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MEDZINÁRODNÝ VEDECKÝ ČASOPIS MLADÁ VEDA / YOUNG SCIENCE

Číslo 2, ročník 10., vydané v júni 2022

ISSN 1339-3189

Kontakt: info@mladaveda.sk, tel.: +421 908 546 716, www.mladaveda.sk

Fotografia na obálke: Zbierka známok. © Branislav A. Švorc, foto.branisko.at

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Slovenská republika

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MANAGING PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATIONS IN THE SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

ŘÍZENÍ INOVACÍ VEŘEJNÉHO SEKTORU VE VYBRANÝCH STÁTECH EVROPY

Miroslav Jurásek, Jana Ticháčková¹, Petr Wawrosz²

Miroslav Jurásek působí jako analytik na Ministerstvu vnitra a zároveň vyučuje na Vysoké škole finanční a správní v Praze. Ve svém výzkumu se věnuje tématům jako inovace veřejné správy a otázky spojené s konceptem kulturní inteligence. Jana Ticháčková pracuje na Ministerstvu vnitra v Odboru strategického rozvoje a koordinace veřejné správy. Za českou stranu má na starosti mj. komunikaci a prohlubování spolupráce s Observatoří pro inovace veřejného sektoru (OPSI). Petr Wawrosz působí na Vysoké škole finanční a správní. Mezi jeho odborné a výzkumné zájmy patří ekonomie, kulturní inteligence a korupce.

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Abstract

This comparative study examines a specific approach to public sector innovations in three European countries (UK, Finland, Denmark). As these countries are world leaders in the innovations, the knowledge gained through qualitative analysis of their government reports, publications and policy analyses can serve as an example of good practice and inspire other countries. The aim of the study is to find certain generalizing principles and procedures that can be followed in the interest of good public governance. The example of the three selected countries shows the current direction of the public sector innovation effort, how innovations

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are supported and implemented in the public sector. In general, the development of innovation in the public sector requires strong, concrete political (usually from the country's prime minister) and financial support, a clearly defined innovation strategy and a functioning innovation cooperation, which is set up and developed centrally. With regard to public administration, in contrast to the private sector, innovations are not regulated by law and their definition given by a law is missing. Municipal and regional governments play a crucial role in the field of innovations, supporting public sector development through local innovation laboratories/hubs and centers.

Key words: innovation, public sector, public administration, Great Britain, Finland, Denmark

Abstrakt

Tato komparativní studie zkoumá specifický přístup k inovacím veřejného sektoru ve třech evropských zemích (Velká Británie, Finsko a Dánsko). Jelikož jsou tyto státy ve vytyčené oblasti světovými lídry, poznatky získané kvalitativní analýzou jejich vládních reportů, publikací a politických analýz mohou posloužit jako příklad dobré praxe a inspirovat další země. Cílem studie je najít určité zobecňující principy a postupy, které je možné následovat v zájmu dosažení kvalitní správy věcí veřejných. Na příkladu tří vybraných zemí je ukázáno, jakým směrem jde v současnosti snaha inovovat veřejný sektor, jak (jakým způsobem) jsou inovace veřejného sektoru systémově podporovány a zaváděny. Obecně lze říci, že k rozvoji inovací ve veřejném sektoru je nezbytná silná, konkrétně projevená politická (zpravidla ze strany premiéra dané země) a finanční podpora, jasně stanovená inovační strategie a fungující spolupráce v oblasti inovací, která je nastavena a rozvíjena centrálně. S ohledem na veřejnou správu, na rozdíl od soukromého sektoru, nejsou inovace legislativně upraveny a chybí v zákonné podobě jejich definice. Významnou roli v oblasti inovací veřejného sektoru hrají obecní a regionální samosprávy, které podporují rozvoj veřejného sektoru prostřednictvím místních inovačních laboratoří a center.

Klíčová slova: inovace, veřejný sektor, veřejná správa, Velká Británie, Finsko, Dánsko

Acknowledgments

The result was created in solving the student project No. 7427/2020/06 "Intercultural communication: the research on the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ)" using objective oriented support for specific university research of the University of Finance and Administration".

Úvod

Innovation in the public sector became a global concern only after 2010. Until then, international organizations, such as European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), were only concerned with innovation in the private sector. However, the field of innovation is evolving dynamically and not only these international organizations have realized over time that innovations in the public sector have many specifics and therefore need to be approached differently than innovations in the private sector. EU action reflects the fact that the public sector is a major employer and investor as well as a service provider (European Union 2020).

In 2013, the European Commission set up an expert group to examine the innovation environment in the member states and subsequently issued recommendations on how to support it. At present, innovation in the public sector is supported in various ways by the EU. In addition to financial programs, the EU supports the development of expert studies, workshops and awards the European Public Sector Award (EPSA, see www.epsa2019.eu/). Last but not least, the EU supports innovation in the public sector and through the OECD, which has sufficient capacity to build a knowledge base, monitor new tools, methods and trends, and especially support countries in setting up systemic support for innovation in the public sector. All these activities are carried out through the Observatory for Innovation in the Public Sector (OPSI) part the OECD, of which the Czech Republic is a member. It deals with the topic of innovations in the public sector, especially on the basis of the concept of Client-Oriented Public Administration 2030 (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2021).

The fact that institutions such as the EU and the OECD take an active approach to public sector innovation confirms that it is indeed important for countries to set up an effective system to support these specific innovations. Some states are further in setting up this system than others. This descriptive comparative case study examines innovation policy, resp. national approach to public sector innovation three countries that are generally considered to be leaders in public sector innovation: The United Kingdom, Finland and Denmark. All selected countries are actively seeking systemic support for the introduction of innovation in the public sector. Public administration of all mentioned countries is long-term procedurally managed and/or significantly digitized. This study examines how selected countries have set up a system to support public sector innovation and how innovation is targeted by the state. The aim of the study is to identify certain positive elements and characteristics of public sector innovation management in countries that can serve as a model for others to follow and inspire. The study based on the example of the above countries and with the intention of a certain generalization examines: 1) the direction of public sector innovation efforts, 2) how public sector innovations are systematically supported and 3) the way in which public sector innovations are introduced. Specifically, focusing primarily on one segment of the public sector, public administration, the following questions and sub-questions are sought:

- Is the implementation of innovations in the agendas of the public sector (or public administration) enshrined in legislation / strategic materials? If so, at what level? National, regional or both?
- Is there a public sector-specific definition of innovation in the countries analyzed in this study?
- Who is the initiator of innovation in the public sector (public administration): ministry, specialized agency, academic sector, companies or someone else?
- How is cooperation set up to introduce innovations into public administration agendas?
- Is the responsibility for introducing innovations also transferred to the local government? If so, how?

- From what funds are the innovations introduced into the public administration agendas financed (from the state budget, EU funds, national funds, other financial instruments, or others?)

Secondary data such as policy documents, strategic materials and concepts, government analyzes and publications, annual reports, etc., which are available online as the researcher are commonly considered (e.g., Saunders, Lewis a Thornhill 2007) to be a suitable source of information for this type of comparative case study. The phenomenon cannot be observed directly (van Thiel 2014). In these materials and documents, answers to the above research questions were systematically sought in order to draw some general conclusions. The data obtained from these three case studies are analyzed qualitatively (Dul and Hak 2007).

United Kingdom

Over the years, the British public administration has realized a substantial shift in approach to innovation. Initially, innovation was initiated at the level of central government organizations and institutions. Innovations were implemented mainly in the principle of top-down, the emphasis was mainly on process improvement and the use of new technologies (Rivera León, Simmonds and Roman 2012). Based on experience with innovation, it was found that human factor and therefore the support was reoriented mainly to the emergence of innovations on the bottom-up principle, i.e. that ideas for innovation come from individuals from practice. People (or the human factor) play a crucial role in the design and implementation of innovation. The UK's public sector innovation support system builds on the right institutional set-up, clear leadership of the organization and the innovative and creative abilities of employees (Innovative UK 2020). Attention is also paid to issues of leadership and the creation of innovative skills and capacities of employees. This is also in line with the so-called human-centered approach, which permeates the entire British public administration.

In the United Kingdom, several subjects are responsible for coordinating and systematically promoting innovation in public administration: The United Kingdom Research and Innovation Organization (UKRI, see www.ukri.org), the NESTA Innovation Foundation and Nudge Unit - a behavioral unit, however, the actual implementation of innovations is realized mainly through individual local laboratories and centers.

UKRI is an independent public administration organization that serves to provide professional support to individual government departments. The functioning of UKRI and its tasks are defined by the Higher Education and Research Act of 2017. UKRI's mission is to support and facilitate research, new ideas and technologies, and collect data on research, development and innovation (R & D & I). It further provides advice and spreads awareness of R & D & I. UKRI is also a national investment fund, i.e. it provides grants, loans and other financial resources. One of the nine subcommittees operating within UKRI since 2018 has been the Innovate UK (see www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk/about). Its mission is to support innovation in the private sector, which should, however, help to address societal challenges, not only through funding but also by creating an environment conducive to innovation.

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) Innovation Foundation, which was officially established in 1998 (see www.nesta.org.uk/brief-history-nesta/), has a very important role to play in innovation in public administration. NESTA is financially supported by the British government. The organization's goal was to support the implementation of even riskier innovations thanks to its secure financial background. In 2005, the foundation stopped focusing on supporting individuals (innovators) and focused on commercial activities, such as initial investments in autonomous vehicles. Since 2012, it has been a completely independent non-profit organization with a special fund, NESTA Investments. It continues to aim to support innovation through practical programs, investment in innovative start-ups and the conduct of innovation research. Since this year, NESTA has focused on supporting innovation with great benefits for society in a total of 5 key areas: health, public administration, education, and the creative economy and innovation policies. New goals and missions have been set for the period 2017 - 2020, which are achieved through various activities and projects. One of NESTA's main missions is Government Innovation (see www.nesta.org.uk/government-innovation). NESTA has extensive experience in setting up, designing and operating interconnecting innovation laboratories (see <https://www.nesta.org.uk/feature/innovation-methods/public-and-social-labs>). The innovation laboratories and agencies are the main implementers of the innovations.

Last but not least, the Cabinet Office set up a Behavioral Insights Team (BIT or Nudge Unit, see <https://www.bi.team>) during David Cameron's government, which uses approaches from behavioral economics and psychology. The knowledge of behavioral sciences is used to positively influence the behavior and decisions of people (e.g. Thaler and Sunstein 2008), who do not always behave rationally in the assumption of classical economics. In order to help improve public services and policies, the Nudge Unit provides advice and suggestions to public authorities on possible solutions to problems related to the functioning of public services. E.g. in the event that a state intervention is planned, several solutions can be prepared and tested first, how people will react to the new reality and adapt to the planned change.

Nudge Unit works with government and local authorities, businesses and non-profit organizations. Team members often implement very simple changes, which, however, contribute to solving major societal problems. It was originally a seven-member team at the Office of the Government. Today, it is a company with a global reach, which has so far implemented more than 750 projects, organizes a number of diverse workshops and training in the field of behavioral sciences for officials around the world, and publishes various publications and reports. Its employees are civil servants, experts and academics specializing in behavioral economics, anthropology, psychology and neuroscience. Through the international panel, the world's leading scientists and experts in the relevant fields are also involved. Since 2014, the BIT organization has been jointly owned by the Office of the Government, the innovation organization NESTA and the staff of the Nudge Unit itself (see www.bi.team/about-us/). This organization has a fund for financing projects with great potential, the so-called Impact Opportunity Fund.

In the principle of using the bottom-up principle and focusing on human capital, the implementers of innovation in the public sector are mainly local innovation laboratories (centers such as the Northern Ireland Public Sector Innovation Lab, see <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-innovation-lab>). The laboratory aims to modernize and reform public services in Northern Ireland. In its project activities (such as more frequent use of analytical data in public administration or optimization of patient treatment), the laboratory uses methods such as design thinking or behavioral sciences, tests prototypes and improves them with the participation of citizens, officials and other stakeholders. Based on the partnership between academia and the NESTA Innovation Foundation, the Y-lab Innovation Laboratory operates in Wales (see [/www.nesta.org.uk/project/y-lab/](http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/y-lab/)). Thanks to the cooperation of the laboratory with local public administration bodies, innovation and research capacities are created, which present new, already tested solutions. Through various innovation programs, the laboratory solves current problems in the field of education, healthcare, social care or security. Last but not least, the UK Government's so-called Government hubs program. These centers (Manzoni 2016) are intended to help streamline the work of civil servants by providing modern and digitized work spaces and to contribute to a more efficient use of state-owned buildings. Every effort should be made to create favorable working conditions for civil servants. The establishment of innovation poles in the regions is intended, among other things, to help increase the supply of jobs outside London.

Finland

In Finland, public sector innovation is largely focused on addressing societal challenges and achieving sustainable development goals. The so-called anticipatory innovations are also connected with this approach. These innovations suggest solutions to societal changes that have not yet taken place, but can be expected to occur in the future (such as an aging population or the development of artificial intelligence). Innovations should prepare society for these situations, or mitigate their negative effects. Last but not least, the emergence of innovation is also supported through public procurement (Ministry of Finance Finland 2020). In Finland, great emphasis is placed on financial support for research and lifelong learning (Finnish government 2021). Innovation funding is strongly supported on the basis of Public Private Partnerships.

The Ministry of Economy and Employment is responsible for the preparation and implementation of Finnish innovation policy (see <https://tem.fi/en/innovation-policy>). The special agency for financing of innovation and for support of trade, tourism and investments so called Innovation Funding Centre „Business Finland“ is subordinated to the Ministry. Business Finland's activities and obligations are set out in Act No. 1146/2017 (see inlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2017/en20171146). The task of Business Finland is to create a favorable innovation environment, enable testing and development of innovation capabilities and support the extensive practical use of R & D & I results. For example, it significantly supports the so-called Testbed Finland, which indicates experimental research or a certain platform for the development of new products. The recipients of funding from Business

Finland are research institutions, public entities, small and medium-sized enterprises, large companies or start-ups, such as the Finnish Technology Research Center.

The innovation system in Finland is coordinated by the Research and Innovation Policy Council (see details

[https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2008/en20081043?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bkieli%5D%5B0%5D=en&search%C\)%205Bpika%%205D%20=%20Innovation](https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2008/en20081043?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bkieli%5D%5B0%5D=en&search%C)%205Bpika%%205D%20=%20Innovation))

chaired by the Prime Minister. This coordinating and advisory body, with the contribution of various stakeholders, formulates the main development lines of the innovation environment in Finland. One subcommittee of the Council, chaired by the Minister for the Economy and Employment, focuses on innovation and technology. Current goals in supporting the innovation environment in the public sector are contained in the National Roadmap for Research, Development and Innovation from 2020, which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture Finland 2020).

Other systemic elements that support innovation in Finland include the Finnish Innovation Fund (SITRA, see <https://www.sitra.fi/en/topics/>) and the Technical Research Center of Finland. SITRA supports projects that increase the efficiency of the economy, improve the level of education and research, and address future scenarios. At the same time, it acts as a think-tank that publishes professional publications and organizes educational programs. The Technical Research Center of Finland focuses on new societal issues, such as the aging population, food production, energy, Smart Cities, 5G networks, automation and robotics, artificial intelligence, climate change, etc. (see <https://www.vttresearch.com/en/ourservices>).

Program “Experimental Finland” (see <https://kokeilevasuomi.fi/en/frontpage>) launched in 2015 has played a major role in developing the innovation environment and innovation in the Finnish public sector. Several small and large projects (so called sand box projects) have been supported under the program with the aim to support circular economics, digitization and artificial intelligence. An Experimental Finland Team was set up to support new ideas and oversee experiments at all levels of government. Successful projects and experiments could then be implemented using government financial support or public and private sector co-financing. As part of the program, and in order to encourage bottom-up innovation, the Place to Experiment digital platform (see okeilunpaikka.fi/en/p/about-us#instructions) was set up in 2017 for experimentation in public sector innovation (such as the guaranteed income).

To the other actors supporting innovation development in Finland belongs Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) focusing on environmental issues and sustainable society, Hansel Ltd. and KL-Kuntahankinnat non-profit companies (nezisková společnost, která funguje jako centrální nákupní orgán pro ústřední a místní samosprávu ve Finsku), KL-Kuntahankinnat Ltd. acting as a central purchasing subject for central government, regional governments and municipalities. All these subjects are members of coordinative network for innovative public procurements KEINO (see <https://www.hankintakeino.fi/en/about-keino>).

Denmark

In Denmark, there is not just one specific organization responsible for managing and supporting public sector innovation. As in the other countries surveyed, there are more important actors in Denmark (ministry, municipalities, and private initiatives). Innovation in the public sector in Denmark is not linked to specific policy objectives but arises as bottom-up innovation focused largely on services for citizens. One of the reasons is the important role of local government in providing public services. Local government is one of the most important actors implementing innovations in the public sector, respectively in public administration (OECD 2021).

The Danish Ministry of Finance is responsible for innovation in the state administration. The position of Minister for Innovation in the Public Sector was created in 2015, (for one election period until 2019), the task of which was to modernize and streamline public administration by supporting innovation. As this ministry did not produce the promised effect, attention was focused more on digitization, which was supported by the Agency for Digitization (see <https://en.digst.dk/about-us/>) established in 2011 by the Ministry of Finance. A strategy for financing innovation was then approved and the Innovation Fund Denmark was subsequently set up (see <https://innovationsfonden.dk>).

The Danish National Center for Public Sector Innovation (COI, see <https://www.coi.dk/en/about-coi/>) plays an important role in public sector innovation. The organization was founded in 2014 on the principle of partnership between the public sector, associations of municipalities and regions and associations of public administration employees. COI activities contribute to the provision of quality public services through effective innovation. As the set ambitious goals cannot be achieved without the contribution of other actors, the COI cooperates with politicians at the national, regional, and municipal levels, or also with foreign partners. The COI focuses on assessing Denmark's innovation potential, supporting the systematic dissemination of innovation in the public sector, strengthening structures and competencies to make progress in exploiting its innovation potential; it also makes information on innovation in the public sector in Denmark and abroad easily accessible.

One of the most important activities of the COI was the publication of the first national data from surveys collected at the level of individual public sector workplaces. The result was the Innovation Barometer for Public Administration, the world's first official public sector innovation statistic (see Lykkebo, Munch-Andersen and Jakobsen 2019 for details). The following methodology was adopted by other Nordic countries. The Barometer enables international comparison of individual parameters and indicators of implemented innovations in the public sector, such as the share of innovations that are introduced as the first of their kind, inspired by other solutions or copied (The Danish National Center for Public Sector Innovation 2019). Following the Innovation Barometer for Public Administration and the experience of other countries in measuring public sector innovations (eg. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand), the Copenhagen Manual was published (The Danish National Center for Public Sector Innovation 2021). The manual describes how innovation in public administration and innovation potential can be

measured and how countries can them used. Based on it, ten countries in the world (including the Czech Republic, see <http://kvalitavs.cz/mereni-inovaci-ve-verejne-sprave-2019-2021/> for details) have carried out a mapping of innovations in public administration. COI also publishes freely available publications and methodologies, e.g. for innovation evaluation (see The Danish National Center for Public Sector Innovation 2018 for details).

In addition to the above-mentioned organizations and institutions, innovation hubs and laboratories, which have the task of supporting innovation, especially on a practical level, also play an important role in introducing innovation in the public sector in Denmark. Already in 2002, the MindLab laboratory was established, which served other countries as an example of good practice in establishing innovation laboratories. Based on a political decision, the laboratory was closed down in 2018. Instead, an innovation unit focused on the digital transformation of public administration and the regulation of new technologies (the so-called Disruption Taskforce, see Apolitical 2018) was created at the initiative of the then Danish Prime Minister. Several other laboratories (such as the Health Innovation Center of Southern Denmark, see <https://www.innosouth.dk/> or the Center for Innovation in Aarhus, see <https://cfiaarhus.dk/>) have been set up at regional and local level.

It can be summarized that top-down innovations predominate at the state level. They match current policy priorities, often in the field of digitization. After the abolition of MindLab, the state is perceived as a subject that facilitates the emergence of innovations, rather than as the main actor that would create (or initiate) innovations. Its support consists mainly of financial assistance and the creation of a suitable environment for experimentation (OECD 2021). Innovations at the level of municipalities and regions are often the answer to specific problems that local governments face in providing services to citizens. They are mostly initiated by the workers themselves, and therefore bottom-up innovations prevail. In Denmark, they also have experience with projects creating sandboxes for municipalities (which means that municipalities are not subject to legislative regulations concerning their functioning for some time) so that they can freely (without legislative restrictions) experiment with introducing innovations and are not afraid of possible failures or legal sanctions. An example is the pilot project under the auspices of the COI under the Open Government Partnership initiative (see <https://www.opengovpartnership.org>).

Conclusion

There was a growing belief in the second decade of the 21st century that public sector innovation was different in nature from corporate innovation and needed to be approached in a specific way. In principle (and our study largely confirms this) that there is no uniform model how innovations are managed; each state acts in its own way in supporting and implementing innovation in the public sector. The state's approach to innovation reflects the culture and public functioning system of the country. In Finland, for example, sustainable development is a long-term priority, so innovation in the public sector is measured by societal benefits, especially with regard to sustainable development. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, they have long focused on streamlining public administration. Innovation aims to

bring greater efficiency and cost savings to the public sector. In Denmark, this is primarily a positive impact on citizen services.

However, certain features and elements in the approach to innovation common to all the countries studied can be found in the presented comparative study. Table 1 provides a clear summary of the answers to the questions asked in the Introduction to this study.

Nicméně určité rysy a prvky v přístupu k inovacím společné všem zkoumaným zemím v předložené komparativní studii najdeme. Následující tabulka (Tab. 1) přináší přehledné (a bodové) shrnutí odpovědí na otázky, které byly položeny v Úvodu této studie.

	<i>United Kongdom</i>	<i>Finland</i>	<i>Denmark</i>
Political support	Prime minister (<i>Nudge Unit</i>)	Prime minister (program Experimental Finland)	Prime minister (innovation unit for digital transformation)
Is there any special legal norm?	NO	NO	NO
Definition	NO	NO	NO
Cooperation	NESTA supports local innovation laboratories	Financing of innovations (PPP projects) + innovative public procurements KEINO	The Danish National Center for Public Sector Innovation (COI)
Regional innovations	Yes (bottom-up principle, significance of local Innovation laboratories	Experimental Finland	Municipalities and regions as important subject (local innovation laboratories) + sandboxes
Financing	UKRI, NESTA, BIT	SITRA	Innovation fund Denmark

Table 1 - Innovations in public sector in analyzed countries

Source: author

The promotion of innovation in the public sector was initiated by the commitment of the highest political leaders (usually at the level of the Prime Minister). Thanks to their support, special programs were created, which helped to start the development of innovations in public administration and provided the necessary financial resources. Examples include the use of a behavioral approach and the establishment of a Nudge Unit in the UK, or program Experimental Finland.

Innovations are usually not regulated by legislation, or in some way the legislative regulations concern only the area of innovations in the private sector. There is no specific law within the surveyed countries that would focus independently on innovations in public administration.

No law provides a strict definition of innovation in public administration, which gives governments some leeway in formulating a definition of innovation in public administration, given the specific tasks they have set in their strategic materials. However, the wording of the latest edition of the Oslo Manual (see OECD 2018) is always considered. In all three countries, cooperation takes place between the various stakeholders and it is set up centrally, albeit in different forms. The same applies to financial support for the introduction of innovation in the public sector. In terms of innovation in public administration, local governments play an important role, often running innovation laboratories and centers. The analyzed documents of individual countries show that a clear organizational setting, financial support, and a strategy on the basis of which this type of innovation is implemented and supported is important for the successful development of innovations in the public sector.

*Tento článek doporučil k publikování ve vědeckém časopise Mladá veda:
doc. Ing. PhDr. Lucie Severová, Ph.D.*

Zpracováno v rámci projektu „Implementační jednotka Strategického rámce rozvoje veřejné správy České republiky pro období 2014–2020“, reg. č. CZ.03.4.74/0.0/0.0/15_019/0000125. Projekt je spolufinancován z prostředků Evropské unie, Evropského sociálního fondu.

Zvláštní poděkování patří Ing. Rut Bízkové a Ing. Petrovi Jirmanovi za jejich cenné připomínky, erudované rady a odborné vedení během práce na této studii.

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