

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The ABGCR (which stands, in Spanish, for Yearbook on Good Governance and Regulatory Quality) is an **annual publication** of the **Fundación Democracia y Gobierno Local**, with the support of the Spanish National Commission on Markets and Competition, which each year analyzes, through the participation of renowned experts from different disciplines (Law, Economics, Public Management, Political Science, etc.), the main **issues related to good governance and good administration**.

The Yearbook is prepared following [the prior holding of a Living Lab](#), that is, a methodology for innovating collaboratively in response to social challenges, in order to share information and experiences. This method provides more creative contexts, with horizontality and empathy; more representative contexts, since the participating community (which goes beyond the purely academic sphere) is structured according to the challenge to be solved; and seeks experimentation and co-creation.

The Yearbook addresses **topics** such as regulatory quality, the protection of reporting persons (whistleblowers), the impact of behavioral sciences on public management, conflicts of interest, ethical or conduct codes, artificial intelligence, corruption prevention, due diligence standards, the evaluation of public policies, and the role of lobbies, among others. These issues are **approached** from both an academic and a practical management perspective, including analyses of relevant national and international documents and the development of management instrument models that may prove useful, **with special attention to the local sphere**.

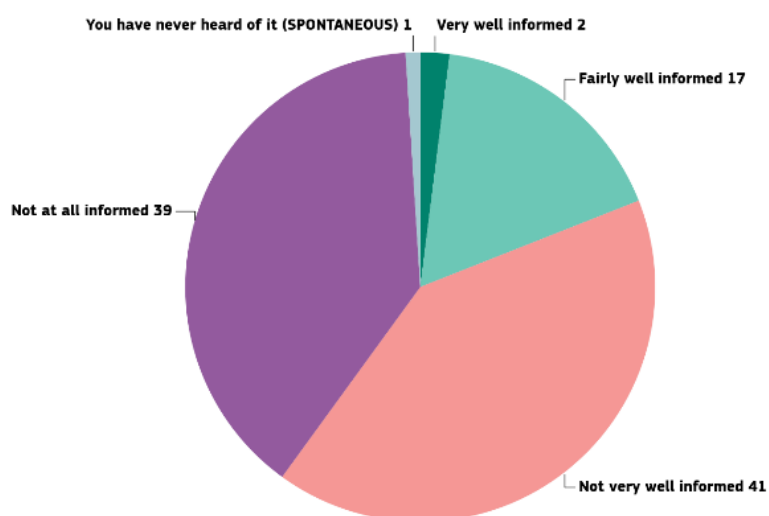
As is well known, in addition to being recognized in Spanish legislation and case law, the right to good administration is also recognized in **the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** — approved in 2000 and incorporated into the Treaty on European Union (Treaty of Lisbon) of 13 December 2007, ratified by Instrument of 26

December 2008, in Article 6 — which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2025. Good administration is very frequently applied by the Court of Justice of the European Union and by the European Court of Human Rights (under the different designation of “good governance”), as well as by national courts both within and outside Europe.

For years, the European Commission has published various surveys concerning citizens’ awareness of the Charter. According to these surveys, although the situation has improved since its approval, there is still a long way to go.

According to Special Eurobarometer Report 563 (February–March 2025) on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, prepared by the European Commission on the basis of a survey of more than 26,000 citizens from the 27 Member States, and aimed at measuring the degree of awareness, perception, and potential use of the Charter in practice, slightly fewer than one in five respondents (19%) feel well informed about the Charter: 2% state that they are “very well informed” and 17% “fairly well informed.” Eight out of ten respondents (80%) indicate that they do not feel well informed, of whom 39% state that they are “not informed at all.” Only 1% of respondents spontaneously declare that they have never heard of the Charter. This reveals a significant deficit in effective knowledge; at the same time, a high degree of ignorance or confusion persists regarding its scope and application, despite the fact that the majority recognize its legally binding nature.

QB2: How informed do you feel you are about the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU? (EU27) (%)



Very well informed	=
Fairly well informed	▲ 2
Not very well informed	▲ 7
Not at all informed	▲ 2
You have never heard of it (SPONTANEOUS)	▼ 10
Don't know	▼ 1

▲▼ (Feb/Mar 2025 - Mar 2019)

Feb/Mar 2025

On the one hand, there is broad demand for more information about the Charter: around two thirds of European citizens express interest in learning more about different aspects, particularly where to turn in the event of a violation of their rights (64%), the content of the Charter (63%), and when it applies (62%). On the other hand, these data indirectly reflect a deficit in practical knowledge, since, although citizens generally identify possible avenues of redress (courts, EU institutions, or ombudsmen), the report evidences confusion and lack of clarity concerning the concrete functioning of the Charter and its guarantee mechanisms, which precisely explains this strong interest in receiving more information on how to act in the event of a possible rights violation.

Finally, the importance of good administration has recently been highlighted again by the [2023 study on good administration in European states](#), promoted by the Swedish government.

In this context, the Yearbook regarding 2025, published in 2026 and directed by Professor Ponce (UB) and coordinated by Professor Capdeferro (UB), is devoted in large part, though not exclusively, to improving the quality of public services, **with special attention to the local sphere**, taking particular account of the work carried out during 2025 for the Government of Catalonia by the Commission of Experts for the Definition of the Strategy for the Transformation of the Administration of the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Improvement of Public Services (CETRA).

2. Structure of the Yearbook

The Yearbook includes **several studies by renowned specialists from academia and public management, both generally and at the local level, some of whom were part of CETRA:**

- **Carles Ramió:** Specialist in the field and **president of CETRA**. He is the author of the analysis on reform processes in the General State Administration and the administration of Catalonia (Generalitat).
- **Esther Pano:** **Coordinator of CETRA Working Group 2** (service design from the citizens' perspective), responsible for the study on citizen orientation.
- **Joan de la Paz:** **Coordinator of CETRA Working Group 5**, who contributes on issues of transparency and traceability.
- **César Cierco:** Member of **CETRA Working Group 1** (regulatory and process simplification), author of the chronicle on the new momentum in administrative reform, in collaboration with **Antonio Roperó Vilaró**, Secretary General of the Lleida City Council.
- **Julio Tejedor Bielsa:** Member of **CETRA Working Group 1**, author of the study on the Plans and Projects of General Interest of Aragon (PIGAs).
- **Julia García-Royo Díaz, Oscar Huerdo Cobos, and Rocío Navarro-Rubio:** Authors of the CNMC analysis on SMEs and public procurement.

The Yearbook is completed with the customary sections on good administration and good governance in general: **documents of interest**, selected and annotated international and national **case law**, and selected and annotated relevant **bibliography**, prepared by:

- **José Luis Ros-Medina and Víctor Martín Bonilla:** Responsible for the section on documents of interest.
- **José Ramón Chaves:** Judge responsible for the section on case law of the CJEU and the High Courts of Justice.
- **Jesús Cudero:** Author of the overview of the case law of the Spanish Supreme Court.
- **Oscar Capdeferro:** Author of the bibliography.
- **Juli Ponce:** Responsible for international case law.

3. Conclusions, Proposals, and Recommendations

In light of the analyses included in this 2025 Yearbook, the following conclusions and recommendations regarding the improvement of public services may be highlighted:

1. Making the right to good administration effective in relation to the improvement of public services must be an instrument for addressing the current challenges faced by our societies and for legitimizing the social and democratic rule-of-law state, since institutional quality and public management have become crucial in combating the populisms that threaten it.

Reforms aimed at improving public services are not merely technocratic plans, but **crucial elements for the legitimacy and survival of our democracy**. Success depends on governments maintaining the political determination and courage necessary to overcome the trade union and corporate resistance that tends to block change.

2. The local sphere is a critical element for the legitimacy of any reform. Citizens do not distinguish between administrative competences when carrying out a procedure. There is an imperative need to integrate the municipal perspective into state and regional legislation, since the final implementation of key areas such as urban planning, the environment, or social services often falls to local councils.

Regulating from a higher level while ignoring local realities is a design error that should be corrected through a coordinated, multilevel vision of administration.

3. Reforms should focus on specific and rapidly implementable “**levers for change**” rather than on comprehensive but unmanageable plans.

4. Any profound change must necessarily rest on at least **four indispensable pillars**:

a) regulated professional public management

b) a new model of public employment (selection and career development)

c) a new organizational model, and

d) radical technological renewal (AI and data).

5. The **development and improvement of digital and data management systems** is recommended in order to provide citizens with a centralized environment for consulting, managing, and monitoring their procedures. In this regard, the creation of “digital twins” is recommended in order to test innovations before applying them to citizens, as well as the development of regulatory testing environments (sandboxes), thereby avoiding failed initiatives.

Such systems must enable the administration to **provide proactive and personalized services, through a possible and appropriate legal basis alternative to consent**, in accordance with current European and Spanish regulations, allowing **two equally relevant mandates** to be reconciled and balanced: **the right to good administration and the right to data protection**.

6. The transformation of public administration is not fundamentally a technological or regulatory challenge, but rather a challenge of **governance, organizational culture, and political leadership**. The success of the proposed reforms to improve transparency and traceability in administrative procedures depends on the capacity of institutions to overcome **organizational inertia** and fragmentation into “silos” evolving toward a proactive model that places people at the center and uses technology to guarantee fundamental rights, such as the right to good administration.

7. In this regard, a **cultural change** is necessary so that the administration ceases to regard citizens with distrust, and concrete technical modifications that make this possible are

incorporated. Although society is not changed solely through laws, laws may nevertheless contribute to such change.

Therefore, it is recommended to introduce the so-called **right to error**, based on the **principle of trust**, a principle reinforced in systems such as the Italian one, which introduced it in the Italian Public Procurement Code approved in 2023 (*principio della fiducia*). This right to error was regulated for the first time in Spain in Catalan Law 9/2025, with clear inspiration from French Law No. 2018-727 of 10 August 2018, known as the *Loi pour un État au service d'une société de confiance* (LESSOC).

8. It is recommended to move toward an administration that **takes citizens' experience into account** in administration-citizen relations, which implies, at least:

- a) simplifying burdens placed on citizens,
- b) replacing occasional assistance with continuous citizen guidance throughout the entire relationship with the administration, and
- c) defining measurable quality commitments based on real experience in order to promote continuous service improvement.

9. The success of reforms aimed at improving public services depends not only on political will and legislative reforms, but also on their **capacity to orient the administration toward the principle of results and the genuine satisfaction of the general interest**.

It is therefore recommended that the implementation of these measures be accompanied by an **allocation of human and technical resources** that makes resolution deadlines credible. It is imperative to institutionalize the use of new technologies through secure guidelines and to promote an administrative culture that, instead of taking refuge in formalism, understands and treats its citizens on the basis of mutual loyalty.

10. It is advisable to **reduce the abuse of mandatory administrative reports, encourage oral communication in relations between administrations and citizens, and establish annual accountability** before legislative bodies regarding the state of citizen services in order to ensure the effectiveness of the changes introduced.

11. In the field of plans and projects of general interest, it is suggested:

a) to create a specific structure within the regional administration for the coordinated management of these projects, preventing the current informal bureaucratic structure from becoming overwhelmed by the increase in applications.

b) to incorporate clear criteria regarding project maturity, such as proof of effective financial capacity and actual energy availability, in order to avoid declaring immature business ideas or projects intended for resale as being of general interest.

c) to promote agreements with the General State Administration in order to reduce the time required for state sectoral reports, which are currently unaffected by regional urgency and delay final approval.

d) given the negative fiscal impact on municipalities, it is advisable to make proactive use of the urbanization levy (up to 1% of the investment) or agreements guaranteeing the maintenance of infrastructure without burdening municipal budgets.

12. With **regard to SMEs**, an efficient administration should not seek to favor them because of their size, but rather to eliminate obstacles that add no value to the general interest and that undermine effective competition. Regulatory simplification, the redesign of procedures centered on user experience, and transparency in the traceability of administrative files are structural conditions for strengthening the productive fabric.

To this end, it is recommended:

a) to move toward a model of multilevel governance in which municipalities voluntarily adopt model ordinances that streamline procedures and unify criteria regarding licenses and declarations of responsibility.

b) to replace prior controls with ex post risk-based controls, allowing economic activity to begin immediately under the operator's responsibility.

c) to effectively implement the "once only" principle, ensuring that SMEs do not have to submit documentation already held by the public sector through interoperability systems and internal consultation.

d) to replace the so-called "cliff effect," which abruptly triggers new obligations once certain workforce or turnover thresholds are exceeded, with gradual transitions or regulatory "ramps" that do not penalize expansion.

e) with regard to public procurement, it is proposed to facilitate SMEs' access by dividing contracts into lots, reducing the financial burdens associated with guarantees and insurance, and professionalizing contracting authorities so that they design tender specifications more closely aligned with market realities.

f) digitalization must evolve from mere online processing toward proactive services that use artificial intelligence to anticipate needs and reduce completion errors.

ⁱ This text is a translation of the original Spanish version. The translation has been produced using an automated translator, subsequently reviewed by Oscar Capdeferro.