

Focus

Public Management Gazette Number Nine

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

OECD Principles for Managing Ethics

1. Ethical standards for public service should be clear.
2. Ethical standards should be reflected in the legal framework.
3. Ethical guidance should be available to public servants.
4. Public servants should know their rights and obligations when exposing wrongdoing.
5. Political commitment to ethics should reinforce the ethical conduct of public servants.
6. The decision-making process should be transparent and open to scrutiny.
7. There should be clear guidelines for interaction between the public and private sectors.
8. Managers should demonstrate and promote ethical conduct.
9. Management policies, procedures and practices should promote ethical conduct.
10. Public service conditions and management of human resources should promote ethical conduct.
11. Adequate accountability mechanisms should be in place within the public service.
12. Appropriate procedures and sanctions should exist to deal with misconduct.

Managing ethics: An OECD Recommendation

The Public Management Committee (PUMA) of the OECD developed a set of principles for managing ethics in the public service. They were discussed at a symposium held in November 1997. After a thorough review, the Committee presented them to the Council of the OECD, which adopted them as a recommendation. OECD ministers later welcomed the recommendation and asked the PUMA Committee to report in 2000 on the way countries were using these principles.

Ethics is a key issue today

The question of ethical conduct in public service has grown in people's perceptions. Stories of "clean hands" initiatives and legal action against politicians and high-level officials accused of corruption are making media headlines. A growing sense of mistrust and an apparent decline of confidence in government and public service is observed among citizens.

These developments have raised several issues. Is this trend a result of recent public management reforms that devolved authority and gave discretion to public managers? Do developments such as globalisation and more public-private partnerships destroy the public service ethos? Is it correct to say that these stories are in the news because civil society has gained more leverage and is demanding greater transparency, or simply that the media know and report more?

Responses are many

Governments try to provide responses to these challenges. They issue new codes of conduct, strengthen controls and inspection, devise action programmes against corruption, organise training sessions, etc. Moreover, PUMA's work showed that, while governments may focus on specific aspects of improving

ethical conduct, they actually have recourse to a whole ethics infrastructure.

An ethics infrastructure

An infrastructure approach implies a comprehensive view of ethics where the various elements complement each other holistically. They constitute a whole and need to function in harmony. Concentrating on one single element does not help. A good example is what a former mayor of a big city has said: "To fight corruption, I introduced new control mechanisms. Everything was checked twice; but, it did not help. These measures created huge bureaucratic burdens and the amount of bribery paid per transaction increased." More attention to other elements would have helped. The success of ensuring a better ethical environment depends on the proper management of the entire ethics infrastructure.

Using the principles

The OECD Recommendation asks countries to take action to ensure well-functioning institutions and systems for promoting ethical conduct. This can be achieved, it says, by regularly reviewing procedures and practices influencing ethical conduct. The Recommendation invites countries

to use these principles in the review process. This exercise will help to locate the strengths and weaknesses of the ethics infrastructure and enable governments to improve their ethics management systems.

The Recommendation

The full text of the Recommendation is on the PUMA Web site: <http://www.oecd.org/puma/gvrnance/ethics/pubs/rec98/rec98e.htm>. Please also see previous issues of *Focus*. ■

V.I.P. — Austria's administrative reform programme

*This time Panorama looks at recent developments in Austria. **Emmerich Bachmayer**, Director-General of Central Personnel Co-ordination at the Federal Ministry of Finance, made a presentation at the March meeting of the Public Management Committee. Below is a summary of his presentation describing a new initiative undertaken by the Austrian government.*

A new orientation

After a large-scale "administrative management" project in the late 1980s, Austria shifted its attention to cost-cutting programmes, in order to reduce public deficit and be ready for membership in the European Union. The focus on budget cuts put quality improvements and long-term reforms aside for some time. Later, attention shifted towards administrative reform. At the beginning of 1998, the government launched a comprehensive project, known in German as "V.I.P.", which will continue until June 1999.

Strategy

The initiative relies on the involvement of as many staff members as possible, covers all ministerial departments and tries to identify and correct unwanted developments at an early stage through pilot projects. The project is conceived as a joint effort by policy-makers and administrators. It is planned to put more emphasis on involving senior managers, to give the reform a more stable basis.

Priority areas

The programme of work focuses on three major priority areas:

Reforming the scope of tasks and processes:

A series of corporatisation projects will be implemented, and tasks performed in the federal ministries will be reviewed. This action will start with the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Human resource management:

Various measures include: developing a new "Vision for the Public Service", improving induction training for civil servants, restructuring the salary system, defining strategic objectives for each

department as a basis of human resource planning, and increasing mobility between the state and private sectors.

Administrative modernisation instruments:

This includes the development of a system of performance indicators for the federal administration, various "controlling" activities, and greater use of electronic data processing in the administration.

Ongoing projects

Performance review. A preliminary performance review will be finalised before summer. All federal ministries and the Federal Chancellery participated in creating a performance indicator system. This exercise covered 77.5% of all civil servants and 50% of

the budget. The next step will cover the entire federal administration.

"Showcase government". One-stop shops, "product catalogues", cost accounting systems and decentralised budget responsibility will be introduced in pilot projects.

Austrian Government Help pages.

This is a project of the Department of Central Personnel Co-ordination, Ministry of Finance. This electronic one-stop shop (<http://www.help.gv.at>) gives citizens access to the administration. At this stage, it provides information on marriage, birth and divorce procedures (e.g. which forms are needed and where they can be obtained).

Vision for the Public Service.


An interministerial V.I.P. group is ensuring a co-ordinated approach to the project. As a first step, the group will compile a "project manual" with the help of external experts.

This project is preparing the government administration for the next millennium. ■


V.I.P.'s Objectives

- To reorient the role of the state from a regulator to a service provider, and make it increasingly client-oriented.
- To achieve an annual productivity rise of 2-3 per cent, ensuring high-quality performance with scarce resources.
- To introduce effective, outcome-oriented governance gradually by:
 - "steering" (monitoring) through agreed objectives and targeted performance, and concepts such as "performance agreement" or "contract management";
 - developing "product catalogues", defining services and standards, and encouraging the administration to work towards outcomes;
 - bringing about transparency of costs and results;
 - introducing phased decentralisation of resource accountability.
- To introduce efficient human resource management, in order to exercise empowered management in a professional manner, and ensure a flexible use of staff consistent with their qualifications.


●Monitoring decentralised management

In **Sweden**, 99% of employees of the state sector now work in executive agencies, and only 1% in ministries. This implies that personnel management is fully decentralised. An evaluation conducted in 1996 on devolution in this field indicated that this process had promoted more efficient personnel management. However, it was found that continuous monitoring of performance was essential for ensuring efficiency improvements. At the end of 1997, the Ministry of Finance launched a monitoring system. Agencies are reminded that their objective is to achieve specific outcomes and their personnel policy should support this. Agencies are asked to produce annual reports on their personnel policy objectives and account for their staff's current competency, mobility, wages, etc. This reporting system helps the government assess the employer policy objectives of agencies. 

●Information technology as a reform tool

Turkey has launched work on restructuring the public administration. Objectives such as improving transparency, deconcentration and decentralisation, the state's further withdrawal from economic activity and changing the bureaucratic ethos guide this work, which has three pillars: administrative reform, legislative reform and personnel reform. Information technology plays a leading role in implementing these reforms. First, "electronic administration" will be created in the Prime Ministry, using information technology methods that will allow more rapid circulation of documents and information electronically. Later, this will be enlarged to cover the whole administration. 

●Restructuring the government

In order to cope effectively with the current economic crisis, **Korea** recently passed the Government Organisation Act. The Act, which came into effect on 28 February 1998, aims to create a government that is smaller but stronger and more efficient, user-oriented, flexible and responsive to social change, with decentralised authority and responsibilities. The number of cabinet ministers and minister-level officials has been reduced and the number of government employees, excluding teachers, will be cut by 10.9% over the next 3 years. Some ministries have been abolished, others merged, and the Prime Minister's Office strengthened. A Presidential Commission on Planning and Budget has also been set up. Next on the agenda is the restructuring of local governments and government-run corporations. 




This symbol indicates that more detailed information on a news item exists on Focus On-Line (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/focus>). For more information, including contact names and addresses in countries, see the Supplement.


●Changing the administrative structure

Greece is changing its administrative structure, with a focus on flexibility, adaptability and quality. Through decentralisation and deconcentration, regions have become administrative units with their own budgets; at local government level, municipalities and communities are being merged. Government departments and agencies are rationalising their structures to avoid duplication and enhance co-ordination. The extended use of information technology has improved the administration's information network. A "Quality Programme" has been created, with the following goals:

- preparing a Citizen's Charter;
- creating one-stop shops for public services;
- establishing on-line communication among public services;
- creating a regulatory reform policy, using checklists;
- simplifying procedures;
- improving working conditions;
- preparing a Code of Administrative Procedure.

To strengthen monitoring and control functions, a new central audit body, the Inspectors-Controllers Body for Public Administration, was recently created. 

●Devolving power

Devolution of authority has been an important issue in **Poland** since 1989. Past experience showed that devolved units were using resources more efficiently than central structures. Based on this observation, the government launched a new scheme and proposed the creation of two new administrative levels: regions and counties. They are expected to start functioning as of January 1999. Counties (*powiats*) will run public services of a local character, such as education, health and nursing homes. The regions (*voivodeships*) will provide services on a regional level, support economic development and secure the unitary character of the state. 

This issue of Focus was prepared by Atila Alpöge, Claude Jacqmin, Marie Murphy, Andrea Uhrhammer and Deirdre Wolfender.

Anti-corruption measures in the public sector

Mechanisms	BEL	CHE	CZE	DEU	ESP	FRA	GRC	HUN	IRL	ITA	JPN	KOR	MEX	POL	SWE
Legislation proscribing corruption and establishing sanctions	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Other anti-corruption regulations	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Oversight by legislature or parliament	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Bodies with power to investigate corruption	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	
Supreme financial audit authority	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Ombudsman *	◆			◆		◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	◆
Specialised bodies to prosecute corruption					◆	◆	◆			◆			◆		
Human resource management controls		◆		○	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	○	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Financial management controls	◆	◆	○	○	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Organisational management policies, controls	◆	◆		○	◆	◆		◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Transparency mechanisms	◆	◆	◆	○	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Guidance and training for public officials		◆		○	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	○	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

◆ Yes ○ Proposed or under consideration

* also called *Médiateur* (BEL, FRA); Parliamentary Committee on Petitions (DEU); Committee for Civil Grievances (KOR).

BEL = Belgium lic
 CHE = Switzerland DEU = Germany
 CZE = Czech Republic ESP = Spain
 FRA = France
 GRC = Greece
 HUN = Hungary
 IRL = Ireland
 ITA = Italy
 JPN = Japan
 KOR = Korea
 MEX = Mexico
 POL = Poland

In 1997, the OECD Public Management Service undertook a survey of anti-corruption measures in the public sector in a selection of OECD countries. The final report, *Countering Public Sector Corruption: An overview of corruption prevention measures in OECD countries*, will be published later this year. The table above shows the anti-corruption mechanisms used in each country. They are:

Legislation proscribing corrupt activities and establishing sanctions: criminal sanctions for specified types of corruption, legislation obliging public officials to declare assets and financial interests, etc.

Other anti-corruption regulations, e.g. regulations setting out codes of conduct adapted to particular circumstances, etc.

Oversight by the legislature or parliament, e.g. permanent or *ad hoc* bodies, committees, or commissions.

Investigation systems or bodies, e.g. the police and general judicial services or special parliamentary commissions.

Supreme financial audit authority, independent of the government, with the power to inspect, regulate and report

on all aspects of the financial management of state assets.

Ombudsman, or bodies with equivalent roles and powers.

Bodies to enforce sanctions and prosecute corrupt activity, e.g. specialised prosecutors.

Human resource management controls intended to prevent corruption, e.g. policies concerning recruitment and selection, conflicts of interest, restrictions on external employment, etc.

Financial management controls intended to prevent or deter corrupt practices, e.g. external audit controls, internal financial auditing and reporting, authorisation of payments, etc.

Organisational management policies, systems and controls intended to minimise opportunities for corrupt activity, both internal organisational controls and external sector-wide measures.

Transparency mechanisms, e.g. independent or public scrutiny, systems for declaring or reporting potential conflicting interests or corrupt activity.

Guidance and training for public officials or politicians, e.g. codes of conduct, ethics awareness training. ■

●Freedom of information

This is a central part of the **United Kingdom** government's modernisation programme. A White Paper called "Your Right to Know" was opened to discussion in the beginning of 1998. It commits the public sector at each level to provide access to official information and records, and to publish more information at no charge. It extends its coverage to private companies that provide public services. Sensitive information can be exempted for purposes of personal privacy, commercial confidentiality, national security and law enforcement. An independent Information Commissioner will oversee the implementation of these measures and handle appeals. ☐

●The 1997 Public Sector Quality Award

A regional branch of the **Danish** Labour Market Agency received the first Public Sector Quality Award from Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in November 1997. An "On-the-right-track" award was presented to an institution for the mentally and physically disabled. The award is based on the European Foundation for Quality Management business excellence model, slightly adapted to meet public sector specificities (see article in *Focus* No. 7, p. 2). A new campaign encouraging public sector institutions to apply for the Quality Award 98-99 was launched at the end of March 1998.

●A new government work programme

On 23 March 1998, the newly re-elected **Danish** government presented a work programme for the next four years in office. Among the public management priorities were:

- regulatory reform and quality checks on new regulation;
- reduction of administrative burdens on companies and citizens;
- greater choice among different providers of public services;
- better information on the quality of different services;
- reform of the police and the legal system.

●Better Government

In the **United Kingdom**, a Better Government White Paper describes the government's vision for the public service in the next millennium, with proposals and initiatives to help realise this vision. The central government will work more closely with service providers, and will create linkages among agencies and encourage them to co-operate, so that services can be delivered more seamlessly and effectively to citizens. Through new technology, information and services will become more accessible. To support this new approach to public service delivery, the government will promote an outward-looking, creative and responsive public service culture. Another goal of Better Government is more coherent policy-making. Ministers should be clear about policy goals and set targets that fit overall government objectives. ☐

Every Monday, the What's New page on PUMA's Web site presents new items (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/new.htm>).

●Government in the citizens' service

Swedish central government has undergone great changes over the past 20 years. But with the increasing use of information technology, accession to the European Union and internationalisation, new challenges have arisen. A government bill on "Central Government Administration in the Citizens' Service" aims to develop a central government that:

- is accessible and responsive to the public;
- has the citizens' full confidence;
- provides business and industry with favourable conditions for work and growth; and
- is a successful and respected participant in international co-operation.

The Bill includes guidelines for improving the administration that will serve as the basis for a government action programme. The programme will last several years and will focus on the following three areas: quality, skills and ethics; control and management; provision of information. See *Focus On-Line* for a summary of the bill. ☐

●Creating an information centre

Somogy, a territorial unit in **Hungary**, is the scene of an experiment. With the full involvement of all administrative bodies in the region, an information centre is being created. The centre will operate as a one-stop-shop where citizens will find all the information they need to deal with different administrations. Eventually, the centre will provide electronic services as well. This experiment will later be extended to other parts of the country. ☐

The Focus Hot File appears on the second Monday of each month. Upcoming issues will be available on: July 13, August 10, September 14. Items from previous issues are stored in the Focus Compendium for 18 months. (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/focus/hot.htm>)

●New public employment framework

In June 1997 the **Australian** government introduced a Public Service Bill that would provide a new legislative framework for managing the Australian Public Service (APS). The Bill, a key element in the government's public service reform agenda, removes central control and enhances accountability. It should improve the APS's competitiveness and comparability with other sectors, and will enable it to promote a stronger performance culture. Pending passage of the Bill, many of the reforms have been implemented through administrative means, including the devolution of staffing powers to agency heads. ☐

●Ministers as leaders

The **Norwegian** Directorate of Public Management Development conducted a survey of some 35 former ministers on their leadership role in the ministries during the last 15 years. According to the results of this survey, ministers find the first few months in office very difficult. They lack information and guidance, both from the Prime Minister and his/her office and also from their own staff in the ministry. They also face many unclear and contradictory expectations. They think that a better clarification of role relationships between the political level and the key staff of the administration would be highly desirable. ☐

The news items on these pages are published in their entirety in Focus On-Line, our electronic newsletter on the PUMA Web site:

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

Focus On-Line is updated weekly.

●New retirement fund arrangements

As of 1 July 1998 new employees of the **Australian** government will no longer become members of a compulsory, government-run defined-benefit pension scheme. Instead, employees will select a pension fund from a set of non-government suppliers chosen by their employer. From 1 July 2000 government employees who are members of the government-run schemes will have the option to leave those schemes and participate in the new arrangements. The new system will give employees greater choice and control over their retirement savings.

●The State Personnel Policy Programme

A long-term programme of state personnel policy was completed under the direction of the **Finnish** Ministry of Finance in late 1997. Its strategic guidelines were jointly drawn up by the civil service unions and representatives of the major state agencies. The programme document consists of: an assessment of the changes in the operating environment of the state administration; the challenges to the state personnel policy that arise from those changes; and proposals for concrete measures. The key proposals concern the following areas:

- making the state a more competitive employer;
- providing better human resource management instruments for the central government;
- ensuring the proper number and quality of staff;
- developing methods, standards and systems for manager assessment, and setting quality targets for managers;
- enhancing staff mobility, both within and outside the government sector. ☐

●Ethics in the public administration

As part of the reforms taking place in **Hungary**, the government is seeking to identify new public sector values that fit the new public management environment. In this context, the Ministry of the Interior organised an international conference on ethics in the public service on 17 April 1998. Participants were asked to identify fundamental public sector values and to discuss ways to promote these values, enforce ethical conduct and improve communication between the administration and the public. The Ministry has prepared a report presenting its ideas on the subject as well as a draft code of ethics. (Both are available on the Internet in English and French at www.b-m.hu.) The following basic civil service values are identified: serving the general interest; legality; political neutrality; highly qualified staff; impartiality; concern for justice and equity; the human element; citizen satisfaction; individual responsibility; and effectiveness. ☐


●Re-establishing public trust

Recognising the damage done in 1998 to public trust in the administration and the civil service by the behaviour of certain public servants, the **Japanese** government has concluded that present discipline enforcement policies may be inadequate. It will therefore present a legislative bill for re-establishing trust in the government to the Ordinary Session of the Diet.


●Co-operation among administrations

Italy has launched an initiative with Spain to promote close collaboration among the public administrations of European Union member States, with a view to achieving uniformly high levels of efficiency and productivity. The Italian Minister for the Civil Service and Regional Affairs proposed that ministers meet to discuss the following issues:

- policies for high-quality regulation, deregulation and administrative simplification;
- training public managers and setting common parameters for evaluating the performance of public administrations;
- the agency (authorities) system in the European context;
- information technology as an instrument of administrative modernisation.


Several countries have expressed support for this initiative, and a meeting of an “informal Council” has been tentatively scheduled for November 1998. 

●High priority on regulatory reform


Regulatory reform is an integral part of the work conducted in Mexico to modernise and restructure the economy. The Economic Deregulation Council established in 1995 provides basic support for the implementation of an action programme in this field. Recent interventions under the programme include: the review of existing business formalities; the review of new administrative and legislative proposals; the development of legislative reforms to improve the regulatory framework; support given to states and local governments. Extensive work is also conducted to eliminate red tape and simplify procedures. A full report on all these efforts is on *Focus On-Line*. 

**For recent PUMA publications, see
<http://www.oecd.org/puma/pubs>.**

●Reviewing accountability documentation

The New Zealand State Services Commission is reviewing the large volume of accountability and performance documentation produced over a decade of public management reform. It will examine the adequacy of accountability mechanisms for setting expectations of performance, monitoring actual performance and ensuring accountability, while considering the needs of the key actors involved and without imposing unnecessary burdens. In a second step, it will look at harmonising and consolidating accountability documents and streamlining reporting processes. The aim is to develop a clearer, more efficient performance and accountability framework. 

●“The chain approach”

Policy implementation is problematical. It is generally thought that once you pass a law or declare a policy, implementation will follow naturally. However, this is not the case. Governments end up devoting huge amounts of resources to ensuring compliance. The Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management launched an initiative to overcome this difficulty: the chain approach. Compliance depends on elements such as policy, regulation, implementation, enforcement and organisation. This implies a chain in government action and emphasises that all these elements should be integrated in the process in order to ensure a “results-oriented policy”. This also means setting up mechanisms for early involvement and full consultation. Detailed information on this process can be found on *Focus On-Line*. 

• FROM THE BOOKSHELF •

Government Reform and Accountability to Citizens in Italy

Department of the Public Service, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Rome, March 1998 (7 pages)

This paper describes policies for increasing government accountability to citizens. Tools to achieve this include simplification of administrative procedures and a public service delivery charter. Steps are being taken to promote and reward excellence in delivering public services, and pilot projects are experimenting with new practices of good governance. Government efficiency is being increased through information technology and decentralisation.

Available from:

Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica
Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri
Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 116
I-00186 Roma

The Swedish Central Government in Transition

Statskontoret (The Swedish Agency for Administrative Development), 1998 (108 pages, ISBN 91-7220-301-3)

This is an abridged version of the 1997 report on development in central government administration. Part I describes the state in terms of employment, staff composition, consumption of central government services, and productivity trends. Part II describes administrative policy before and during the 1990s, and structural and other changes made. Part III focuses on the changes in central government administration associated with information technology. Available from:

Statskontoret Publikationsservice
Box 2280, S-103 17 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel:+46-8-454.4643 Fax:+46-8-454.4645
EM: publikations.service@statskontoret.se

18 months to go

Y2K (the Year 2000 problem) has become an important agenda item during the last three months. It moved to the front pages of newspapers, and governments are announcing new action plans. Below you will find reports on how five OECD Member countries are responding to this challenge.

In France

At the end of May, the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry circulated to the heads of enterprises a 10-point guide to help them deal with Y2K. Proposed actions are:

- Name a responsible person and create a Y2K team.
- Alert and brief all personnel, and obtain their full involvement.
- Get a monthly report from the team to be fully informed on its work.
- Ensure that an inventory is made of systems that may be affected.
- Assign priority to these areas of difficulty.
- Obtain official confirmation from all input providers that their products are Y2K compatible.
- Develop an action plan in the light of priorities and their timing.
- Budget the resources required by these interventions.
- Get the advice of your insurer, and develop a crisis plan in case of a problem after 2000.
- Make sure that firms with which you have commercial relations will effectively deal with Y2K.

For further information, see: <http://www.industrie.gouv.fr/accueil.htm>.

In the United Kingdom

The government is making progress on two fronts. In the public sector, all central government departments and agencies have been asked to produce plans and to ensure that their systems are modified and tested by December 1998, subject where appropriate to a final check of end-of-year financial systems by April 1999. The government has also announced an initiative, "Action 2000", that will work through industry and professional organisations, primarily to help the private sector.

In the United States

The President appointed an Assistant to the President for Y2K Conversion and an interagency President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion. The Council will: ensure that no federal programme experiences disruption; work with state and local governments to address the problem; co-operate with the private sector, mainly in the areas of banking, financial systems, telecommunications, public health, transportation and electric power generation; and communicate with foreign partners.

In Canada

In February 1998, the Year 2000 Task Force delivered its final report: "A Call for Action". (See: <http://www.itac.ca/policy/policy.htm#2000>) It proposes recommendations to encourage work on Y2K compliance. The Task Force also launched an awareness campaign. Within the Canadian government administration, the Treasury Board Secretariat is co-ordinating efforts. (See: <http://www.info2000.gc.ca/Frame.asp>) Furthermore, a bilateral initiative has brought together officials from Canada and the USA to consider cross-border Y2K issues.

In Belgium

In January 1997, the government

launched an initiative called *Projet Admi-2000* and asked the *Bureau Conseil ABC* (ABC Consultancy Bureau) of the Ministry of the Public Service to co-ordinate Y2K efforts. After initial work on project design and evaluation of budgetary implications, the government made its strategic decisions towards the end of the year. As a result, project teams were created in government organisations. A person (known as "Monsieur/Madame Year 2000") was chosen to have primary responsibility and act as the contact person *vis-à-vis* other organisations. In all, there are 44 Monsieur/Madame Year 2000. They meet every three months under the auspices of the *Bureau Conseil ABC*, and review progress and discuss issues. This body, called Forum-2000, submits quarterly progress reports to the government. The *Bureau Conseil ABC* is assisted in its work by private consultants, and an independent audit firm oversees the quality of the work undertaken. ■

More information on Y2K appears in a Focus On-Line special feature, "Millennium Countdown" (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/focus/current/y2k.htm>). It reports on action being taken in countries, recent publications and links to other Web sites.

OECD and PUMA look at the Y2K problem

Y2K was a discussion item on the agenda of the Public Management Committee (PUMA) meeting in March. Delegates expressed the need to have more information on what countries were doing and to contact those with key Y2K responsibility in capitals. A month later, ministers of Member countries also raised similar issues in their annual meeting, and asked the OECD to promote global awareness of the problem and its potential economic impact. They instructed the Organisation to submit a report to the Ministerial Conference on Electronic Commerce to be held in Ottawa in October 1998. PUMA is taking the lead in developing this report in co-operation with the Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry of the OECD.

Please contact *Focus* at PUMA OECD
2, rue André-Pascal
75775 Paris Cédex 16 France

Fax+33-1-45.24.87.96
e-mail: pum.contact@oecd.org