

Focus

Public Management Newsletter

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Citizens as partners in policy-making

A new OECD report finds that engaging citizens in policy-making is an investment in good governance, helping to build public trust in government and to strengthen civic capacity – as long as governments know exactly what they are inviting their citizens to do and why. Two upcoming events aim to launch dialogue with civil society organisations and share policy lessons with non-member countries.

Mapping progress to date

A forthcoming OECD report, *Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*, examines government efforts to engage citizens in decision-making and respond to new demands for greater government transparency, accountability and openness by expanding citizens' access to information as well as opportunities for consultation and active participation in policy-making. The report provides a wide range of country experiences, identifies examples of good practice, and highlights innovative approaches in OECD countries, including the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The report is part of a larger 'family' of products designed for specific target audiences in Member and non-member countries alike. A policy brief (*Engaging Citizens in Policy-making*, PUMA Policy Brief no. 10) distils the lessons drawn from OECD country experience and offers a set of guiding principles for senior policy-makers, while an accompanying handbook (*Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*) offers a practical guide for government officials (see box).

Learning from experience

The report offers numerous insights and policy lessons. Governments must

ensure that the information they provide is objective, complete, relevant, easy to find and easy to understand. And they must ensure that all citizens are treated equally when it comes to accessing information and being able to participate in policy-making. Citizens must have clearly defined rights -- grounded in law or policy -- to access information, be consulted and take part in policy-making. At the same time, governments have an obligation to co-ordinate across departments to ensure policy coherence and reduce the risk of "consultation fatigue" among citizens bewildered by a shower of information and requests for feedback from different public offices about the same issue. A wide range of traditional tools for informing, consulting and engaging citizens in policy-making already exist (brochures, public hearings, consensus conferences). They are increasingly being complemented by new ICTs offering powerful tools for information delivery and the potential for on-line consultation.

Engaging in policy dialogue

The OECD's Public Management Service is now taking steps to initiate dialogue with civil society, disseminate the key findings and share policy lessons with non-member countries. The main objectives are:

- **Dialogue:** Highlights from the report have been presented at

several national and international meetings of public officials from Member and non-member countries (e.g. Korea, Slovenia). They will also feature in two upcoming OECD events: the OECD Global Forum on Governance on 'Modernising Government' (6-7 November 2001, Paris) and the OECD Governance Outreach Initiative Forum on 'Ensuring Accountability and Transparency in the Public and Private Sectors' (5-6 December 2001, Brasilia). Planning is under way for an international roundtable involving representatives of both government and civil society organisations, to be held in 2002.

- **Dissemination:** A major step towards making the results available to a wider audience will be the on-line publication of the policy brief and the handbook on the PUMA website (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/citizens>) in English and French. In addition, partners are now being identified for translation into other major languages (including Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian) as well as for dissemination in non-member countries (e.g. OECD's SIGMA programme, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank Institute).

For more information contact joanne.caddy@oecd.org. ■

Ten tips for strengthening government's relations with citizens

1. Take it seriously
2. Start from the citizen's perspective
3. Deliver what you promise
4. Watch timing
5. Be creative
6. Balance different interests
7. Be prepared for criticism
8. Involve your staff
9. Develop a coherent policy
10. Act now

From *Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*

● Investing in the future

In January 2001, the **Danish** government published *Investing in Denmark's Future*, which presents its public investment policy for the next ten years. Denmark faces a number of public investment challenges and opportunities, including:

- Meeting the demands of the growing number of elderly people, and the limited possibility of creating more jobs due to low unemployment and the falling number of people of working age.
- The shift to the knowledge-based society with its technological possibilities, particularly in the ICT area.
- Economic growth and the ever-increasing demand for better services and higher quality.

The government intends to emphasise investment projects that fulfil the following objectives: place Denmark at the forefront of ICT development and the knowledge-based society; ensure a more efficient public sector in which the use of modern technology and ICT will free up resources in the administration that can be used to provide services; create a better infrastructure of public facilities (roads, hospitals, etc.); and enhance and maintain the quality of public services.

Contact:

Jacob Hald (see details below)

● A sustainable future

In January 2001, the **Danish** government published *A sustainable future – Denmark 2010*. The goal is for growth to occur while the welfare society is maintained and developed on a sustainable basis. To achieve this, the government intends to: improve quality in the core areas of the welfare society such as education, health, childcare and eldercare; ensure high employment; obtain an increase in real wages; and make room for greater private consumption and more savings. The government plans to fulfil these goals while keeping taxes stable. Also, the public debt is to be reduced by 50% and the foreign debt, paid.

The government sees two major challenges to this, given the ageing population:

- higher expenditures on pensions, retirement homes, etc.;
- the difficulty of obtaining revenues from taxation to maintain public services even at today's level.

These challenges make heavy demands on the prioritisation of resources if today's welfare society is to be maintained in the long term. It is therefore necessary to pay off a large part of the public debt now, so that the money currently spent on interest payments can be used to pay for the rising expenditure on pensions, home care, etc. This would make general tax relief impossible. The labour market must also be made more attractive to people over 50 years old so that fewer choose to retire. Finally, the public sector needs to be modernised further to become more efficient.

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● Reforming finance laws

A law to reform the 40 year-old Order on Finance Laws was recently passed in **France**. The objectives of the reform are twofold: to strengthen parliamentary information and control regarding fiscal matters, and to modernise public management. This will involve the following:

- **Certification by the *Cour des Comptes*** that the government's accounts are discharged in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.
- **Increased information to Parliament** concerning money flows, government guarantees, tax entitlements, and the financial and patrimonial assets of the state.
- **Distinction between budget appropriations and individual programme accounts.** The budget will be presented, adopted and implemented on a cash accounting basis; accounts will be developed on the basis of generally accepted accounting principles.
- **Outcome-focused budgeting.** Instead of voting on a great number of appropriations, Parliament will vote on a more limited number of programmes. Managers will have greater autonomy to allocate funds within each programme; however, a ceiling will be fixed for personnel expenditure.
- **Managerial accountability.** In return for their increased autonomy, managers will be held accountable for results.
- **Performance management.** All ministries must provide an annual performance report showing the objectives, results, indicators and associated costs for each programme, to allow for an efficiency audit.

The law will be applied in successive stages over the next four years, and will therefore not be fully effective until 2005, when the budget for 2006 is prepared.

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● Policy evaluation system

As part of central government reform in **Japan**, a government-wide policy evaluation system was introduced in January 2001. To ensure that ministries implement the system appropriately, the government designed Guidelines for Policy Evaluation that include objectives and criteria, as well as standard evaluation formulae for project evaluation, performance evaluation and comprehensive evaluation. The government is also planning to submit legislation to Parliament to enhance the effectiveness and reliability of this system.

●“HELP” in dealing with the authorities

In **Austria**, “HELP”, an Internet-based platform to provide customer-oriented services for the citizen, provides information and services from ministries, provinces, towns and institutions nationwide. Its services are grouped around “life events” (e.g. the birth of a child, obtaining a passport or identity card), as well as other situations such as dealing with personal bankruptcy. Both general information and essential documents can be found on this site. Terminals have been installed in public offices, so that all citizens can have access to the service. Earlier this year, the government launched a co-operative scheme whereby citizens can print out the documents they require or obtain information from a terminal in tobacconists – so far 1000 tobacconists have joined this scheme. Other initiatives include: a new application for business people, “HELP – business”, where 30 business situations and matters are covered; an “interactive guestbook” where the competent authorities provide quick answers to each entry; and “@mtsweg-online”, where forms can be directly accessed, filled in and sent off electronically.

●A portal for e-Government

In conjunction with the Third Global Forum on Fostering Democracy and Development through e-Government, held in Naples in March 2001 (see *Focus* 19), the **Italian** government launched an e-Government portal, <http://www.egov.it>, to foster the development of ICT applications in public administration, and to share the potential of e-Government worldwide. The portal provides an introductory overview of the fast-growing domain of e-Government websites, and gives access to 1000 sites with a brief description. An institutional directory also provides direct access to some 10,000 more e-Government sites throughout the world. Sites are grouped by country and theme. Other sections of the portal allow the exchange of information and experience, present the contributions of speakers at the Forum, and provide references for scientific publications on e-Government.

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●E-Procurement in government agencies

In **Ireland**, an inter-organisational committee comprising central and local government and the health and education sectors is continuing its work on the development of an e-Procurement facility for the public service. A study to identify and address the issues involved and devise an appropriate strategy has been carried out. As a first step, an interim Public Sector Procurement Opportunities Portal containing tender advertisements and associated documentation has recently been launched. It is planned to launch a pilot phase of the e-Procurement system in mid-2002.

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●Reducing red tape

In **Ireland**, the regulatory reform agenda is an important one, and its original focus on reducing red tape has been broadened to include issues such as improving competitiveness and reducing the burden of compliance on businesses and citizens. Steady progress has been made in the ‘Reducing Red Tape’ Action Programme launched in July 1999. For example:

- The statute book has been made available in electronic format and, as part of their e-Public Service strategies, departments and offices will be increasingly using web-based technologies to publish regulations, application forms and explanatory information.
- Departments and offices are required under amended Cabinet procedures to use a quality regulation checklist for each new legislative proposal.
- The new Statute Law Revision Unit in the Attorney General’s office is preparing for a comprehensive programme of restatement, which will begin in 2001, subject to the enactment of the Statute Law Restatement Bill.
- Departments and offices have been asked to examine their primary and secondary legislation frameworks to identify scope for revision, repeal and consolidation.
- A dedicated Regulatory Reform Unit has been set up in the Department of the Prime Minister to co-ordinate the delivery of the regulatory reform agenda.

Over the past year, the major project in the regulatory reform area has been Ireland’s participation in an OECD Review of Regulatory Reform in Ireland, presented to the Prime Minister in April 2001 [see box below]. The government sought to have this review conducted in order to help objectively identify best practice in relation to regulatory reform.

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New publications on regulatory reform

The OECD has recently published two books on regulatory reform. Both are on sale at the OECD Online Bookshop (<http://www.oecd.org/bookshop/>).

Regulatory Reform in Ireland

This, the latest in the series of OECD Reviews of Regulatory Reform, presents an integrated assessment of Irish regulatory reform in areas such as the quality of the public sector, competition policy and enforcement, and market openness.

Businesses’ Views on Red Tape: Administrative and Regulatory Burdens on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Based on a survey of almost 8000 businesses, this report assesses the quality, application and burdens of employment, environment and tax regulations and formalities. It provides the first opportunity to systematically compare data across 11 OECD countries.

Public Sector Pay and Employment Data

Conscious of the strategic importance of having in-depth knowledge of their national resources, governments have invested significantly in national statistics. However, it took a long time for the effort of collecting information to be applied to government itself.

Since 1993, the OECD Public Management Service has annually updated and maintained the Public Sector Pay and Employment (PSPE) Database. The purpose of the database is to meet the rising demand for information on

pay and employment trends. This serial data is unique; no other organisation in the world manages a database of this kind.

The most recent PSPE questionnaire (sent in December 2000, with 23 countries responding) used a greater number of fields than in previous years, including a breakdown by gender at various levels of responsibility, the rate of employment by age group, and the distribution of civil servants in each ministry.

Figure 1. Gender by Responsibility Level

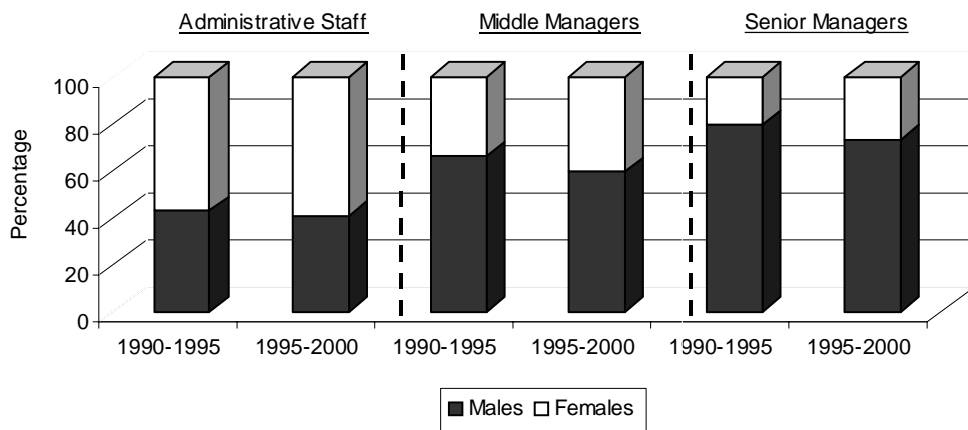
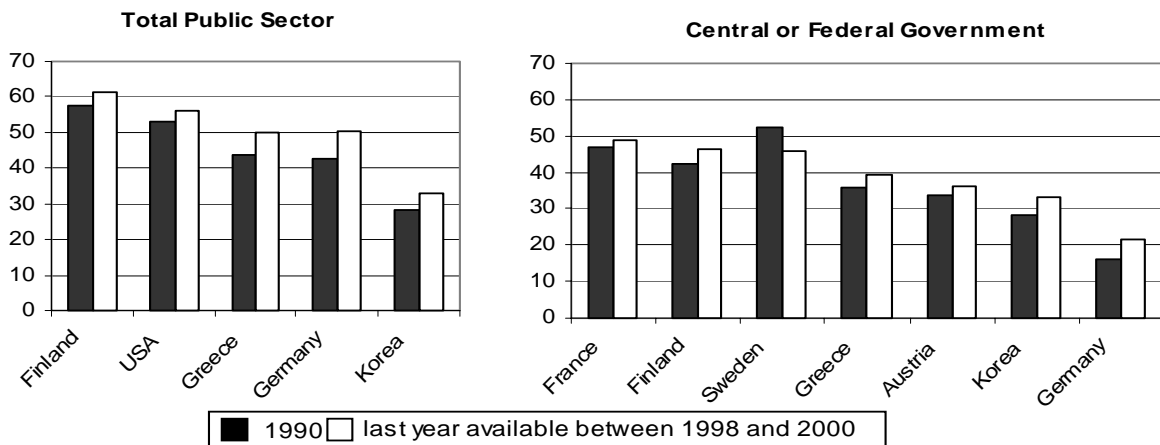


Figure 1 shows the share of employment according to level of responsibility and by gender. The share is the arithmetic mean of eleven OECD country ratios. This indicator shows the general trend of female participation in the public sector. Although the share of female participation has been increasing over the past decade, women are still under-represented at the middle and senior management levels. When this indicator is compared with the situation in each country, we see significant differences across Member countries. Figure 2 shows the change in the percentage of women in the public

sector since 1990, in selected OECD countries. It should be noted that some areas of activity that traditionally include a large number of women, such as education and health, are spread differently between the public and private sectors in different countries. Caution should thus be used when comparing across countries. The data are useful primarily to show change within a given country. Tables showing these data, as well as many other international comparisons of pay and employment in the public sector, are available on the OECD website at <http://www.oecd.org/puma/>, under "Statistics". ■

Figure 1. Share of Female Employment in the Public Sector



● Reforming staff policy

In February 2001, the **European Commission** adopted a number of documents to improve staff policy that covered, amongst others, the following issues.

- **Career structure:** replacing four job categories with 20 promotion steps, reducing the number of length-of-service pay rises, and introducing payments to staff with special policy or financial responsibilities or heavy workloads.
- **Annual appraisal and promotion:** defining staff duties through systematic job descriptions. Promotion is to be based on merit points.
- **Training and development:** requiring all new staff and certain categories of staff to undergo training; introducing personal training maps and training “passports”; increasing the training budget.
- **Mobility and career guidance:** introducing structured mobility to encourage staff to change jobs regularly; benchmarking optimal periods for holding posts; identifying sensitive posts that should be held only for a set period; increasing secondment outside the Commission and scope for leave on personal grounds.
- **Recruitment and selection:** holding more competitive examinations for specialists, using computer-based pre-selection, boosting the use of selection boards, and increasing co-operation among EU institutions on recruitment.
- **Management system:** introducing new appointment procedures and requirements as well as a probationary period for middle and senior managers, demoting managers for poor performance, and creating a new appraisal system for senior managers.
- **Performance problems:** following up cases of under-performance, instituting new procedures for dealing with professional incompetence.
- **Non-permanent workers:** setting new rules for national experts seconded from member States and for auxiliary agents, and creating a new type of non-permanent staff (the contract agent) to replace auxiliary agents.
- **Pay, allowances, expenses and pensions:** changing a number of allowances and expenses, and moving towards the creation of a pension fund for officials as of January 2005.

● Public employment observatory

The **French** Public Employment Observatory was set up in September 2000. It has three tasks:

- ensuring transparency on the size of the workforce, by improving the system for collecting public employment data;
- improving management planning for staff, jobs and skills, by anticipating future needs, and by avoiding job insecurity through better adapting recruitment to needs.
- conducting prospective studies on public employment and qualifications, such as potential labour market developments and the impact of new jobs on work organisation.

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Forthcoming report on enhancing the competitiveness of the public employer

OECD Member countries are facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality personnel in government.

PUMA's project on the Competitive Public Employer aims at finding successful strategies and policies to enhance the competitiveness of public employers and to promote practices of improving professionalism in the public sector. An expert meeting was held on this issue last April in Paris, where countries presented the challenges faced and strategies being adopted.

The meeting concluded that there are a range of issues apart from remuneration which are critical for recruiting and retaining qualified and competent personnel. These include efforts to improve the public employer's image and enhancing human resources management systems. A report of the project and the country cases presented at the meeting will be published later this autumn on PUMA's website. For further information on the project, please contact Ms. Kirsi Aijala (e-mail: kirsi.ajala@oecd.org).

For information on the latest OECD publications on public management, see the OECD Online Bookshop: <http://www.oecd.org/bookshop/>.

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Just published: Public Sector Leadership for the 21st Century

OECD Member countries are finding that there is a gap between existing public service cultures and the public's needs now and in the future.

A common complaint is lack of dedication to the underlying values of public service and the interests of the citizens served. A common response seems to be the attempt to promote a certain kind of leadership. In addition, in an era of globalisation, decentralisation, and knowledge-based economies, governments are having to reshape public sector leadership to cope with new challenges. This environment requires new roles for public sector leaders including change agents, promoters of enhanced performance, co-ordinators of government policies, and keepers of public service values. Many governments of OECD Member countries are developing new public sector leadership models.

Comprising a synthesis report and six country cases, this book is the first report to examine key leadership issues across OECD Member countries, including the strategies and practices governments are adopting, and the lessons from country experiences so far. The book will be available on OECD's Online Bookshop: <http://www.oecd.org/bookshop/>.

Performance management and budgeting revisited

Since the early 1990s, almost all OECD Member countries have been working to improve the quality of their public expenditure by implementing a focus on results in their management and budgeting regimes. The approaches to implementation have been diverse and adapted to national capacities, cultures and priorities. Notwithstanding these differences, the similarity of the conceptual framework and thinking behind reforms has made international comparison and learning fruitful.

As results-focussed reforms are maturing in Member countries, issues of implementation in public sector organisations, agencies and sectoral ministries are becoming pertinent, and there is a need to go beyond the rhetoric of reform to look at real-life implementation. Are results-focussed management reforms making a difference in public sector organisations? What are the impacts, and are they positive or negative? What are the conditions under which results-focussed management is working and not working? Are there sectoral differences? Observers of public sector management reforms – i.e. academics – are critical of results-focussed management

reforms in some OECD countries. What are their criticisms, do they differ among countries and are their criticisms warranted? Some reforms are based on reporting to parliament on public sector performance – are parliamentarians interested and is the information adapted to their needs?

PUMA is arranging an expert meeting for government practitioners in OECD Member countries on how reforms intended to enhance the quality of public sector expenditure are implemented in public sector organisations. The aim is to establish the challenges and problems and to reflect on how they can be overcome.

The meeting will be held in February 2002 at the OECD headquarters in Paris. Invitations will be sent to the PUMA Committee members and Senior Budget Officials in all OECD Member countries. Participants at the meeting are invited to submit and present reports on experiences from their countries. Findings from the meeting will be available in Spring 2002.

For more information, please contact Jens Kromann Kristensen at jens.kristensen@oecd.org, tel. +33-1-45.24.18.35, fax +33-1-45.24.17.06.

Forum on Ensuring Accountability and Transparency in the Public Sector

5-6 December 2001, Brasilia

The OECD, in collaboration with the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Brazilian government, is organising a Forum on Ensuring Accountability and Transparency in the Public Sector. The purpose of the Forum is to launch a policy dialogue for senior officials and ministers to support the efforts of the OAS countries in the design and implementation of preventive measures against corruption, within the framework defined by the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. Drawing on the experience of OECD countries, the Forum will assist the process of formulating a set of policy guidelines. These guidelines will guide and underpin the efforts of Latin American countries to increase transparency and accountability and to reduce the level and risk of internal corruption within the public administration.

For more information, contact janos.bertok@oecd.org.

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Survey on Knowledge Management

PUMA is launching a survey on knowledge management practices in the public sector in OECD Member countries. This will be the first extensive and comparative survey on knowledge management practices to be carried out for the public sector. The two goals of this survey are to analyse where central ministries stand in terms of knowledge management practices, and to carry out cross-national and cross-sectoral comparative analysis on the implementation of knowledge management strategies in public organisations. PUMA plans to send the survey to countries before the end of 2001, and to present a preliminary synthesis report of the knowledge management survey at its symposium on "The Learning Government" in 2002.

For further information on the survey, please contact Elsa Pilichowski (email: elsa.pilichowski@oecd.org; Tel: +33-1-45.24.76.12) or Dorothee Landel (email: dorothee.landel@oecd.org; Tel: + 33-1-45.24.82.43).

• FROM THE BOOKSHELF •

Para recobrar la confianza en el gobierno: Hacia la transparencia y mejores resultados con el presupuesto público

Jorge A. Chávez Presa

Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2000
(ISBN 968-16-6311-X, 336 pages)

Distrust of government is a marked characteristic of 21st-century democratic societies. The author of this book believes that, in Mexico, this stems from the lack of transparency surrounding many government processes: for example, the preparation of the federal budget.

This book offers fresh ideas and guidance to federal, state and municipal officials for preparing public budgets more efficiently and clearly. It also aims to help politicians, administrators and the public better understand how government works, through its budgetary function.

Available only in Spanish from:

Fondo de Cultura Económica
Carretera Picacho-Ajusco, 227, 14200 Mexico, D.F.
<http://www.fce.com.mx>

Safeguarding the Public Interest: Summary of the 56th Report to the Government

Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2000
(70-page summarised translation of the full report)

In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, many government services have been transferred to the private sector, and further transfers are being considered. This report discusses privatisation, and the public/private balance. In particular, it looks at the question of how public and private responsibilities should be assigned in the promotion of public interests. The report discusses which social interests are identified by the government as public interests (meaning that government takes responsibility for them), and how the operational responsibility is carried out in both the public and private sectors while safeguarding the public interest. Available from:

Scientific Council for Government Policy
P.O.Box 20004, NL-2500 EA The Hague
Tel:+31-70-3564600
Email: info@wrr.nl <http://www.wrr.nl>

Rethinking Democratic Accountability

Robert D. Behn, The Brookings Institution, 2001
(ISBN 0-8157-0861-0, 317 pages)

Traditionally, American government has created detailed, formal procedures to ensure that its agencies and employees are accountable for finances and fairness. Now, in the interest of improved performance, front-line workers are asked to be more responsive, middle managers are urged to be innovative, and public executives are exhorted to be entrepreneurial. The author examines the ambiguities, contradictions and inadequacies in current systems of accountability for finances, fairness and performance, and suggests a new model of accountability to address new paradigms for public management. Available from:

The Brookings Institution
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Wash., DC 20036
Tel:+1-202-797.6000 Fax:+1-202-797.6004
<http://www.brook.edu>

2001 IFAC Handbook of International Public Sector Accounting Pronouncements

International Federation of Accountants, 2001
(315 pages, ISBN 1-887464-70-0)

This Handbook brings together for continuing reference background information about the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the currently effective pronouncements on the public sector issued by IFAC as of 1 July 2001. It also presents the International Public Sector Accounting Standards being developed by IFAC. Available from:

International Federation of Accountants
535 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017
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<http://www.ifac.org>

Room at the Top? A Study of Women Chief Executives in Local Government in England and Wales

Pam Fox and Mike Broussin, Bristol Business School,
University of the West of England, May 2001
(171 pages, ISBN 1-86043-319-7)

The research for this report was conducted when local government was undergoing fundamental change as a result of the "modernising agenda". It investigated areas such as how women become chief executives and the barriers they encountered; what advice and guidance women chief executives need; whether and how women's experiences and career/personal development needs differ from those of their male colleagues; the implications for the changing role of local authority chief executives. The report includes 14 recommendations. Available from:

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To Serve and To Preserve: Improving Public Administration in a Competitive World

Asian Development Bank, 2000 (ISBN 971-561-244-X, 776 pages)

The quality of public administration is central to the achievement of poverty reduction. While preserving and promoting their basic social values, countries must not only pursue sound socio-economic development objectives but also deliver efficiently and effectively the public services expected of them. This book, the first in a series, aims to reach policy-makers, planners, administrators, civil servants and the media in developing countries and transition economies. It presents the principles of good governance and discusses their successful application in various countries. Available from:

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P.O.Box 789, 0980 Manila, Philippines
<http://www.adb.org>

Evaluation and Poverty Reduction

Edited by Osvaldo N. Feinstein and Robert Picciotto
World Bank Series on Evaluation and Development
Volume 3, 2001 (ISBN 0-7658-0876-5, 382 pages)

Evaluation is a central aspect of any poverty reduction endeavour. In this book, a network of scholars and development practitioners covers the gamut from methodological issues to policy concerns with respect to participatory evaluation, poverty-reducing growth, macro and micro levels of intervention, health, nutrition and population programmes, social inclusion and the changing role of the civil society. The emphasis is on what works in poverty reduction programmes. Available from:

Transaction Publishers
New Brunswick (New Jersey, USA) and London (UK)

Managing risk: Senior officials meet in Reykjavík

The annual meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government of OECD Member countries will be hosted this year by the Secretary-General of the Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland on 22 and 23 October 2001. Discussions at the meeting will primarily focus on risk management.

All governments must anticipate and manage a wide variety of risks, ranging from natural risks (earthquakes, floods) to risks that are exacerbated or directly caused by new technologies (oil spills from supertankers, nuclear energy) or the security threats posed by terrorism and the malicious use of new information and communications technologies. The potential scale of diseases such as AIDS, foot and mouth disease or bovine spongiform encephalitis are another form of risk.

Participants will first establish a taxonomy of risks in order to identify the implications for decision-makers. Some risks may be more limited in scope and readily predictable, while others may only be dealt with once they have occurred. It is thus important for decision-makers to be able to determine where and when a simple possibility may evolve into a high probability that a given risk may occur.

Experiences with risk management will be central to the discussions, as

there is a need to exchange information on the capacity of governments to anticipate, limit, act and react to risk. What legal framework, policies, organisations and structures, training and financial resources are needed to limit or combat a given risk? The discussion will allow participants to identify successes and analyse the determining factors behind recent setbacks.

Participants will also analyse the complex relationships between decision-makers, the scientists who provide them with technical advice and the general public, who can at times exert considerable pressure on public authorities when there is a perceived risk. How can a balance be struck between an immediate response and the long-term outlook? How can decision-makers decide upon a measure when the technical opinions about a given risk are both divided and uncertain?

An additional issue is the way governments communicate with and involve the public when managing risk. Many governments are judged according to their ability to anticipate and restrict risk, and to cope with crisis situations. How, when and what governments communicate to the public, as well as how they involve the public in decisions and actions, is often crucial to public confidence in decision-makers.

Participants will also discuss the interface between the public and private sectors. They will tackle several issues such as the fundamental role of the state, the functions it should retain and those that could — or should — be taken on by the private sector. Member countries sometimes have very different views of the state, and hence of the frontier and degree of overlap between the public and private sectors. The discussion will cover a wide range of areas, including regulation, privatisation, contractualisation, semi-public agencies, sub-contracting of service delivery, and ethics in activities sub-contracted by government.

With unique input from practitioners from centres of government, the meeting will allow participants to build on PUMA's work on public policy formulation and countries' efforts to ensure more coherent government action. ■

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Human resources management: Taking a broader view

The 2001 meeting of the Working Party on Human Resources Management (HRM) was held on 25-26 June, with over 50 delegates representing most OECD countries. At the meeting, delegates discussed challenges and problems they are facing in the HRM field, including public sector leadership, the competitiveness of the public employer, knowledge management, and conflict of interest. Knut Rexed, Chair of the Working Party, noted: "OECD governments are confronted by serious challenges to their capacity to meet the needs of citizens:

- The processes of government are largely ill-suited for management in a knowledge-intensive society.
- The diversification of public management structures is making good governance and effective performance at a whole-of-government level more difficult to achieve.
- The current level of mistrust of government by citizens reduces the efficiency of government actions and diminishes the attractiveness of public service for the most able people."

Delegates voiced the need to gain synergy by looking at HRM issues in a wider context. To this end, they decided to tackle three broad issues: the Learning Government, Governing for Performance, and Building Public Trust. To support this, Germany proposed to co-host an OECD Symposium on Governing for Performance, to be held in Berlin in March 2002.