Focus

This newsletter is prepared by the Public Management Service (PUMA) with the guidance of the Public Management Committee of the OECD. It appears quarterly: March, June, September, December.

Effective governance is crucial to national prosperity

Economies can work better only if governments work better, say ministers

Ministers responsible for public management systems in OECD countries met at a symposium in Paris on 5-6 March. This meeting was the first of its kind held at the OECD. Organised by PUMA, it allowed ministers to exchange ideas on key public management issues: the changing scope, role and structure of government; the evolving impact of the media, interest groups and democratic accountability; and solutions to long-range problems in a world that demands immediate action.

Discussions at the meeting revealed that public management has entered the mainstream of political agendas. It is no longer seen as an independent activity, but as being closely linked to economic performance. Global pressures to co-operate and compete, rising expectations of citizens, and the need to reduce public deficits are changing the way countries need to be governed. Governments have responded by undertaking public management reforms. These reforms are not considered as definitive solutions, but rather as a continuous process.

"We are not alone!"

As the Chair noted in her closing statement, countries have much in common despite many differences. They face similar dilemmas and respond in similar ways. Most OECD countries are engaged in the following: re-examining what government should both do and pay for, what it should pay for but not do, and what it should neither pay for nor do; decentralising authority within governmental units and devolving responsibilities to lower levels; downsizing the public service; emphasizing performance; looking for cost-effective ways to deliver more customer-oriented, quality services; simplifying regulation, reducing its costs and improving the management of regulatory activity. On the other hand, countries reject any notion of relinquishing such traditional roles as protector of the general interest, keeper of law and order, promoter of fairness and equity, and caretaker of disadvantaged citizens.

"When you have no more money you have to start thinking!"

As one minister pointed out, severe limitations on resources can foster creativity. Ministers said that they came to this meeting not only to talk about common concerns, but also in the hope of helping each other find solutions. They noted that the deliberations in the meeting suggest that public management reform will be instrumental in renewing confidence in democratically elected governments, and that countries have much to learn from each other. The OECD has always operated on the assumption that strong and growing economies reinforce democratic rule and make social goals easier to achieve. Conversely, if a strong economy makes governance easier, effective governance strengthens the economy. The OECD has a role to play in looking at ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of governance, and should help set the agenda on this front.

Further information on the symposium (including the Chair's closing statement) is available on the PUMA Web site: **http://www.oecd.org/**

The community of reformers

Improving governance and public management is now a central element of reform programmes. Countries now acknowledge the role of public institutions in promoting economic efficiency and policy effectiveness, and their impact on the implementation of new policies. Policy-makers and senior officials seriously question the way they manage the public sector. However, political will alone is not sufficient. To be successful, interventions in the public sector imply a deep cultural change, and this is not a quick fix. Reform efforts raise difficult issues of governance and may create strong resistance to change. This is why reformers in countries want to follow closely the experiences of other countries and learn from them. *Focus* addresses these needs and provides a platform of exchange for the community of reformers.

Derry Ormond
Head, Public Management Service

Information should be shared

Almost all OECD countries are experiencing major changes, both internally and externally. Most feel that an active response is needed in the public sector and have put public management reform high on the political agenda.

The members of the OECD's Public Management Committee (PUMA) have an active forum to acquire, compare and discuss relevant issues and developments. It is felt, however, that the Committee should do more to disseminate the wealth of information PUMA collects.

This newsletter, together with the PUMA Web site on the Internet, are new initiatives designed to do just that. We hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter and will feel free to contribute your comments and suggestions.

Dr. Benita PLESCH
Chair, PUMA Committee

●The winds of change are blowing

Many OECD countries are launching comprehensive reform programmes.

In **Germany**, a special council has been created to develop the "Lean Government" programme. This expert council is composed of representatives from various sectors: the federal government, the *Länder*, municipalities, local authorities, industry, trade unions and the scientific community. It is overseeing efforts to streamline bureaucracy across all levels of government.

Ireland made public the Strategic Management Initiative "Delivering Better Government" with the core aim of providing quality service across all government departments.

In **Mexico**, the President recently announced a major reform programme focusing on the improvement of service quality, the decentralisation of central functions, fostering performance management in the public service, and development of a career service with special emphasis on budget reform, deregulation and downsizing of ministries.

The **Turkish** Ministry of Finance has designed, in collaboration with all major government units, a new financial management system to improve the way resources are allocated and used. The government approved the package and launched its implementation. The new system will have an important impact on budgeting, accounting, cash management, control and audit.

In **Japan**, reform work is moving ahead on many fronts, including studies on major issues concerning decentralisation, review of the deregulation action programme to make it more effective, and preparatory work on the legal framework for making government-held information available to the public.

In **Italy**, the reform effort also has many facets. These include improving the internal functioning of the administration, simplifying administrative procedures, making managers accountable for results, better informing citizens, introducing more transparency, announcing service quality charters, rolling back state intervention, and changing its role.

In upcoming issues, *Focus* will provide more information on the initiatives undertaken in these countries. ■

Words & Concepts

Governance... decentralisation... benchmarking. These words are among several terms that appear in the pages of *Focus.* What do they mean exactly? Experience indicates that they can mean different things to different administrative cultures. For example, in some countries *department* stands for *ministry*, while in others it is only a unit within a ministry. These differences in usage sometimes cause confusion. The *Words & Concepts* column will address this difficulty, and try, in forthcoming issues, to promote a better understanding of these differences in usage.

●Evaluating reform

In Finland, the past ten years have been very active for public management reform. It was felt that an evaluation of how these reforms were carried out, and of their impact, would provide a valuable support to new reform initiatives and help better understand the dynamics of change. It would also help strengthen and spread the evaluation culture throughout the country.

The Ministry of Finance therefore set up a cross-sectoral steering group to conduct 12 specific projects. These include studies of state-owned enterprises, evaluating evaluation, results-oriented management, regional and provincial administration, citizens' views of public services, financial effects of the reforms, and international comparison of public management reforms. This evaluation covers the period 1987-1994, and a final report will be published in 1997.

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A few lines from a PUMA publication

Despite a great deal of hand-wringing about challenges posed by globalisation, the process also offers many opportunities, including the potential to strengthen policy effectiveness, to tap ideas from other countries, and to have more influence over the international decision-making process that inevitably affects us all. But this will require some adjustment in the structures of government.

It will require public sector staff to be skilled and competent to work in an interational environment. It will require better co-ordination and strategic direction at the centre of government. And, most importantly, it will require effort and investment at the international level to develop and maintain appropriate checks, balances and democratic quality in the structures and processes of "global governance".

***Globalisation: What Challenges and Opportunities for Governments?* OECD, 1996**

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Greetings! Welcome to Focus*!*
This publication is about the work of the OECD on public management.
It reports PUMA Committee activities, meetings and publications; but the main focus is on what Committee members report on their countries.

The country experiences summarised here are taken from the fact sheets submitted by Committee members.
In cases where we have detailed information on specific actions, we reproduce them fully on PUMA's Web site: ***http://oecd.org/puma/new.htm.***

On this page you see two features of the newsletter: ***Words & Concepts*** *and* ***the publications box****. You will find them in each issue. The publication you see on this page is new and free of charge. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy.*

●Service to the public under scrutiny

By studying the way the administration functions, service to the public can be improved. The United Kingdom is enjoying continued success with the use of efficiency scrutinies. A scrutiny is a study of specific areas of an administrative process or service provision, aimed at finding practical, innovative and cost-effective ways to improve quality of service or value for money. To launch a scrutiny, terms of reference are drawn up by the Prime Minister's Efficiency Unit and the government department or public service to be studied. The scrutiny is carried out over 90 working days by a team including practitioners from the area under study. A final report is submitted to the Prime Minister's Efficiency Adviser. The government department then submits an action plan to implement the scrutiny's recommendations within two years. Recently, efficiency scrutinies have been used to tackle the burdens of paperwork in the criminal justice system, the National Health Service, and schools. Some recommendations propose greater use of information technology, but many are "low-tech", based on simpler working practices and improved working relationships between organisations. The end result is that practi-tioners handle millions fewer forms and documents.

They thus gain from increased efficiency, and the government gains from reduced costs. The recent scrutiny of the criminal justice system, for example, identified potential cost savings of £30 million per year. Another on the National Health Service identified £40 million of administrative expenditure that could be freed for patient care.

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●Better organisation provides better support

In March 1996, the Centre for Management and Organi-sation Development was set up in Ireland. The CMOD brought together in one organisation the former Central IT Services, Civil Service Training Centre, Management Services Unit, and Operations Research Section of the Ministry of Finance. The CMOD will provide advice in these fields to other ministries, and conduct studies and training. The establishment of the CMOD was part of a response to organisational challenges of the government's Strategic Management Initiative. The new Centre will have a leading role in supporting the programme by providing a unified and better co-ordinated approach to the delivery of advisory and support services to other ministries and government offices.

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Budget directors meet

The 17th Annual Meeting of Senior Budget Officials was held in Paris on 11-12 June. The annual meeting is a unique forum for high-level budget officials to meet and discuss major budgetary issues. This year's meeting, chaired by Barry Anderson (of the Office of Management and Budget, USA), focused on several topics.

These included ways of integrating a more long-term orientation into the budget process through the use of multi-year budget forecasts, generational accounting and legal instruments. The New Zealand Fiscal Responsibility Act was reviewed at the meeting as an example of the latter. A presentation was also made on the OECD Ageing Population Study. The budget officials discussed and endorsed the proposed *Best Practice Guidelines for Contracting Out Government Services*. These guidelines were prepared by the PUMA Secretariat following a meeting of officials responsible for contracting out held in February. The meeting also considered a paper on the implications of the changing legal and institutional frameworks for the future role of central budget offices. Further information on the meeting is on the PUMA Web site: *http://oecd.org/puma/new.htm.* ■

●Police force concentrates on policing

Should a policeman trained in law enforcement techniques sit behind a desk filling in forms? That would be an inappropriate use of skills, and an inefficient way of providing service. In Denmark, a study was undertaken to focus on the results of the organisation, costs and work functions of the police. A concept from the private sector, "business process re-engineering", was applied, with the aim of simplifying and reorganising administrative procedures. The study focussed on two aspects: technology and organisation. One of the outcomes was a breakdown of the total work hours of the police force and the workload covered in that time. It was found that there was an uneven distribution of clerical tasks as opposed to policing tasks. Some of the reasons for this situation were the fixed numbers in the budget for categories of staff and inadequate information technology. So local computer networks were created, and a coherent strategy was adopted for the development of the use of IT. Now, new information technology and upgraded computers are being used by the clerical staff best trained for them, and policemen are concentrating on doing their job: policing. A summary report of the study is available in English.

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Another important feature of Focus *appears on this page: the names of contact persons in countries. They can provide any further information you may need. You also see a note on the recent meeting of senior budget officials. They form a key network and have produced a range of PUMA publications on budgeting and market-type mechanisms. Some reports on market-type mechanisms are available free of charge (the list is on the PUMA Web site). One of them is used as a textbook by Parisian public hospitals in training courses.*

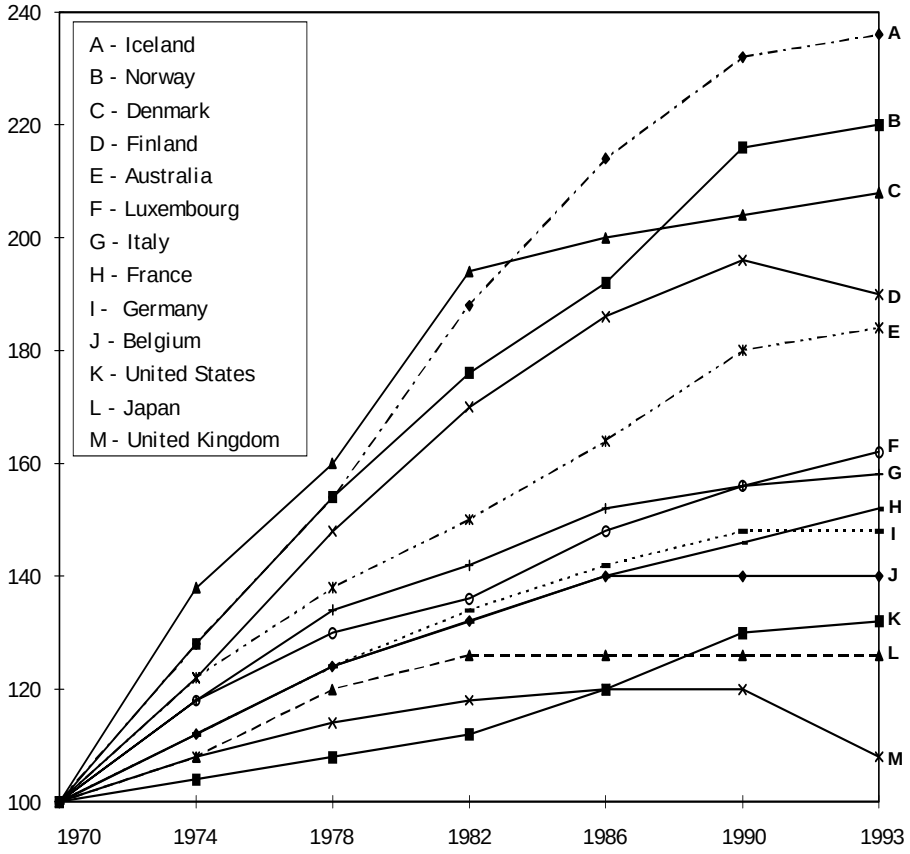
The graph on the right shows the general trend in total government employment expressed in the number of persons employed in the "general government" sector. This is a concept defined in a standard way and commonly used in national accounts statistics. The source of information in this graph is the National Accounts database of the OECD. To make comparison between countries easier, 1970 is chosen as the base year and numbers are indexed (the values in 1970 are taken as 100). In the database only 13 countries have time series for the 1970-1993 period. The data for the other OECD Member countries is not complete. The graph is only indicative. It is given here simply to raise the issue of measuring the size of government.

There has long been debate about the size of government. Policy-makers, the general public and the media have been eager to compare their public employment figures with those of other countries, wondering "Is our public service bigger than others?" There is no simple answer, because available figures are not fully comparable.

The National Accounts system has a precise definition for the government sector. However, this definition is not always strictly followed, making comparisons difficult. Furthermore, the adopted definitions vary sometimes over time, thus making time series problematic.

Two years ago PUMA studied the nature of the comparability problem in a publication, *Statistical Sources on Public Sector Employment.* This year, PUMA has launched a pilot study called "Harmony" to see whether available national employment data sources can be harmonized to generate comparable statistics on government employment. The objective is to look for ways to apply the "general government" concept of national accounts to available employment data.

This work draws on a methodology used in the Netherlands (see next column). It is carried out with the close collaboration of the statistical offices of six Member countries: Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and Turkey. ■



●Comparing public employment

The Ministry of Home Affairs of the Netherlands commissioned a study in 1994 on the size of the public sector in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The study showed that differences of definitions cause discrepancies between published figures on government employment. The schemes used to finance services (health care or social services) also have an effect on these figures. The study developed a methodology to relate definitions to a common base.

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How has employment evolved over the years? How do countries compare with each other? The graph on this page sheds light on these questions. As can be seen in the graph, in most countries government employment has grown at quite considerable rates during the first part of the period, on average 3 to 7 per cent annually. Later, a general slow-down is observed, followed by stabilisation in some countries. But a basic question is, "How meaningful, reliable and comparable are the figures?" This is what the PUMA project "Harmony" is trying to address: developing shared standards for government employment. Further information on this work can be found on the PUMA Web site: ***http://www.oecd.org/puma/***

●Innovations are on-line

Sharing information on innovative ideas can be an investment for the future. This is the purpose of APS INNOVATIONS - ONLINE, an electronically accessible database on promising practices in the Australian public service (APS). Innovative practices are classified by topic and contain a brief abstract and contact details for further information. There are three topics: managing people and organisations; running programmes and delivering services; and work in progress. The database is offered both in CD-ROM format and on the Internet (http://www.innovations. gov.au).

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Assessing regulatory impacts

A key problem with regulation is that it is often made without sufficient understanding of its benefits, costs and effects on economic processes. It is with this problem in mind that most OECD countries have developed processes for regulatory impact analysis (RIA). But this is not easy. The results of two decades of investment in this area show a very mixed picture.

Sixty senior officials and representatives of business and trade unions came together in May in a PUMA meeting to take stock and discuss the practical experiences of countries. What should be the objectives and scope of RIA? How should it be organised? What are the pros and cons of various methodologies? What are the major difficulties? What are the best practices?

A PUMA publication on best practices in RIA is planned for Fall 1996. For further information on the meeting, see the PUMA Web site: http://oecd.org/puma/new.htm. ■

●Quality at the top

Officials in senior positions are under growing pressure. They need to be fully equipped to face this and the challenge of change. With this in mind, the United Kingdom launched a "Public Sector MBA" programme for civil servants. The main aim is to expose them to top-level management thinking and practice in order to ensure that staff with the potential to fill senior posts are qualified for the job. The full-time courses last a year. Part-time options may extend to 2-3 years. Officials develop management skills in courses side-by-side with their counterparts from the private sector. This mixed environment is very useful. There are also specialisation courses designed for (but not restricted to) participants from the public sector. Three well-known UK business schools and the UK Civil Service College are involved in this initiative.

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Question & Answer

• *Your country has introduced an MBA programme (see left). An interesting aspect of this initiative is putting people from public and private sectors together in major courses. Why? What is the objective?*

• The public and private sectors are coming closer together. We are operating in the same economic and social environment. Future senior civil servants need to understand this environment and its changing pressures in just the same way as future leaders of industry. The mutual exchange of skills and information through initiatives like the Public Sector MBA is a major element in this process. A professionally qualified civil service will be able to continue to meet the changing demands placed upon it.

Hugh Taylor, Under Secretary, Office of Public Service, UK and Vice Chair of the PUMA Committee.

●Preparing for the 21st century

An organisation's employees are its greatest asset. But how best to use that asset to ensure the well-being of the organisation? This is happening in the Netherlands, where the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Home Affairs gave an open invitation to all employees to participate in strategic planning for the Ministry's role in the 21st century. The response was positive. Project groups have been set up, each adopted by a member of the Ministry's board of directors-general. Each employee has the right to spend one day a week for a two-year period on the projects. The approach is interdisciplinary and dynamic. Participants in each project group may come from several separate departments within the Ministry. In addition, each subject is discussed by at least two project groups. Thus, the development of strategic orientation is a collective effort, and the dangers of one-sided or extreme outcomes are reduced. The board regularly evaluates the projects to keep them on the right track and to guide the Ministry on the best way to organise itself for the future. The current projects fall into two broad clusters: internal and external. Internally, the Ministry must consider its structure and working procedures, particularly questions of policy-making, management and staff, integrity and internal and external communication, and employment. External developments to be considered include the challenges to Dutch society in terms of the protection of democracy and legal order, internal security, integration and migration, and information and communication technology.

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Some important messages emerge from the initiatives covered by Focus. *Improving public management is a matter of high priority. Change is possible, and change is occurring. Current reform strategies have two aspects. Changes are primarily introduced for immediate impact, but there is also investment for the future. The main investment is in human resources. We will cover different human resources topics in the next issue. And, we will also focus on various aspects of PUMA's regulatory management work.*

●Better access improves service quality

How often have you had to wait a long time for someone to answer your telephone call — and then been left on hold when someone finally answers? This is no longer the case for people who call the Swedish National Board of Student Aid (CSN). In cases of overload at one office, telephone calls are automatically switched to another office where there is available capacity. The CSN has noted an improvement in accessibility as a result of this new technique.

In addition, callers can obtain satisfactory answers to their questions, regardless of which CSN office they have reached, because student application documents are scanned electronically and made available to all case officers. Accessibility is also increased by a voice-message telephone service (where personalised answers can be obtained through audio selection), teletext on the television, and a Web site on the Internet. The CSN carefully monitors the daily fulfillment of the accessibility target: 90 per cent of the callers should receive an answer after a maximum wait of three minutes. 350 case officers handle 5 million telephone calls per year at 24 offices throughout Sweden.

The voice-message telephone service has had up to 80 000 incoming calls in a month. And after six months on the Internet, the CSN welcomes nearly 3 000 users per month.

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What does PUMA do?

The PUMA Committee deals with public management issues: how to make the public sector dynamic; how to equip it to respond to the challenges facing governments; how to ensure that it implements public policy effectively and efficiently. This work has four main components:

- **Reporting and assessing new developments in public management.**
- **Effective governance and the role of the state. How to strengthen policy-making; decision-making and co-ordination capacities; how to renew confidence in government; how to review the roles and functions of government.**
- **Performance and the management of resources. Benchmarking; programme evaluation; performance contracting; service quality; responsibilities across different levels of government; budgeting; financial management; management of human resources; public sector pay.**
- **Regulatory management and reform. Improving the quality of regulatory systems; alternatives to traditional regulation; reducing administrative burdens.** ■

A few lines from a PUMA publication

Service quality initiatives reflect a general acceptance of the importance of responsive and efficient government to economic and social progress, within a general context of budgetary constraints. They are being promoted by governments of various political persuasions. They are not necessarily part of "smaller government" initiatives, although they may be when competition in service delivery is also introduced. They are also consistent with an ongoing role for the public sector and with defending and instilling confidence in the public sector. It is useful to examine the relationship of these reforms with more general public sector reform initiatives. It is clear that service quality initiatives are consistent with the performance orientation being pursued in public sector reforms. Service quality initiatives are also a useful framework within which broader reforms can be mounted. If in setting standards the basic objectives of programmes and costs with which services are delivered are re-examined and re-engineered, and if there is a requirement for regular reporting and review of performance, such initiatives provide the framework for overall performance improvement in that government.

***Responsive Government: Service Quality Initiatives,* OECD, 1996**

●Information and integrity

The New Zealand government has reduced its direct role in society and the economy, and expanded the scope for self-reliance, individual initiative and choice. Thus, information has become increasingly vital for sound policy formulation and individual decision-making. Government-held information provides the public with knowledge about their government, society and economy. It is a means of ensuring government accountability, and a tool for managing government operations. It contributes to the performance of the economy, and often has economic value in the marketplace. The government is now developing a co-ordinated policy framework, including issues on what information can or cannot be shared, what information should be made avail-able to the public, and how, given the increasing use of technology across government. It is important to ensure that demands on individual citizens are reduced through greater information-sharing among government departments, while individual privacy is respected; that the integrity and secur-ity of information is enhanced so as to maintain public con-fidence; and that, where appropriate, information is auto-matically made available to the public under correct terms.

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The public sectors of OECD countries are very active in trying to ease the burden of the administration and creating a new relationship with their clients: businesses, citizens and their organisations. The box on this page presents a major OECD book published in this field. The book contains the papers presented at a symposium on service quality and its relationship to performance. For further information you can consult the PUMA Web site or order through the publications page of the OECD site: ***www.oecd.org/pubs.***

●Linking up in Norway

If everyone speaks the same language, information is more accessible. If everyone uses the same communication tools, work proceeds more smoothly. These ideas underpin the new computer network launched in Norway, called the State Regional Information Network. The SRI currently has around 2500 users in county governors' offices, education offices and chief county medical offices throughout Norway. It allows electronic messaging and file transfers, as well as access to Internet, other information networks and databases. The network ensures co-operation and standardization among government offices, replacing electronic information systems that were too sector-based, closed, and isolated from each other. It is intended to link the SRI network to other public networks in the state and municipal sectors, so that the exchange of information is as easy as possible.

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Surfing the Internet

PUMA is on-line

You can now reach PUMA at the following World Wide Web address: **http://www.oecd.org/puma.**

Created in April 1996, this Web site contains more than one hundred pages, and pages are added and updated regularly.

What is on the site? First, there is a brief description of the PUMA Committee and its Secretariat, followed by detailed information on work areas. A variety of topics are covered: human resources management, performance management, budgeting, regulatory management, the relationships between central and local governments, public sector ethics, policy-making, etc.

Listings and descriptions of all PUMA publications are also available, including information on how to obtain copies. (Half of these publications are free of charge.) The site will soon be expanded to include excerpts, summaries, and some publications in full.

One of our most popular pages provides linkages to various government Web sites in Member countries. In future issues we will cover these sites in greater detail. Readers are encouraged to let us know of other interesting and relevant Web sites that could be included in the PUMA site.

●Less burden on business, better data for government

Private companies in Finland are required by law to provide various government agencies regularly with data on their business activities. It is estimated that this used to cost the 250 000 private companies more than Mk 15 billion annually (US$3 billion). The cost to government agencies of processing the data was estimated at Mk 5 billion (US$1 billion). Moreover, the same information had to be transmitted in different ways to different government agencies. Now a streamlined solution has been found. Each company stores information on invoicing sales and purchases, payments of salaries, etc., in its computer system in its preferred format. Then messages are generated automatically, according to pre-specified norms. The message is filtered through an intermediary computer system, with a built-in security element, that formats the information for the government agency that will receive it. Each receiving agency gets only the messages and reports it is entitled to receive, and no other data. The message content is processed at the receiving end by each government agency, at which time the quality of the information is improved according to specific agency needs. All parties gain in efficiency and clarity. In addition, government agencies can use this system for mutual data connections.

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●Working outside the traditional office

While telecommuting is not a new concept, the advantages it offers are many: providing flexibility for employees with families, reducing costs, reducing automobile-related energy consumption, reducing pollution emission, reducing traffic congestion, increasing safety. The United States govern-ment has conducted several successful pilot telecommuting projects during the last five years. Now it is launching the National Telecommuting Initiative, a plan to increase em-ployee participation at the federal level to 60 000 tele-commuters by the end of fiscal year 1998. It has been calculated that this level of telecommuting (roughly 3 per cent of the federal civilian workforce) will generate facility cost savings of $150 million annually.

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A few words on Focus. *It is produced within a tight budget: 8 pages, A-4 size, in black and white. Next year, the Committee will evaluate the scope and format of this newsletter and decide whether it should continue to be published. The* Focus *team is, in the order of their respective tasks, Atila Alpöge, Deirdre Wolfender, Andrea Uhrhammer and Marie Murphy. They handle all aspects of production: selection of items, drafting, editing, formatting, printing and distribution. This brings us to the last lines of the last* Page Break *of this issue. These boxes constitute a call from* Focus *to its readers. We invite you to express your comments on this newsletter, so that we can serve you better. To contact us, use the addresses shown on the back page.*

OECD Public Management Committee met in March

The Spring meeting

The PUMA Committee meets twice a year, in Spring and Autumn.
Sixty representatives participated in this first meeting of the year, and as a first action, they greeted a new Member country: the Czech Republic.

The Committee considered how best to follow up on the Ministerial Symposium (see page one) and ex-changed views on the substance of PUMA's work programme for 1997-98.

The feedback on the Symposium was positive. The Committee noted that ministers were pleased with the outcome. While the meeting was broad in scope as the first of its kind, there was wide interest in building on this encounter and maintaining the political momentum.

Priorities for 1997 and 1998

Governments face increasing demands and shrinking resources. This is also true for PUMA. In this context, how should PUMA orient its future work? The Committee looked at this issue and defined work areas.

Top priority went to the survey of issues and developments in public management. An increased emphasis on communications was also requested and the Committee decided to produce *Focus*, a newsletter on practical initiatives undertaken in countries to improve public management.

Other high-priority items included: issues related to performance management and the reform and quality of regulation; the design of reform strategies; standards of ethics and conduct; trends in public sector pay; and reducing administrative burdens.

The discussion on the work programme was the beginning of a process that will continue until December, when it will take its final shape.

Election of Committee officers

The PUMA Committee's officers work in collaboration with the Secretariat to develop the agenda of Committee meetings, and ensure that they proceed smoothly and effectively.

At its Spring 1996 meeting, the Committee elected a new Chair, Dr. **Benita Plesch** (Director General, Development of the Senior Public Service, Ministry of Home Affairs, the Netherlands). She replaces **Frank Reeder** of the US, who took a position as manager of operations in the White House. The three Vice Chairs were re-elected to new terms: **Len Early** (Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance, Australia), **Reyyan Ödemis** (Head, Foreign Relations Department, Prime Ministry, Turkey), **Hugh Taylor** (Under Secretary, Office of Public Service, Cabinet Office, UK).

In a short acceptance speech, the new Chair thanked the delegates for their support. She expressed her confidence in the ability of the Committee to be more than the sum of individual countries' interests and to play a significant role as part of the OECD. She underlined the need to better communicate the work of PUMA and of the OECD in general. Finally, she asked for support in keeping topics related to human resources on the agenda. In the final analysis, she said, good management, governance and service provision all depend on the quality of public employees.

Special events at the meeting

Another highlight of the meeting was the presentation made by M. **Marcel Pochard**, Director-General for Administration and the Civil Service of France. M. Pochard explained the way the French administration was bringing public services closer to the public. *Focus* will report on this experience in the next issue.

For half a day, the Committee broke up into three discussion groups. The purpose was to exchange views in a smaller and more informal setting on issues of shared concern. These were "Formalizing citizens' rights", "Changing relationships between executive and legislative branches" and "Sustaining the momentum of public management reform: a question of culture". *Focus* will report on these discussions in the next issue. ■

What is PUMA?

PUMA stands for "public management" on which work is conducted in the OECD under the responsibility of the Public Management Committee and its Secretariat, the Public Management Service. This work deals with issues that shape the way the public sector is managed.

The Committee is the governing body. It discusses public management issues, defines study needs, sets priorities, develops the programme of work, reviews the outcome of work, and approves documents to be made public. Members of the Committee are from central management units, i.e. prime ministries; cabinet offices; ministries of finance and budget; ministries of the interior and national economy; administrative modernisation and public personnel organisations; management and coordination agencies.

The work is conducted by the Secretariat through research, surveys, meetings, analyses, and reports prepared for publication.

PUMA benefits from the substantive contributions of senior officials nominated by governments. These officials prepare replies to PUMA enquiries and come together as a network in meetings to discuss — frankly and discreetly — specific issues, success stories and promising experiences as well as failures. These exchanges constitute a valuable input to PUMA's work. ■

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