




●On track towards a "lean state"

Since 1991, **Germany** has made significant progress in modernising its federal administration. Comprehensive organisational reviews, a reformed public service law, new management and steering instruments and a more flexible budget law have all helped streamline the administration. Reductions in both the government workforce and the number of federal authorities have led to important savings. A new initiative, "Idea 21", fosters continuous improvement through quality circles, the active involvement of managers and an incentive programme to encourage staff to develop ideas. 


●Inspectorate of public administration

The Inspectorate General of Public Administration was created in **Portugal** in July 1998 as part of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It operates in co-ordination with sectoral inspectorates, and handles management audit and control of all central and local administrations in the areas of human resources policy, simplification of procedures and modernisation and rationalisation of structures. 


●Restructuring levels of government

Greece has restructured its administration, redefining the functions of the various levels. The role of the central government is now limited to policy formulation, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation. The regional level has been given administrative and budgetary autonomy to plan and co-ordinate regional development. In addition, a number of tasks previously exercised by ministries have been transferred to regions. Finally, municipalities and communities have been merged to form new local authorities. 

●A reformed central administration

As part of its ongoing restructuring process, **Korea** has trimmed down its government, eliminating two deputy prime minister's posts and five cabinet ministries. A Planning and Budget Commission was created to set state budget guidelines, and it is planned to merge this with the Office of National Budget. Other reforms include the transfer of trade affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the planned creation of a central personnel management body for the civil service. See the current government chart at <http://www.gcc.go.kr>. 

●Streamlining the granting of waivers


In the **United States**, heads of departments and agencies can grant waivers to front-line employees allowing them to deviate from existing internal policies and procedures. This has often led to innovation and improved service. Some best practices have been identified to streamline the process and encourage the use of these waivers, and agencies have been directed to adopt them where appropriate. A Waiver Clearinghouse has been created to document the benefits derived from waivers and facilitate the transfer of them across government. It can be found on the Web at <http://www.napawash.org/waiver>. 

The Focus Hot File presents public management initiatives undertaken in OECD countries. It is updated every month and can be found on PUMA's Web site. Upcoming issues will be available on: April 10, May 8 and June 11.


<http://www.oecd.org/puma/focus/hot.htm>

●Improving regulatory quality


The **Danish** government has launched an effort to improve the quality of government regulation, focussing on three points:

- Improving regulatory management and planning: a new central committee responsible for reform activities plans the annual government law programme and initiates reform activities.
- Improving business regulation, particularly reducing the burden on business.
- Introducing a checklist for better regulation based on the recommendation of the OECD Council of 9 March 1995. 


●Planning for the future

The **Australian** Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA), with the involvement of the PSMPC and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, is studying global and national influences likely to affect the country's development in the next 10 years. Monthly seminars bring together leading thinkers from the academic and business communities, as well as the public sector, to examine trends and develop possible scenarios. Executive summaries of these seminars are available on the Internet at <http://www.dofa.gov.au> (Publications and Circulars, Public Sector Reform). 

●Looking ahead 30 years


Norway has launched a project called "Norway 2030" to help improve strategic planning and prepare the administration for long-term challenges. Interdepartmental teams have been set up to create five scenarios of the role and functioning of the public administration in 2030 in relation to the private sector and civic society. "Norway 2030" is being carried out in co-operation with the OECD, the European Commission, the Policy Research Secretariat in Canada and other partners (see the article on Canada on this page). 

●The VALTIPA network


Finland's VALTIPA network provides government officials and parliamentarians with immediate and reliable access to the information they need. This network of information professionals in the ministries, Parliament and the National Archives also develops common working methods and rules to improve the quality of information services. Various projects carried out by the network include the development of an EU affairs database, special training programmes for the EU presidency, and contracts with electronic information providers. An English version of its Web site will be available in 1999: <http://www.vn.fi/vm>. 

●Building research capacity

To prepare for future policy challenges, **Canada** created the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) in 1996. Four research networks – Growth, Human Development, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges and Opportunities – study social and economic trends and issues likely to arise in the medium term. The PRI advances a forward-looking policy agenda and fosters a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues. Its activities in 1998 included:

- meetings and conferences involving Canadian government officials, policy research experts and academics;
- a seminar on multidisciplinary approaches to policy research;
- meetings between members of the PRI and senior officials from France and the OECD;
- a bimonthly research bulletin, *Horizons*;
- a multi-year project exploring several trend areas; and
- a Web site linking over 600 sources of public policy research in Canada and around the world (<http://policyresearch.gc.ca>). 


●Competition in the public sector

The **Norwegian** government has established a committee to study the use of competition in the public sector. The committee will discuss issues such as the creation of competitive markets, public tendering, benchmarking and the use of vouchers, as well as broader questions such as how competition affects democracy. The committee will submit a report by late 1999 that will be used to prepare a platform for policymaking at the local and central levels. 

●Experiment with service contracts

In **France**, the Regional Department of Industry, Research and the Environment (DRIRE) of Lower Normandy has entered into an experimental service contract with the region's prefect and paymaster and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Finance and Industry. The contract allows the DRIRE to:

- establish global budgets in which staff and operating appropriations are transferable;
- carry over appropriations to the following year; and
- use up to 20 per cent of overall savings to award staff bonuses.

In exchange, the DRIRE must meet certain objectives and standards in accordance with its ISO 9002 certification. A specific formalised procedure governs objectives that require procedures to be streamlined for the benefit of users. 

***Be sure to consult PUMA's website,
now updated weekly.***

<http://www.oecd.org/puma>

Corrupción y Cambio (Corruption and Change)

edited by José Octavio López Presa
Ministry of the Controllershship and Administrative Development (SECODAM) and the Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1998 (399 pages, ISBN 968-16-5879-5)

This book analyses corruption from three different perspectives. The first concentrates on setting a theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon. Then, based on a public administration perspective, the authors assess the different elements involved in corruption (from international trade bribery to ethical principles). Finally, the book describes and analyses recent reforms undertaken by the Mexican government to combat corruption at all levels of the administration. In particular, recent initiatives like legal and regulatory reforms, new institutions, programmes and information campaigns are assessed. Available in Spanish from:

Secretaría de Contraloría y Desarrollo Administrativo (SECODAM)
Insurgentes Sur, 1735
CP01020 México, D.F.

***For up-to-date information on PUMA publications, see:
<http://www.oecd.org/puma/pubs>***

Guide to Service Declarations for Government Agencies

Ministry of Labour and Government Administration, Norway
November 1998 (19 pages, P-0874 E)

It is the goal of the Government of Norway that all central government agencies produce service declarations by the end of the year 2000. The purpose of this guide is to give ministries and central government agencies more information on how to go about achieving this goal. The guide is intentionally brief and general, and provides a list of further reference publications and several contact points in the central administration. Available in English from:

Publications Services
Ministry of Labour and Government Administration
Post-box 8169 Dep
N-0034 Oslo
Fax: +47-22.24.27.86
E-mail: ste-bestilling@ft.dep.telemax.no

Citizen's Charters and Compensation Mechanisms

by Kirsi Kuuttiniemi and Petri Virtanen
Ministry of Finance, Finland, November 1998
(67 pages, ISBN 951-804-053-2)

This research report from the Public Management Department of the Finnish Ministry of Finance is a study of citizen's charters' compensation mechanisms in some OECD countries. A questionnaire was filled out by Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The researchers also included some general information on Australia, Portugal and the United States, and described the situation in Finland. The role of compensation mechanisms in citizen's charters is discussed in order to gain an overall picture of the phenomenon and also to make recommendations for the further development of citizen's charter practices as a tool in improving public service delivery, mainly in the Finnish context. Available in English from:

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Ministry of Finance
P.O.Box 286 FIN-00171 Helsinki
Tel: +358-9-160.32.66
E-mail: seija.ahlqvist@vm.vn.fi

Major Management Challenges and Program Risks: A Governmentwide Perspective

United States General Accounting Office, January 1999
(130 pages, GAO/OCG-99-1)

This report discusses governmentwide challenges that must be addressed to improve the performance, management, and accountability of United States federal agencies. Principles of performance-based management are being adopted so as to shift the focus of government performance and accountability away from a preoccupation with activities – such as grants or inspections – to a focus on the results or outcomes of those activities – such as real gains in safety, health and living standards – and better stewardship of public resources. Performance-based management systematically integrates thinking about organisational structures, programme and service delivery strategies, the use of technology, financial management, and human capital practices into decisions about the results the government intends to achieve.

Available from:

United States General Accounting Office
P.O.Box 37050
Washington, D.C. 20013
Tel: +1-202-512.6000
Fax: +1-202-512.6061
E-mail: info@www.gao.gov
<http://www.gao.gov>

Strengthening government-citizen connections

The OECD-PUMA Working Group on Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections held its first meeting on 15-16 February 1999. Thirteen countries and the European Union participated (Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Greece, the Netherlands and the United States are also members of the group but could not attend.

A complex relationship

The relationship between government and citizens is becoming increasingly complex. Policy decisions are taken at multiple levels of government. Many problems (e.g. environmental degradation, tax evasion, crime) must be addressed within a global environment, requiring co-operation and agreement across regions, nations or internationally. Modern information and communication technologies allow a multitude of interests to communicate across borders and influence policy-makers internationally. Faced with such complexity and the perception of a loss of direct influence over national and local policy decisions, many citizens are demanding that governments respond with greater transparency and accountability. At the same time, governments increasingly realise that they will not be able to carry out policies effectively, as good as they may be, if their citizens do not support them.

Strengthening connections

The OECD activity on Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections aims to support government efforts to strengthen public participation, transparency and democratic accountability, and, ultimately, policy effectiveness by developing comparative information, analysis and advice in three areas:

- government policies in support of citizen access to information, and how information can support well-informed and effective citizen choice;
- public participation in policymaking;
- the Internet and the emerging information society and their impact on citizen access to government information and services.

Data gathering & analysis

Participants at the meeting agreed that PUMA work in this area should involve three main components:

- A general questionnaire will provide an overview of Member countries' policies, legislative frameworks and methods and tools, as well as their evaluation. It will cover overall policies aimed at improving links with the citizen, as well as policies geared toward better use of new technologies.
- A series of case studies, building on the results of the first questionnaire, will go into further depth on certain points (for example, government relations with interest

groups). They will present concrete applications within a particular policy domain or administrative activity concerning the relationship between citizens and government.

- A second questionnaire will complement the first one by providing quantitative, comparable data on the use of new information technologies in support of information, consultation and service delivery for citizens.

The work will be carried out in close co-operation with Member countries, international organisations and policy sectors.

Next steps

The first questionnaire will be launched in April. An interim report on the results of the first case studies and analysis of questionnaire results will be reviewed and analysed, and included in a publication to be completed by the end of 1999. ■

Key questions

- ***How can governments give better opportunities to citizens to be informed and to participate in decision-making and policy implementation? How can they guard against "special interest capture" and ensure that decisions reflect the broad public interest? How can they promote both efficient and inclusive consultation without unduly slowing down policymaking processes?***
- ***How are governments communicating information effectively? What impact is the information society having in this area?***
- ***What means are being established for citizens and businesses to use government information more effectively? What are the choices offered to citizens and the incentives to change their habits when necessary for efficient policy applications?***
- ***How can the role of interest groups be strengthened to yield more representative and accountable results in the decision-making process?***

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