation.

Appendix A: Dissemination and promotion at national level - Good practice

In this appendix we have summarised the information from the chapter on the dissemination and promotion of the CAF at national level. It includes elements of approaches from different countries, and also steps that have not been taken by any country. It is important in this context, however, to emphasise the need for a clear vision, clear goals and strategies to be implemented when promoting the implementation of the CAF at national level. It is very important also to promote adequate training strategies, both for the conduct of a self-assessment and for the organisational and management skills necessary for successful implementation in an organisation.

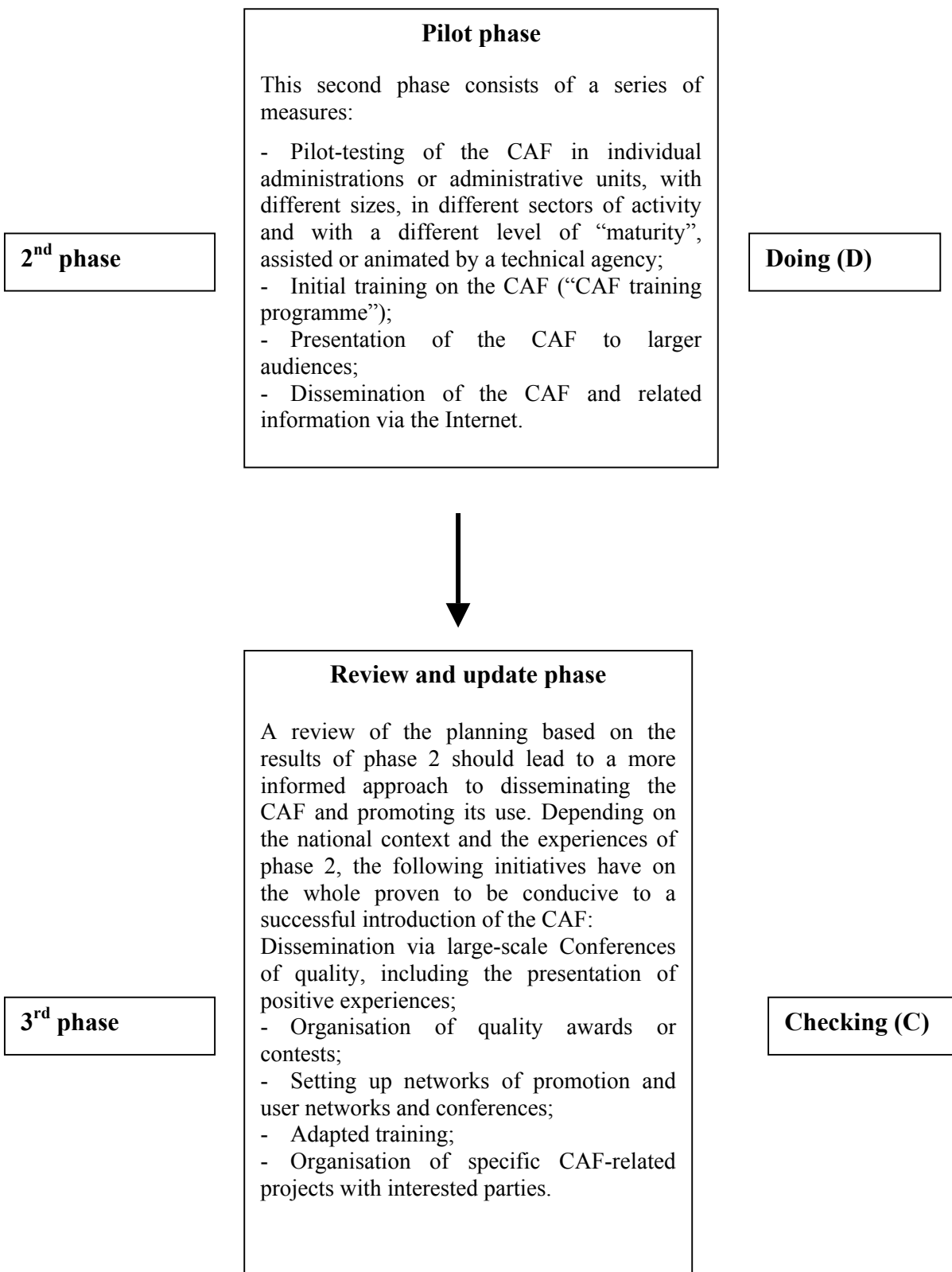The good practice in disseminating and promoting the CAF can in this sense best be presented in a diagram with different phases based on the PDCA-cycle underlying the scoring system of the CAF 2002 itself.

| 1st phase | **Planning phase**

Initial planning by the government or the competent Ministry to work with the CAF and on how to proceed ("strategic planning"). It is of particular relevance to link the CAF to the overall modernization approach.

The planning phase should include an approach to the kind of "political" support to be given to the CAF, to the dissemination of the CAF and to its communication and to the amount of resources and the type of support activities required.

It should also include handing over the operational responsibility to a technical agency and making available initial resources.

Technical Agency

A technical agency should at least obtain the following tasks and corresponding resources:
- Dissemination and provision of general information about the CAF
- Individual assistance to administrations wishing to use the CAF, potentially by following through at least initial self-assessments
- Development of tools to facilitate the use of the CAF | **Planning (P)** |

| **2nd phase** | **Pilot phase**

This second phase consists of a series of measures:

- Pilot-testing of the CAF in individual administrations or administrative units, with different sizes, in different sectors of activity and with a different level of "maturity", assisted or animated by a technical agency;
- Initial training on the CAF ("CAF training programme");
- Presentation of the CAF to larger audiences;
- Dissemination of the CAF and related information via the Internet. | **Doing (D)** |

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| **3rd phase** | **Review and update phase**

A review of the planning based on the results of phase 2 should lead to a more informed approach to disseminating the CAF and promoting its use. Depending on the national context and the experiences of phase 2, the following initiatives have on the whole proven to be conducive to a successful introduction of the CAF:
Dissemination via large-scale Conferences of quality, including the presentation of positive experiences;
- Organisation of quality awards or contests;
- Setting up networks of promotion and user networks and conferences;
- Adapted training;
- Organisation of specific CAF-related projects with interested parties. | **Checking (C)** |

	Acting and facilitating	
	Finally, a number of initiatives and specific (technical) tools have, again depending on the national context, proven to be particularly relevant in view of encouraging administrations to make use of the CAF and of facilitating its use. These are: - Specific guidelines (or "translations") for individual levels of government or sectors of activity; - Electronic assessment and evaluation tools; - A networking service for communication and exchange between administrations/users; - Database of good practice.	
4th phase		**Acting (A)**

Comments:

Experience has shown that the dissemination and promotion of the CAF should ideally be based on a sound strategic approach. This includes a number of elements:

- The CAF should best be linked to an overall reform or modernisation strategy of a government. It would also be helpful to explain the relationship between the CAF and related tools.
- It is equally relevant to communicate the CAF in the right way in order to increase its acceptance and attractiveness. The **initial phase** should thus include a communication strategy – ideally presenting the CAF as a practical and flexible tool for organisational development – which can be evaluated.
- The development of initial training on the CAF should ideally be part of the strategy.
- The dissemination of the CAF can be done in very different ways, and the same way will not be adequate to the culture of each country. Ideally, the dissemination strategy should at least include dissemination via e-mail and Internet and the provision of initial information via the Internet.
- Finally, the evidence suggests that those countries in particular that have entrusted the promotion and dissemination of the CAF to technical agencies have had positive experiences. On the whole, these technical agencies have both a deeper and more specialised knowledge and staff with regard to quality initiatives in public administration and are more familiar with project-related work.

In a **second phase**, a successful spreading of the CAF has been achieved in several countries through pilot projects in particular which had several positive or helpful effects:
- They have helped clarify difficulties of understanding as well as critical aspects of the CAF and, where applicable, the need to adapt the CAF and its communication to a specific national or sectoral context;
- They have been helpful in identifying both adequate ways to communicate the CAF and its purposes and adequate training strategies and methodologies.
- They have also, where successful, been helpful in winning over individual administrations for the CAF and in creating "CAF agents". These administrations that are able to tell positive stories about the CAF and also to point out critical points and obstacles have proven to be one of the most useful "tools" in disseminating and promoting the instrument.

Ideally, a pilot phase should also include other CAF-related activities addressing a potentially wider audience. These include the presentation of the CAF and its purposes in the context of large-scale conferences – to see how administrations react to different ways of presenting and communicating the CAF –, the design of initial training programmes and the dissemination and presentation of the CAF and related information via the Internet. All of these activities should be carried out with the purpose of receiving – if possible measurable – feedback in view of improving the approach. They should also be carried out using as little resources as possible; the deployment of a wider range of resources should ideally happen at a later stage after a pilot phase.

In a next – **third – phase** the evidence of the pilot phase should carefully be examined and used to improve the CAF-related strategy and the accompanying activities. Depending on the results of the pilot phase, this may include:

- Rethinking the approach to communicating the CAF, its objectives and its relation with a more global modernisation strategy;
- "Translating", where appropriate, the CAF into a concept and a language adapted to the national context and the needs of administrations in individual countries (or sectors of activity);
- Identifying, where appropriate, the adequate level of official support given to the CAF (the "status" of the CAF in a particular country);
- Identifying, and making available, the resources needed to spread the CAF and facilitate its use, matching the "status" and the expectations;
- Identifying, where appropriate, the types of organisations most likely to profit from using the CAF, and/or the kind of support different types of administrations (at different levels of government, in different sectors of activity, of different size etc.) may need to understand and to use the CAF in an appropriate way;
- Reviewing or – where appropriate – broadening the network of organisations involved in promoting the CAF and/or facilitating its use;
- Adapting – where appropriate – CAF-related training activities and training methodologies.
- Clarifying the best possible ways and means to spread information with regard to the CAF and to encouraging administrations to work with it; in this respect, the organisation of large-scale quality conferences and quality award contests have proven to be adequate approaches. As far as quality contests are concerned, their design should be carefully considered. One of the shortcomings of such contests is indeed that administrations are assessed – and rewarded – not on their ability or clear commitment to improvement but on the results of self-assessment or existing organisational (good) practice. As the use of the CAF is not an end in itself but merely a way to identify and launch an improvement or development process, the ability and willingness of administrations to give a follow-up to the CAF should be part of the assessment and reward process;
- Setting up – and providing the infrastructure for – user networks and the organisation of user conferences with the purpose of assisting in the above-mentioned tasks and of discussing and developing the tools that will help individual administrations using the CAF;
- Developing specific projects and/or partnerships that should lead to a broader use of the CAF, including, where appropriate, the development of an adapted CAF version;
- Reworking the information on the CAF provided via the Internet and identifying the necessary amount of information needed.

Finally, a **fourth phase** should then – if indeed the aim is to encourage a wider use of the CAF and to offer corresponding services to administrations and users – consist of the actual implementation of a broader CAF-related programme (including seminars and conferences), the deployment of the relevant resources and the development of relevant practical tools. Among these, the following may be considered the most relevant:

- *Practical (electronic) assessment and evaluation tools.* Although there are clear limits to standard evaluation tools – evaluating a self-assessment and organisational development in the end are processes that need to be carried out individually – these may help administrations to understand the results of their self-assessments and to identify potential ways forward.
- *Specific guidelines for different types of administrations or different sectors of activity.* These have the potential of offering useful and practical support to individual administrations wishing to use the CAF ant to share their experiences with others.
- *A networking service and a database of good practice.* Their potential relevance to CAF users in view of sharing experiences, ideas and mutual advice is considered very high.
- *Specific CAF-related projects organised in partnership with relevant organisations and destined to specific administrations.* This can be the right strategy in the case that there is a clear aim to use the CAF as an assessment, improvement and sharing tool in clearly defined areas or for clearly defined purposes.

Two final considerations should be made: First, evidence suggests that the deployment of the CAF in any given country requires clear commitment and leadership from the centre, including a thorough understanding of the degree of support given to the CAF and the amount of resources that can or will be made available. There is, on the whole, not much evidence of a spontaneous use of the CAF by individual administrations. Second, we want to emphasize that this approach in different phases has not been implemented in any country in the way we have presented it, although some countries have evidently chosen for an approach including some of these elements. Also, not all elements mentioned may be relevant for each country, but they are the elements we have identified as good practice. For those just starting with the CAF, we would however recommend to indeed do this with a PDCA cycle in mind, the same cycle used in the CAF itself.

Appendix B: List of national correspondents
Appendix C: List of organisations who participated in the survey (156)
Appendix D: CAF Questionnaire for national correspondents
Appendix E: CAF Questionnaire for administrations

ADDENDUM

Output from discussions held during the European CAF Event held in Rome on 17th and 18th November 2003 - "Self-Assessment and Beyond"

The EIPA Study commissioned by the Italian Presidency, summarised above, formed a major input to the European CAF Event, "Self-Assessment and Beyond" which was attended by over 150 CAF experts and users. The following themes were then discussed in four workshop sessions and the results of the discussions were reported back to a plenary session. It should be noted that the points raised were not necessarily agreed by all participants. Rather, they reflect the differing views expressed during the sessions and do not, therefore, constitute recommendations.

Session 1 - National strategies for implementing the CAF: dissemination, promotion and assistance
Session 2 – CAF- The self-assessment process: lessons learned
Session 3 - CAF as a first step towards a TQM strategy
Session 4 - The relationships between the CAF and the other TQM tools

Session 1 National strategies for implementing the CAF: dissemination, promotion and assistance

Agenda for discussion:
- European co-operation: Functioning of the CAF resource centre (EIPA) and network of CAF correspondents?
- National level: bottom up or top down approach?
- Role of technical agencies?
- Best practices – ideas to take home?
- European co-operation: Functioning of the CAF resource centre (EIPA) and network of CAF correspondents?

Further development of EIPA as a resource centre:
- EIPA as the international 'technical agency' (mission).
- EIPA as a knowledge bank with creative ideas and good practices for implementation of TQM.
- Establish more activities and training for national level (e.g. 'train the trainers').
- Public administrations not ready for international benchmarking.
- EIPA should increase the coordination of co-operation and exchange of knowledge between national CAF-centres.
- National information reported to EIPA should be made available as soon as possible on website.
- Direct communication from EIPA to CAF users.
CAF is but one tool ('the less evangelism the better').

National level: Both bottom up and top down approach is needed
- CAF should not be mandatory. However driving support and assistance from top is needed (in accordance with national tradition and culture):
- Make self-assessment matter for institutions (giving incentive).
- Prioritize international co-operation at the national level.
- Political commitment/support for CAF and TQM is crucial:
- Creation of a national 'culture of quality/improvement'.
- Training is crucial to change culture.
- Inclusion of the whole organisation (CAF as part of the everyday life in organisation).

Role of technical agencies
- Role of technical agency varies with national culture.
- Public sector/central agency should set the agenda for CAF/TQM:
  - Promote TQM broadly and CAF only as one tool among others;
  - CAF training could be done by private companies (only in co-operation with public agencies).
- National strategies needed to promote two roles of technical agencies (-continuity needed):
  - To spread the use of/ knowledge about CAF including feedback to users.
  - To develop supporting tools for institutions.
- Widen the range of activities made by technical agencies.
- More assistance from technical agencies to institutions after using CAF.

Session 2 – CAF- The self-assessment process: lessons learned

(1) Scoring system: Can the CAF work without it?
Scoring is helpful but not a goal in itself.
- Suggestion to use it as a discussion element (people share views/ experiences)
- No benchmarking on the basis of scores (cf. scores depend on the previous experience of the organisation applying CAF e.g. lower scores on 2nd or 3rd round because of greater experience and a more critical view) (cf. Top management tends to give higher scores, lower level gives lower scores)
- Difficulty with the scoring system from 0 to 5, in particular from score 3 upwards. Suggestion made: score 4 for those who did benchmarking against their own previous self-assessment results and score 5 for those who did benchmarking against other organisations

(2) Involvement of Top Management (TM)
e.g. should Top management be part of the self-assessment group
There is no single reply; it is related to the culture/ trust of the organisation
The main thing is that TM should plan action based on the results of the self-assessment group.
You need support from the political level as well (commitment to better quality services) but avoid making it a compulsory exercise

(3) What can the CAF model deliver (what can you expect from it)

One can apply the CAF for different purposes (from diagnostic tool to strategic steering instrument).

In the preparatory phase it is important to define the purpose of the use of CAF, and its use should lead to a meaningful action plan related to the purpose defined

What is the level of maturity (of the organisation) needed? It is not easy to define but it was suggested that one should try, even if not ready for SA (i.e. it is a learning exercise/ tool)
Cf. CAF study shows that even when organisations recognise that they were not ready for the SA exercise, the application of CAF has always led to benefits for the organisation

(4) Perspectives

It is recommended to use the CAF 2 to 3 times and for example to apply it every two years. The advantage of CAF (compared to alternative tools such as EFQM): results occur faster which leads to more motivation from staff

With regard to benchmarking, it is noted that one should first apply SA within the organisation (first develop yourself) and only later turn to other organisations with a view to benchmarking
NB the EIPA CAF database is only a starting point to find a partner: you can look whether there is an organisation in your sector but you will have to establish personal contact to check whether it is a suitable organisation for benchmarking.

Session 3 - CAF as a first step towards a TQM strategy

(1) Validating process

- Difference between internal and external evaluation
- Internal evaluation for diagnosis
- External for scoring
- Peer evaluation / key representatives
- Accuracy increases with training and experience
- Common understanding between internal and external evaluators/ assessors
- National pool of qualified assessors, which could be supported by the technical agencies or EIPA
- First step out of administration on national level, second step European level
- Tasks: training, moderate, external evaluation

(2) Motivation

- Recognition to all CAF users
- Certificates after external evaluation
- To promote / to communicate best practise

(3) The use of CAF
- CAF as a basis for annual planning
- Check of progress
- Assessment makes sense as a diagnostic check before planning
- Assessment should be done annually, while an external scoring can have a longer period – main aim is improvement

(4) What happens after CAF
- Improvement tools such as the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and ISO
- Better trained and prepared personal for the next step to TQM
- Awareness of the directors to TQM
- Raised interest for benchmarking

Session 4: "The relationships between CAF and other TQM tools"
- The presentation of the city of Vienna showed that it is possible to combine TQM tools like the Balanced Scorecard (BSc) and CAF
- EFQM said they see CAF as a good starting point for the introduction of QM
- The example of the Italian self-assessment system VIC was shown as a starting point for organisational change
- CAF as a tool has some advantages
  - It encourages people to ask questions
  - It gives room for open discussion
  - It is a tool that can be used without external help
- CAF can establish a quality culture which then can be used for benchmarking activities
- Interested public organisations need more information about other organisations that are combining different tools (Creation of an additional entry in the EIPA database?)
- The training possibilities of CAF should be supplemented with basic descriptions of other important TQM tools
- There is a possibility of sector specific developments of CAF.