Workshop Proposal Outline form
for prospective Workshop Directors for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops

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Title of proposed Workshop:	Collaborative Efficiency in Government: The Trend, The Implications

Outline of topic:	**Background** The fiscal crisis faced by political executives across Europe and the wider world has had a dramatic effect on public administration. In attempting to re-balance budgets, governments of varying political hues have adopted strategies to reduce the size and cost of the state bureaucracy. An emerging trend, which this Workshop shall explore, is the pursuit of collaborative efficiency measures in government. This section addresses three questions: What is collaborative efficiency? Why does it matter? Why do we need a Joint Sessions Workshop? **1) What is collaborative efficiency?** Collaborative efficiency measures are reforms to organizational structures and processes that are designed to produce cost savings through cooperation with one or more additional organization(s). The efficiencies are generally the result of greater economies of scale, pooled investments, and professionalization. Examples of such reforms include: • **Shared services arrangements**, where common 'back-office' activities (like payroll, HR, finance, etc.) are provided for multiple organizations from a single platform (Elston, 2014; Tammel, 2014); • **Procurement syndicates**, where different agencies collaborate when purchasing common goods and services, in order to enhance their collective buying power (Murray et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2013); • **Infrastructure consolidation**, where websites and electronic service delivery platforms are shared for multiple purposes; and • **One-stop-shops**, where different agencies co-locate their frontline operations to reduce overhead costs. Collaborative efficiency often involves decoupling tasks and activities from their rightful organisations and re-clustering them in multipurpose delivery agencies. In some senses, this simply reverses the prior international trend away from 'process'-based administrative design and toward 'purpose'-based or 'output'-driven organizations (Gulick, 1937). At the same time, however, collaborative efficiency measures are extending into new areas of the public sector (e.g., municipal governments); are involving new types of private sector commissioning and collaboration; and can often rest upon new forms of information technology. Therefore, collaborative efficiency measures are an intriguing combination of old and new ideas about how to manage government organizations.

	2) Why does it matter? The international trend towards collaborative efficiency presents important challenges and opportunities for scholars of politics and government. The particular significance lies in the fact that: • Collaborative efficiency measures appear to have **universal ideological appeal** along the political spectrum, although there are certainly differences in how the idea is translated into practice; • Collaborative efficiency **departs from the previously dominant global reform paradigm**, which understood that good government was about decentralization to semi-autonomous public agencies (Verhoest et al., 2011); • Despite the rapidity with which this new idea has gained near-hegemonic status, both the **organizational** and the **political implications** of adopting collaborative efficiency measures in government are not clearly understood. In particular, there are key issues regarding the changing nature of **political accountability and control** that call for new scrutiny and research. **3) Why do we need a Joint Sessions workshop?** The Co-Directors, along with Dr Muiris MacCarthaigh (Queens University Belfast), are now in the process of developing international comparative research on collaborative efficiency in government. Currently, the field is rather underdeveloped, with key insights scattered among different sub-disciplines (political science, public administration, public management and organisation studies). Therefore, the Workshop will gather together these and other researchers in one venue for the first time, providing new impetus for internationally coordinated and multidisciplinary research. At the workshop, we will explore new empirical data, confront emerging conceptual and theoretical challenges, and develop plans for coordination publications, including either a journal special issue or new edited book. We consider the ECPR Joint Sessions to offer an ideal forum for advancing this exciting new project.

Relation to existing research:	At the Workshop, scholars will engage with and develop a number of existing bodies of literature in the fields of public administration, political science and organization studies. These include: The **public management reform** literature, including: • Studies of **government reform trajectories**. Much attention has been directed towards the modification or tempering of 'new public management' (NPM) over the last decade (Dunleavy et al., 2006; Christensen & Lægreid, 2007; Olsen, 2008; Lodge & Gill, 2011). Many of the collaborative efficiency measures that we propose to study signal both continuity and change against the NPM paradigm, allowing us to bring valuable new insights to existing debates about the nature of government bureaucracy in the twenty-first century. • Studies of **reform legacies** and **layering**. Several commentators have observed how post-NPM reforms have been layered on top of older reforms, rather than replacing them outright (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Elston, forthcoming). Collaborative efficiency measures exemplify this, bringing new opportunities for studying the nature of reform hybridization and layering, and their implications for accountability and governance in the public sector.

	• Studies of **reform diffusion**. Public sector organizations are prone to institutional isomorphism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), but the mechanisms behind such mega-trends are still unclear. Collaborative efficiency measures bring new opportunities for pioneering research into public management fashions and fashion-setting processes (e.g., Entwistle, 2011; Elston & MacCarthaigh, 2014). • Studies of **reform advocacy**. Scholars have noted the growing role of management consultants and transnational institutions in determining administrative reforms adopted by governments (Saint-Martin, 2004; Pal, 2012). Collaborative efficiency research will add new cases to this literature (Tammel, 2014). The **governance and accountability** literature, including: • The issue of **state capacity** (Weiss 1998; Migdal 2001; Peters and Pierre 2006), and how governments have sought to maintain levels of public service delivery through the new efficiency measures identified above. • The concept of **governance as 'polity'** (Treib et al. 2007), and the importance of understanding the institutional properties of the state so that we may understand the translation of political priorities into action. The bipartisan appeal of collaborative efficiency also deserves greater attention as the politics of public service reform enters a new phase. • The **'many hands' accountability dilemmas** (Thomson 2014) that new collaborative public service measures bring, not only for citizens but also for legislators or legislative bodies that do not have the capacity to scrutinise the deepening complexity of new cross-organisational service delivery methods (Strøm et al. 2003). • The issue of **political risk and blame**, as public service delivery becomes ever more dependent upon the collaboration of multiple independent actors. The **organizational design and behaviour** literature. • Organizational design involves **confronting trade-offs** (Gulick, 1937; Galbraith, 1971). By the use of technology and by seeking to compromise between alternative organizational paradigms, collaborative efficiency measures hope to avoid these traditional dilemmas, or else minimise their unwelcome effects. Whether this is successful or not remains empirical questions that workshop participants might address. • Studies of **public sector leadership**, **organisational culture** and **staff motivation**.

Likely participants:	The Workshop will bring together scholars at a variety of career stages (including PhD researchers), from a cross-section of countries and from several different scholarly disciplines, including political science, public administration and organization studies. We see this diversity as key to building a solid and sustainable research community working on collaborative efficiency in government.

Type of Papers required:	We anticipate that all papers will combine theoretical and empirical components, although authors are free to determine the nature and relative weighting of these sections. Qualitative and quantitative papers are equally welcome, although case studies should be of wider significance and involve some theoretical component.

	These criteria, which shall be made clear to participants prior to submission, reflect our concern that the Workshop and publications derived from this not simply provide a commentary on current developments, but use these to advance broader theoretical and conceptual arguments in public administration and political science. Ultimately, our aim is to use the 2016 Joint Sessions to develop papers that will be submitted as part of special issue proposal to a high-quality journal.

Funding:	There are various funding agencies in the UK and Belgium which the Co-Directors will apply to, should this application to the ECPR be successful. Dr Elston already holds two research grants relating to collaborative efficiency measures, and Prof Dr Verhoest has considerable past experience in making successful grant applications.

Biographical notes:	**Dr Thomas Elston** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Blavatnik School of Government, and a Research Associate at Green Templeton College, University of Oxford, UK. His research is in the field of public administration and executive government, and he currently holds a three-year grant from the Leverhulme Trust relating to this collaborative efficiency trend. Previously, Thomas has researched administrative decentralization and political-administrative relations in the UK. He has published in the journals *Public Administration* and *Public Policy & Administration*; sits on the Editorial Advisory Board for *Policy & Politics*; and has advised and/or collaborated with various government agencies, including the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. Thomas has convened several workshops. In September 2014, he hosted a two-day international conference at the University of Oxford on the opportunities and challenges of shared service reforms. This involved academics, consultants and policymakers from a variety of countries, and was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Thomas also co-convened a panel at the ECPR general conference in Glasgow in 2014, involving academics from Australia, Ireland, Belgium, Estonia and the UK. This prompted the development of this larger Joint Sessions proposal. **Prof Dr Koen Verhoest** is Research Professor (ZAPBOF) in Comparative Public Administration and Globalization at the Department of Political Science (Research Group on Public Administration and Management), University of Antwerp, and is Visiting Professor at the Public Governance Institute (Catholic University of Leuven). His main research interest is on the organizational aspects of public tasks/regulation and their governance in multi-level and multi-actor contexts, including the autonomy, political control and coordination of (regulatory and other) agencies, and the political governance of (public private) partnerships and other forms of collaboration. Moreover, he studies these aspects in an international comparative perspective, enabling to study the impact of globalization and multi-level contexts on the governance and performance of these organizational forms. He was strongly involved in the coordination of the COST-COBRA/CRIPO network on public sector organization, in which he co-chairs the COBRA steering committee. He was Project Manager of the COST Action COST Action IS0601: Comparative Research into Current Trends in Public Sector Organization (CRIPO) (2007-2011) with 23 countries, 35 research teams and 84 researchers involved (http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/cost/act/index.htm).

	Since July 2012 he is appointed as co-chair, together with assoc. Prof. Anne Meuwese (University of Tilburg), of the steering committee of the ECPR Standing Group on Regulatory Governance (http://regulation.upf.edu/). He co-chaired a large number of panels at ECPR general conferences and at the ECPR regulatory governance conferences. He also co-chairs the Permanent Study Group on Governance of Public Sector Organizations at the European Group of Public Administration. He has published extensively in international journals on organization and regulation of public services (among others in Governance, Public Management Review, Organization Studies, International Review of Administrative Sciences, Policy Studies, and Public Administration and Development). Books include 'Autonomy and control of state agencies'; 'The coordination of public sector organizations', 'The Governance of Public Sector Organisations: Autonomy, proliferation and performance' and 'Government agencies: Practices and lessons from 30 countries' (all with co-authors published by Palgrave). He has managed over 30 policy-oriented or fundamental national and international research projects, and was/is involved in European FP and H2020 projects. He is currently promotor or co-promoter of 8 PhDs, besides 6 defended PhD's. He was jury member of foreign PhDs from the University of Exeter, Bergen, Twente and the University of Aveiro. He has given international seminars and talks at, among others, the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, the University of Exeter and PhD courses at IDHEAP (currently part of the University of Lausanne) and the University of Roskilde.

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