

**Proceedings of the OECD-Sponsored
Peer-to-Peer Visit of Jordanian and Lebanese
HR Experts to Belgium
and
Lessons Learnt**

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Background:

The Belgian Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) organized a study-tour of senior public administrators from Jordan and Lebanon to Brussels, Belgium between 20 and 24 November 2006. The peer-to-peer visit was recommended by the representatives of Jordan and Lebanon at the seminar that was held in Amman-Jordan within the framework of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative on 20 and 21 September 2006. The Arab visitors expressed their interest in learning more about the job classification and pay systems in the Belgian civil service. The presentation of Ms. Annick Sools (Advisor on Personnel Development at the FPS P&O) in Amman on the above topic triggered the interest of the Lebanese and Jordanian experts in examining the reform experience of Belgium.

The visitors were the following:

- Dr. Faysal Al-Hyari (Financial Advisor at the Ministry of Finance in Jordan);
- Ms. Muna Hakooz (Executive Director of Human Resources Policy Administration in Jordan);
- Mr. Sameh Al naser (Director of Management Development and Information at the Civil Service Bureau in Jordan);
- Mr. Samer Hankir (Policy Analyst at the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform - OMSAR in Lebanon).

A series of intensive workshops were facilitated by senior civil servants in the Belgian administration and some other HR specialists.

This report epitomizes the main issues that were discussed by the facilitators and visitors in a chronological sequence and concludes some lessons learnt from the study-tour.

DAY 1: November 20, 2006

On the first day of the peer-to-peer visit, three workshops were held. The facilitators were: Mr. Geert Sintobin (Director General of Personnel at the Public Service Personnel Organization – FPS P&O), Ms. Annick Sools (Advisor on Personnel Development at the FPS P&O) and Ms. Lisa Lettens (Team Member / Career Systems at the FPS P&O).

I. Introduction to the federal civil service system by Mr. Sintobin

Mr. Geert Sintobin introduced the government structure of Belgium. It is a federal system, made up of three different levels: the national, community and regional levels. The existence of two large language groups is the cornerstone of the Belgian political system.

Governance responsibilities are divided among the three levels. For example, economic issues fall under the scope of authority of the regional government, education is the responsibility of the community government, while common areas like defence, justice, etc. are the responsibilities of the federal government.

Each government is charged with organizing its own civil service. The federal government is not regarded as a hierarchical authority vis-à-vis the other governments.

Thus, HR functions, including selection, pay scales, promotion, career development, etc. are not uniform among the three levels of government.

The main focus of the workshops was on the federal civil service for which the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) is responsible.

The total number of civil servants is 80,000 (60,000 in the support ministries, line ministries and planning services and 20,000 in the autonomous agencies). The total number of all civil servants at all levels of government is 1 million.

The federal job classification system is highly based on academic credentials. It is composed of 4 levels (in descending order): A, B, C and D levels. There is also a senior civil service management category (the N type).

Level A encompasses 15,000 positions that require Masters Degrees from academic universities (4 years of university education); level B positions require bachelor degrees or high school degrees (2 years of education upon the completion of secondary school education); level C positions require secondary degrees; and level D positions do not require any type of educational degrees.

Internal promotion from one level to a higher one is a possible option, provided that the employee passes a test and meets the seniority condition regardless of the educational degree.

Level A is divided into 5 classes (in descending order): A5, A4, A3, A2 and A1.

Recruitment for A1 positions is open to the labor market. A2 positions cater for professional staff like doctors, engineers, etc. A3 and A4 positions must be open first to already existing civil servants in the same department. If no one was found suitable for the job, the position will be open then to civil servants across the federal civil service. If this attempt fails, the position will be open for external recruitment.

A 5 positions, on the other hand, are restricted for selection from within.

Recruitment for level A positions follows the “mandate system”. The manager will be hired for 6 years. Six months before his mandate expires, an evaluation will be conducted. Three possible scenarios can take place:

Scenario 1: If the result of the evaluation was “insufficient”, the manager cannot re-apply for the job;

Scenario 2: If the evaluation was “good”, the manager can compete with other candidates for the same position;

Scenario: 3 (exceptional): If the manager’s performance was found “very good”, his /her mandate will be extended automatically.

It is still pre-mature to judge the reliability of the mandate system since it became effective in 2002. The first assessment of the newly established system will be possible in 2008.

The N type senior management category was established in 2001. It is made up of 400 senior public managers. This particular category included 4 sub-types (in descending order): N, N-1, N-2 and N-3. Holders of type N jobs are the number one administrative figures in the public entities (Presidents of the federal organizations). N and N-1 positions are open for selection from inside and outside the civil service. N-2 and N-3 positions are retained for selection from within providing civil servants with an incentive for internal promotion.

Performance appraisal of level A staff is conducted by the minister concerned (the cabinet staff of the minister has a crucial input in this respect), as far as the N type senior managers are concerned. The Minister and N type managers appraise the performance of N-1 type. The latter and N type managers evaluate the performance of N-2 type. The Minister and N type managers appraise N-3 managers’ performance.

The federal staff is either “statutory” or “contractual”. Contractual employees constitute around 25% of total employment. The contract does not determine a definite expiration period, but less job-security, lower retirement rates and a more restrictive step-salary increase are distinguished features of contractual employment.

Each minister has the right to appoint his/her own staff to work for his office. This is called “**the political cabinet system**”. Political appointees can be drawn from inside or outside the administration for duration of 4 years. The only limitations to this particular type of appointment are the budget and the set staffing figures. When the minister leaves the ministry, the staff that was drawn from the civil service will go back to the original administrations due to the guaranteed position security.

II. Introduction to the “Copernicus Reform” in the Belgian federal administration by Ms. Annick Sools

Ms. Sools introduced the four pillars of the reform program that was launched in 2002: a new structure, a new management culture, an HR vision and new work methods.

The reform program was based on the results of a survey conducted in 1999. A diagnosis of the then situation of the federal administration exposed its deficiencies. Amongst the highlighted shortcomings were: lack of managerial skills, limited autonomy of top management, the sole reliance of the career system on seniority, lack of initiative and the diminishing responsiveness of the administration to the citizens’

demands. The Belgian federal civil service had to wait for 65 years to have a new reform program (the last reform dated back to 1937).

The survey prescribed the top 6 demands for change in order of priority, as expressed by the surveyed civil servants.

1. Salary revision;
2. Staff motivation;
3. Investment in ICT;
4. Change of management style;
5. Organizational efficiency; and
6. Succession planning.

The results of the survey gave an impetus to the reform process that was born in 2002 under the title “COPERNICUS REFORM”.¹

The reform thrust was directed at the top of the administration on the assumption that renewing top management will be reflected on the entire administration. It is at this point where the 6-year mandate system was injected. Top positions were open for competition among candidates. Fixed “personnel envelopes” were established on a yearly basis. The envelope covers all personnel expenses, introduces the notion of “personnel plans” and provides a certain scope of managerial discretion. This reform step was a tool for cultural change in the civil service.

The prerogatives of the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) cut across the whole of the public service. A “Local” personnel unit in each administration was set up to be the counterpart of the FPS P&O.

Several business reengineering projects were executed, many of which were transformed later into “work modernization” projects after realizing that work improvement does not necessarily imply radical change. A new career management and development system was set up based on competence assessment and “development circles”. The latter provides the chance for superiors and subordinates to communicate on mutual expectations, plan achievements, identify training opportunities and map-out development paths. Competences became the bedrock of individual career development. Bringing remuneration in line with the market was a solution to the problems that faced recruitment and retaining of skilled staff.

The horizontal progression to a higher salary scale within the same level was based on competence assessment and seniority.

III. Basic principles of the job classification system and pay scales in the Belgian federal administration

Ms. Lisa Lettens explained to the Lebanese and Jordanian visitors the basic principles of the job classification system and pay scales in the federal administration of Belgium. She made the point that personnel regulations are not embodied in one act. Instead, they are scattered among dozens of mandates. The upcoming reform step is to establish a coherent regulation that governs civil servants. Compensation includes the salary and other types of allowances. Amounts are linked to the inflation index (which

¹ The reform program was named after Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish pioneer of modern astronomy who presented the then revolutionary idea that the earth revolves around the sun. The latter is thus, the center of universe. The sun stands for the citizen who should be the ultimate beneficiary of the administration. The citizen must be served by the state.

is currently set at 1.4002). Therefore, financial figures (X) are multiplied by 1.4002. X is determined according to the pay scale and length of service (seniority). Statutory retirement is calculated by taking the average of the last 5 years of employment multiplied by 75%. The retirement rate of contractual staff takes the average number of years of the entire career as a reference point multiplied by 60%. Thus, the retirement rates for contractual staff are much less than that for statutory staff.

Ms. Lettens went over the new career system and gave examples of how it started to be applied across the various levels.

Mobility across “grades” of levels B,C and D is not a promotion. On the other hand, mobility across “classes” of level A is a promotion.

The new career system added competence assessment to the already existing seniority pre-condition for mobility.

The “norm” pre-condition of the old career system, according to which a percentage of staff members who are eligible for mobility towards the next scale is determined, was abolished.

DAY 2: November 21, 2006

On the second day of the peer-to-peer visit, three workshops were held. The facilitators were: Ms. Maria Deleeuw (Development Consultant at the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O), Ms. Isabelle Gilson (Personnel Development) and Mr. Gert Rego (Consultant at the Hudson Group).

I. The COPERNICUS Reform Program

Day Two of the study tour started with a dialogue between the Lebanese and Jordanian visitors and Mr. Jacques Druart (Staff of the President of the FPS P&O) on the reform experiences of Belgium, Jordan and Lebanon. Mr. Druart pointed at the involvement of the Big Four (the largest private consulting firms) in the public sector reform process in Belgium. The Minister of Civil Service considered that management is management whether it is in the public or private sectors. Mr. Druart clarified that the political cabinet system was to be replaced by the establishment of “strategic cells” in all ministries under the jurisdiction of the Presidents of the Public services (equivalent to Directors General in other countries). However, the attempt was thwarted after a new government took over. The political cabinet system remains in place.

Mr. Druart cited the peer reviews that are conducted by the OECD. Findings of a similar assignment on HR functions in the Belgian civil service are likely to be published in March 2007.

Ms. Maria Deleeuw gave a presentation on “Welcoming new staff, career guidance, training and development”. These tasks fall under the scope of functions of the FPS P&O.

She outlined the reasons for modernizing training and personnel development policies and practices in Belgium. Prior to the Copernicus reform program, the Latin culture dominated the civil service with excessive regulations and lack of managerial feedback. The Copernicus reform carried the seeds of the Anglo-saxon managerial

culture that emphasized the set up of professional training units in the line ministries, empowerment and results-based management. Ms. Deleeuw outlined the various types of plans that are relevant to training and development:

-The Personal Development Plan that brings organizational needs and performance objectives in harmony with individual needs;

-The Training Plan identifies training actions required to upgrade the competences of civil servants. It is developed on an annual basis. Training plans, however, must be improved to better reflect training priorities on the ground of training needs analysis. The training plan must not be a mere catalogue of training courses.

-The Global Development Plan is a strategic management instrument in the hands of the staff of Personnel and Organization unit in each federal organization to plan for the development of competences required to achieve strategic objectives of the organization and individual career goals. It is a multi-year document that is linked to other organizational development initiatives (knowledge management, BPR, communication, etc.).

The FPS P&O has developed a tool kit that helps the induction of new staff into public sector organizations (welcoming brochures, manuals for superiors, coaching, networking, etc.).

Ms. Deleeuw introduced the IFA (Training Institute of the Federal Administration of Belgium) which is part of the FPS P&O. It delivers initial and continuous training to federal civil servants and supports the training units in the federal organizations. Various types of training are provided, knowing that public entities can resort to other private training firms. The IFA, however, is non-profit, non-commercial organization. It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Finance (which is the largest ministry in Belgium that includes 30,000 staff members) and Ministry of Defence have their own training institutes.

Training impact assessment is an area that requires further progress.

II. The “Development Circles”

Ms. Isabelle Gilson delivered a presentation on the Belgian performance evaluation system (the Development Circles). This system does not apply to the N category. The title “Development Circles” imply an attempt to change the negative image of performance appraisal into a more positive and appealing notion. The old appraisal system that was based on individual scoring was abandoned. Civil service development drew further attention, thanks to the “Development Circles”. Contractual staff became subject to the new system, in addition to the statutory staff. A special characteristic of the new evaluation is that its results are not tied to promotion, mobility, or remuneration. The ultimate goal is to improve individual and organizational performance in a new open cultural context that promoted mutual communication between the employee and his/her superior and enhanced staff motivation.

In the year 2000, a multi-disciplinary team was established to review the strengths and weaknesses of the old evaluation system. It lacked the “management culture” that was the main contribution of the new system. A Royal Decree was passed in August 2002 providing the legal basis for the “Development Circles”.

The “Development Circles” system attempts to answer the following questions:

Where are we going?; how shall we achieve the objectives?; how can I contribute to the objective and with whom?; do I need to acquire additional competences to achieve the objective?

The concept focuses on the identification of organizational, team and individual objectives via open communication and competence development.

The “Development Circles” approach is implemented in four phases:

1. The functional interview during which managers and employees jointly review the job descriptions and competence profiles;
2. The planning interview seeks to establish performance objectives (not compulsory), and personal development objectives inspired by the SMART principle;

Phases 1 and 2 can take place concurrently aiming at mutual consensus.

3. Performance interview (not compulsory) during which a civil servant can ask his superior for further coaching based on self-assessment;
4. The Appraisal phase based on narrative description rather than scoring of evaluation factors.

The Personal Development Plan can be revisited according to the results of the “Development Circles”. Practical arrangements of the Circles should be determined by the top managers. The line manager should be a coach who helps employees to perform better.

The “Development Circles” is a shared responsibility: the employees conduct self-appraisal in an informal manner, line managers coach their employees, the HR units follow-up and support the process and the FPS P&O develops the necessary advisory tools (manuals, training guides, practical films, etc.) and tracks the smooth implementation of the process. Communication is an area that has been receiving a growing attention by devising various channels through which the development message could be conveyed.

If the employee’s performance was rated “unsatisfactory”, the employee will be provided with a 6-month period before he/she is subject to another evaluation round. The administration concerned has the flexibility to prolong the period. It is the line manager’s responsibility to help employees rectify the situation. A second “unsatisfactory” evaluation will lead to dismissal. As for contractual staff, the dismissal decision will be taken once performance was found “unsatisfactory”.

III. Introduction to the 5+1 COMPAS - COMPETENCY – RELATED Job Grading Model

Mr. Gert Rego from the Hudson Group introduced the above job evaluation model. The Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) worked closely with the Hudson Group, a private consulting firm, to develop the new job grading system for level A positions. The 5+1 COMPAS is an integrated HR approach that was developed in 1999. The FPS P&O invited the Hudson Group to help adopting its job evaluation system in the federal civil service of Belgium. 1500 standardized job descriptions were developed for level A positions. What drew the attention of the Arab visitors is that remuneration was set prior to the process based on 100 jobs that were selected as benchmarks for evaluation in 2000. Accordingly, boundaries were delineated and remuneration was determined.

Job grading is the measurement of the added value that jobs contribute towards the realization of the corporate objectives. The FPS P&O and the Hudson Group followed a two-fold job evaluation method: the quantitative point-rating system and the qualitative job comparison method. The latter was necessary to apply to expedite the job evaluation process. The outcome is that 1500 jobs at level A have been evaluated awaiting the endorsement of the Royal Decree.

The 5+1 Competency Model is based on the added value of jobs and competences required. Jobs are viewed from 5 main perspectives:

- *Personal management;
- *Interpersonal management;
- *Information management;
- *People management;
- *Tasks management.

The +1 is related to an additional perspective which is technical expertise. It is tailored to the specific work requirements of each organization. Technical skills are associated with the educational level attained and years and type of experience.

DAY THREE: November 23, 2006

On day three of the peer-to-peer visit two workshops were held. The facilitators were Ms. Annick Sools (Advisor on Personnel Development at the FPS P&O), Ms. Laurence Janssen (Staff member at the Directorate General of Personnel Development / FPS P&O) and Ms. Lisa Lettens (Team Member / Career Systems at the FPS P&O).

I. JOB Evaluation and IT Tools

Ms. Sools and Ms. Janssen presented the job evaluation process in the Belgian federal administration and the IT tools used in the process. The job evaluation assignment was focused on level A positions. The remuneration system was put in place prior to job evaluation. Total separation between job evaluation and remuneration was established for practical reasons. This pragmatic approach was needed to ensure a smooth implementation of the process that waters down any possible reservation or resistance. A hundred jobs were selected as reference-points and remuneration was set accordingly. It was a strictly mathematical issue that had no roots in the job evaluation project. The pay scales for below level A were set up in 2002 and for level A in 2004.

A “Career A Team” was designated including a project manager, 8 staff members and one administrative support staff. Six people from Hudson Group-private consulting

firm were involved. Networks were established with federal organizations and trade unions to get all the stakeholders concerned on board. Monthly network meetings were held with the project managers at the organizations concerned. Each organization had to deal with one contact person at the FPS P&O to guarantee easy communication. Job evaluation activities were planned and coordinated by the FPS P&O.

The assignment started by conducting an inventory of all existing jobs at level A through questionnaires that were distributed to record the main tasks of the jobs and their specifications.

The outcome of this phase was the clustering of jobs according to domains of expertise that would determine the final list of jobs to be described. Although level A included 15000 employees, the final list came up with 1500 jobs to be described. They were categorized into “centralized jobs” (jobs that existed in more than one organization like ICT, HR, logistics, finance, etc.) and “decentralized jobs” (jobs that were peculiar to the organization).

The job evaluation process combined two methods: the analytical point-rating method that was applied on approximately 300 jobs in accordance to the COMPAS 5+1 Model, and the non-analytical job-matching method for the remaining 1200 jobs.

The 1500 jobs were evaluated and checks were conducted all the way through to ensure the consistency of the process. The job evaluation committee was designated by a ministerial decree (endorsed by the Minister of Civil Service). The committee had representatives of the FPS P&O, FPS Budget and Management Control, ministries and external consultants. All committee members undertook certified training sessions on the point-rating method / COMPAS 5+1 by the Hudson Group.

Job evaluation for level A was a project that started in 2003 and was completed in 2006. Results were communicated informally and confidentially to the top management of each organization and to trade unions. Only draft evaluation results were revealed and not the specific points of evaluation since the points were only the means for final evaluation. Based on discussions, an evaluation revision was done and final results were proposed.

Currently, the FPS P&O is making the necessary preparations for raising the final output before the political circles. The first stage would be to discuss the matter with the political cabinet of the Minister of Civil Service, then with the representatives of all Services (ministries) before submitting the whole “product” to the Council of Ministers. Only then, job evaluation results can be considered “final”. In case the parties concerned failed to reach an agreement, the Council of Ministers will re-debate the issue and take the final decision by a passing a Royal Decree. At this stage, the evaluation results will be communicated to all level A civil servants.

As for the computer program, it was tailor-made by a private company that set up a huge database that gave the FPS P&O the capability to manage the job evaluation system through sorting, analyzing and reporting tools. The final job descriptions are expected to be soon published on the internet.

The FPS P&O will develop a manual that supports the federal organizations in implementing the job evaluation system. Integrating the new system into other HR aspects is the next step required. The FPS P&O will work closely with the personnel units in the federal organizations to ensure the success of the project.

II. Financial Impact of the Reform

Ms. Lisa Lettens presented the “Financial Impact of Changes on the Career System”. At the outset, she differentiated between a “salary scale” and a “salary range”.

A salary scale sets a minimum base at one end and a maximum ceiling at the other end. Between the two identified points, a sequence of fixed steps is determined. The salary scale follows the evolutionary principle according to which seniority is the main driver of step-salary-increase regardless of individual competences or performance. The scale system provides legal certainty for and equality among civil servants.

A salary range, on the other hand, has a maximum ceiling and a minimum base, but does not include fixed steps in-between. It is an evolutionary principle that is based on evaluation of individual performance and competences.

While the scale system provides certainty, equality and clarity, the range system provides a room for managerial flexibility.

Between the above systems, mixed forms can be tailored to meet the priorities of the organizations. Such forms can adopt a well-established salary scale coupled with performance evaluation whose result determines the step-salary-increase for the employee. Another mixed form can be a career system that consists of different scales. Within the scale, upward mobility is determined by seniority, while the more significant upward mobility (eg. from one scale to a higher one within the same level) is based on competence assessment (the Belgian case). Another mixed form can be a salary range in which upward mobility is based on a combination of seniority and evaluation.

The design of the pay system is also affected by:

- the length of the scale;
- the “different maxima” where there is a salary range with two maximum ceilings (within Max 1 sub-range, employees with satisfactory performance will be placed. Between Max 1 and Max 2, employees with outstanding performance will be situated);
- the compact ratio according to which a salary range is established within which upward mobility will be faster up to a certain ceiling (eg. every year or two years) and slows down between the set ceiling and another higher ceiling (eg. upward mobility every 3 or 4 years).

Level A in the Belgian federal administration is made up of 14 scales. Within each scale, there are pre-determined, fixed steps. A group of scales form a class. Level A is composed of 4 classes.

Upward mobility from one scale to another is based on seniority and passing a competence assessment. In case of failure, the employee will continue climbing the fixed steps within the same scale according to the seniority principle. As for contractual staff, it is not possible to be promoted to a higher scale, unless he/she competes for a vacancy in a higher scale with other candidates. Normally, the contractual employee remains in his/her pay-scale and climbs the fixed steps within the scale according to the seniority principle.

The design of the pay system is subject to the “give and take game” that maintains the balance among different parties who might have opposing priorities and requirements. Studying the market situation by conducting wage comparison surveys is another influential factor. Relevant questions within this context are the following:

1. With which market does the organization wish to compare? (international market, specific sectors, etc.)
2. What will be compared? (monthly pay, basic salary, specific benefits, total compensation, etc.)
3. How to compare? (eg. comparing jobs on the basis of job-matching or comparing job weights on the basis of the point-rating system).
4. Which position, compared to the market, does the organization wish to take?
5. Which staff groups are to be differentiated and how? (eg. managerial staff, ICT staff, giving bonuses to highly demanded staff, or giving a higher market position to specific groups).

One should keep in mind the budgetary constraints to the design of the pay system. The Copernicus reform program in the Belgian federal civil service brought amendments to the pay system (regardless of job evaluation). For instance, scales of level B staff were adapted to faster mobility during the first 10 years of the career, a third scale was added and a higher starting salary was established (8-9% increase). A market comparison study was conducted for level A salaries by matching 90 jobs that were taken as benchmarks with similar jobs in the market. Accordingly, certain amendments were introduced to the level A pay system like replacing the “norms” notion with competence assessment, easing seniority requirements and establishing a more objective classification based on job weights.

Other variable pays can be decided like commissions, profit-sharing, bonus for results (or competence or performance), team bonus, etc. For example, in the federal administration of Belgium, a competence allowance was adopted based on passing a competence assessment regardless of the employee’s performance on the job.

DAY FOUR: November 23, 2006

On the fourth day of the study-tour, a site visit was paid to the Department of Administrative Affairs at the Flemish Community Government. Ms. Mieke De Meester gave the Jordanian and Lebanese visitors an overview of the job families in the Flemish Government. The second workshop was held at the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) where Ms. Anne-Marie Korres from the Directorate General of Personnel Development explained the link between job classification and HR processes.

I. The Classification of job families in the Flemish Community Government

Ms. Meester explained to the Arab visitors that there are 13 government domains in the Flemish community. Each domain falls under the responsibility of a government department. In addition to government departments, there are 68 agencies. The total number of staff in the Flemish community is estimated at 40,000 employees of which 23,000 functions fall under the Flemish Personnel Statute. There is one coherent HR policy with some very slight discretionary powers in the hands of the community

organizations. The establishment of job families was finalized in the year 2003. However, it became effective in the summer of 2005.

A job family is defined as a cluster of jobs where the nature of tasks carried out is basically the same although there may be significant differences in the levels of work complexity.

The Flemish Government, through the Department of Administrative Affairs, decided to evaluate job families rather than individual jobs. Thus, instead of developing a job evaluation system based on individual job descriptions, the Flemish Government opted to establish job families on the basis of available job descriptions and then evaluate job families according to which pay scales were designed. This method was regarded as simple, less time-consuming and feasible, especially that individual job descriptions in the community organizations were not standardized. Each organization had its own job description format and terminology. Therefore, job descriptions exist within a job family context paving the way for a better integrated HRM approach.

The scope of job families is wide enough to include the Flemish Government departments and agencies. Unique jobs were excluded from the clustering exercise. Job families cluster jobs of similar nature where the type of work is almost the same regardless of the work domain or field of specialization (eg. environment inspector and internal auditor were grouped in the same job family). Within each job family, the levels of work complexity were identified leading to the delineation of different work levels.

Seventeen job families were established. Each bunch of families targeted a specific group (citizens, the organization, policy-makers and management). For instance, under the “citizens target group”, there are three job families (customer advising, processing external requests like licensing, and technical specialization like the design of roads that will be used by citizens).

Some job families served more than one target group (eg. control/audit, specialized performance like photographers and nurses, practical performance like cleaning staff and receptionists and other jobs that do not require academic degrees). Such job families serve the citizens and the organization. Hence, a special cluster was established that encompasses these job families.

For each job family there are objectives, result areas, division criteria and specific competences.

1. The “job family objective” answers the question: “what does this job family do and why?”.
2. The “result areas” element answers the following question: “what are the main tasks undertaken by the job family and what are the main work processes?”.
3. The “division criteria” element answers the following question: “what makes some jobs in the same job family more complex than others?”. It is noteworthy that each job family has its own 4 to 8 division criteria inspired by the job evaluation factors (if exist). The criteria differ from one job family to the other, as opposed to the uniform job evaluation factors. Various work levels within the same job family were identified at this stage.
4. The “competences” element answers the following question: “what is the basic level of knowledge required and what are the behavioral competences that

must be available?”. Various levels of competences will be identified pending on their importance.

Building on the last element, the Flemish Government developed a competence dictionary that identified and explained 32 behavioral competences. Four value-based competences out of 32 apply to all employees in the Flemish Government (cooperation, continuous improvement, customer-orientation and reliability). All competences are demonstrated by behavioral indicators. There are 4 levels per value-based competence and 3 levels for the other competences.

The Department of Administrative Affairs in the Flemish community provides the tools, manuals, necessary guidance and training. Slotting jobs in the different levels and applying the tools and manuals is the duty of HR units in each community organization.

The development of well-established job families is conducive to the objective design and implementation of HR processes (HR planning, recruitment and selection, mobility, performance evaluation, training, career development, development of new job descriptions, remuneration, etc.).

The future intention of the Flemish Government is to establish an overall pay structure based on job families and define base salaries for individual employees according to the position within the job family. The envisaged salary scale will take into account the current salaries of employees and their seniority. The salary scale in the Flemish administration is climbed automatically based on seniority.

II. The link between job classification and HR processes

Ms. Anne-Marie Korres introduced the concept of Resource Planning that the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) is expected to work on its implementation across the federal administration. Ms. Korres briefed the Arab visitors on the recruitment and selection practices. The SELOR (Selection Bureau of the Federal Administration), which is part of the FPS P&O, is responsible for selection and competence certification. It plays a pivotal role in the selection of candidates needed to fill vacant jobs across all the civil service levels (N, A, B, C, D), as far as the statutory positions are concerned.

As for contractual staff, the system is decentralized to a certain extent since SELOR is also involved in the selection process, though to a lesser degree.

Each vacancy is announced by a Royal Decree. On the other hand, announcements of contractual jobs do not require a Royal Decree. Candidates fill out an application form accessible on the internet. SELOR makes a “comparative selection” of candidates for statutory positions. Candidates are ranked according to tests whose types are decided by SELOR. The federal organizations must comply with the ranking roster presented by SELOR. Employees who ranked high fill the vacant jobs. The names of those who got lower ranks will be maintained on a “reserve list” that ministries can use later. SELOR determines the validity period of the list. Once a new vacancy emerges, SELOR will contact the candidates whose names are on the “reserve list”.

Only positions that are filled by selection from within the same organization can be staffed by the organization itself. If positions are open for competition among public sector employees, SELOR remains the indispensable central administration.

Employees who compete for internal promotion (eg. from one class to a higher one within level A) must have a satisfactory performance record (in the sense that no “insufficient performance” was recorded) and must meet the seniority pre-condition. Five candidates will be identified by the Board of Directors of the organization². The current promotion procedure lacks any testing requirement. Regulations stress the sole condition of seniority.

Ms. Korres emphasized the positive impact of the newly proposed job description and evaluation system on the proper functioning of the “Development Circles” and consistency of HR procedures.

The speaker concluded the workshop with a quick review of the SELOR’s website.

DAY FIVE: November 24, 2006

The last workshop was facilitated by Mr. Ben Smeets from the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) / Organizational Development.

The speaker presented an overview of a “Citizen-Centric Business Process Management (BPM) Approach to the Modernization of the Belgian Federal Government”. Mr. Smeets wrapped up the general structure of the administration and the latest Copernicus reform program. There was a need for a “shock therapy”, especially after the degradation of the public sector image due to a series of sad events that culminated in the food contamination crisis and repetitive accidents of child abuse. The public opinion in Belgium questioned government reliability. These crises triggered a comprehensive reform initiative. The “shock therapy” created a burning reform platform that influenced the federal organizations, including the FPS P&O whose functions support the other federal organizations.

The Organizational Development unit in the FPS P&O has re-shaped the mission and vision of the entire FPS P&O. Various tools were adopted by the latter in its advisory services to the other organizations aiming at the achievement of better employment practices in the civil service. The tools were the following: strategic management, process management, the balanced scorecard system (started to be applied in 2004), project management, quality management, change management, and customer and employees satisfaction surveys).

Therefore, the Organizational Development unit at the FPS P&O is taking the lead in instilling a new managerial culture across the civil service.

Mr. Smeets went over the main elements of the business process re-engineering approach. It is a fundamental rethinking process that “cleans up” the table and questions everything, placing the end-user/citizen at the center. It drives away from the previous administrative practices by re-designing work processes in a radical manner, shifting from a hierarchical silo-approach towards modern structures that are based on processes irrespective of hierarchical boundaries leading to significant work

² The Board of Directors of a federal organization is composed of the President of the organization (D.G in other countries), the N manager of the organization and a representative of the Minister’s cabinet.

improvements. The key processes are identified and mapped out overshadowing individual activities and functions. IT is utilized as a change enabler.

Mr. Smeets differentiated between core processes, support processes (that help core processes to achieve their results) and management processes. The citizens/end-users are not concerned with the organizational processes. They have specific demands that are expected to be satisfied. The processes themselves are the business of the organization.

The speaker presented an example from the Ministry of Economy. The core processes are: formulation of economic policies and laws; development of regulations that put these policies and laws into action; controlling the proper execution of policies and laws; collecting statistics and information about economic performance; and analyzing the economic environment to develop new policies and laws.

The above processes can be viewed as a whole process that is broken down into sub-processes.

The support processes are knowledge and competence management, personnel and organization, management and budget control, ICT and logistics.

The BPR is a phased-out approach that envisages the “to be processes” irrespective of the “as is” processes. After setting out the “to be” process, a comparison with the “as is” situation shall be conducted. The BPR as a reform approach initiated in 2001 was thought to be a comprehensive assignment whose scope covers the entire organization. In 2003-2004, it was realized that this approach was unrealistic, time-consuming and costly. Consequently, the FPS P&O shifted to a more focused approach that concentrated on specific processes within an organization. Processes to be reengineered were prioritized on a yearly basis. Once radical change is achieved, continuous improvement of the process will be followed up. Thus, the organization will be moving from business process reengineering (BPR) to business process management (BPM). The BPR approach was modified due to the accumulating learning experiences. For instance, the previous BPR methodology was a top-down / imposed reform initiative. Today, it is a more balanced top – down / bottom – up and voluntary change method.

The unrealistic objectives became more modest according to a list of priorities. The involvement of customers became more frequent. The one standardized approach became more customized.

Mr. Smeets advised the Arab visitors that “the journey is as important as the objective”. When reform efforts do not bring the sought results, we should ask ourselves whether we should keep insisting on going in the same direction. A possible solution could be the identification of the reasons for failure in an attempt to unravel out complications.

Lessons Learnt:

The peer-to-peer visit to the Belgian civil service gave the Lebanese and Jordanian delegates some important insights into the administrative reform process, especially in the field of human resource management. The following are conclusions and observations that inspired the Arab guests:

1. The Belgian model of federal public service employment is closer to the career-based system than the position-based system. Entry to the federal administration is highly based on academic credentials and an entry examination. Life-time employment guarantees a career for civil servants whose promotion is tightly linked to seniority and competence assessment. Civil service regulations are uniform cutting across the whole of the federal administration establishing a collective civil service identity. The Federal Public Service Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) plays a pivotal role in public employment. HR powers is, hence, centralized in the SELOR (Selection Bureau of the Federal Administration), an integral part of the FPS P&O. Belgium's previous decentralization of HR functions made a U-turn towards further centralization. Some elements of the position-based system could be easily traced in the Belgian administration. One example is the opening of vacancies, including top management jobs, for external recruitment, in addition to the possibility of internal promotion.

2. The performance evaluation system in the Belgian civil service, "the Development Circles", is soft and participatory compared to that of the Lebanese and Jordanian appraisal systems (if ever applied). The "Development Circles" approach is based on dialogue between line managers and their employees. Individual and organizational outputs are interconnected without relying on performance rating systems. The results of the evaluation, however, do not have any remuneration or mobility fallouts. Personal development is a distinguished feature of the system. This approach is very much inspiring to Lebanon and Jordan. The staggering attempts to adopt a strictly evaluation rating system must make the civil service more open to new evaluation methods that avoid sensitivities. The adoption of a similar approach could make the implementation of performance appraisal in the Lebanese and Jordanian administrations more feasible and less prone to resistance.

3. The Belgian federal employees are still paid according to incremental salary scales. Performance-related-pay (PRP) is not in place, yet. Promotion from one scale to a higher one within the same level in the federal administration is based on seniority and competence assessment that measures the knowledge acquired by training rather than on-the-job performance. The training program is delivered by the Training Institute of the Federal Administration (IFAS) which is part of the FPS P&O.

4. As of 2001, a senior civil service category was created in the Belgian federal administration as a distinct group (N, N-1, N-2, N-3). Civil servants in this particular group of top management count at 400. This category has its own job evaluation system. The six-year "mandate system" that requires managers to develop management plans with performance indicators emphasize the planning functions of managers on a strategic level, making the administration more output-oriented. This strategic orientation should replace the inward orientation of dozens of public sector managers.

5. Political appointment, which is a hot and controversial issue in Lebanon and Jordan, is “institutionalized” in Belgium through the “political cabinet system”. Instead of being practiced with public suspicion, the Minister in charge has the discretion to hire a relatively considerable number of employees who best suit his agenda for 4 years. Since political appointment seems to be unavoidable, according to the realities of the politics-administration inter-relationship dilemma, a better organized approach to political appointment in Lebanon and Jordan can be an alternative solution to the loose, sometimes unrestricted hiring of political appointees. At least the issue is worth further consideration.

6. While possible remuneration fallout is likely to be one reason for bringing the job classification project in Lebanon to a halt or temporary freezing, the Belgian Government decided to separate remuneration from job evaluation. The salary scale was determined in 2004, while job evaluation proceeded afterwards with a clear intention that it will not have direct impact on the pay system, as much as on other HR processes. This perspective could alleviate some financial concerns about the consequences of the job classification system on remuneration in Lebanon. Jordan’s current preparations for a new job classification review can take this measure into account.

7. The pay system in the Belgian administration is based on fixed salary scales that set a minimum base and a maximum ceiling with well-defined steps in-between the two edges. The employee climbs the scale according to seniority. The more flexible, relatively new broad-banding concept was never experienced.

8. Job description and evaluation in Belgium concentrated on Level A since it was considered to be top priority. While a similar exercise needs to be applied at the lower levels, the formulation and updating of job descriptions for Levels B, C, and D can be done through the “Development Circles” process that opened vivid channels of communication between line managers and employees.

9. The well-elaborated classification of job families in the Flemish Community Government provides a logical, though complicated, approach to clustering thousands of jobs in the civil service. Lebanon and Jordan can benefit from this condensed experience of classification to re-classify jobs along target groups and according to the general nature of tasks. While Lebanon’s draft job evaluation system was based on thorough job descriptions that treated individual jobs, the Flemish Community Government started the classification exercise by clustering jobs into job families. The advantage of the Lebanese approach is that the sequence of job classification activities sounds to be more incremental and profound leading to a standardized job description template. However, its disadvantage was the consumption of a good deal of time and resources that was indispensable for describing and evaluating thousands of individual jobs.

On the other hand, the Flemish approach provided a more solid and objective classification of job families, while the individual job description component lacked in-depth analysis and standardization. The Lebanese prospective pay scale will be based on evaluation of individual jobs. The Flemish prospective pay scale will be based on evaluation of various levels of work complexity within job families. Jordan has to weigh the balance before selecting the approach that better suits its administration.

10. The quota system in the Lebanese civil service is institutionalized on the top management level and is practically kept on an ad-hoc basis on lower levels to a certain extent. While this system remains debatable in Lebanon, it is legitimate and widely accepted and practiced in the Belgian civil service. The federal administration, amongst its other functions, is a tool for national unity. The Belgian experience in managing diversity can provide some insights despite the difference between the two countries regarding the type of political system (the Belgian political system is federal, while Lebanon's is unitary), and nature of societal cleavages (Belgium is made up of language groups, while Lebanon's diversity is based on religious groups).

11. While the Flemish Community Government is more advanced than the Belgian federal administration in terms of establishment and elaboration of job families, the latter leads the former in setting relatively objective criteria for upward mobility. Seniority remains the sole factor to be considered by the Flemish administration. On the other hand, the Belgian federal administration brought competence assessment in harmony with seniority.

12. The "Federal Public Service for Management and Budget Control" in Belgium is responsible for setting budgetary ceilings and linking the budget to management considerations. Such policy and planning functions were separated from the executive functions of the Ministry of Finance that focus on citizen (taxpayer)-oriented tasks (levying taxes, customs administration, etc.). In Lebanon, management and budget control is barely practiced and lacks well-developed, organized institutional frameworks. Moreover, finance-related executive functions and budgetary issues are captured by the Ministry of Finance. Fiscal and administrative reform in the public sector ought to be better interconnected through concerted efforts and mechanisms.

Conclusion:

The importance of the study-tour of Lebanese and Jordanian public administrators to Belgium is that it opened new tracks of communication between various administrations that belong to different parts of the world. As far as it is untrue that all countries have similar problems that need universal solutions, it is also untrue that different countries have totally different incomparable problems whose solutions can only be applicable in national contexts.

It was a value-added learning experience to the participants. The workshops did not follow a rigid style of lecturing, but rather an interactive approach that allowed the hosts and visitors to exchange ideas, highlight concerns, acquire and update information, search for solutions and grasp new management tools. The workshops' facilitators did not hesitate to readjust the schedule to the needs of the visitors who did not only assimilate the intensive material presented by the Belgian experts, but even had the chance to learn from each others' experiences. This event can be a preliminary step towards the establishment and maintenance of a network of experts in the field of public administration development under the auspices of the OECD.