

# Focus

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This supplement to  
**Focus**,  
*The Public Management  
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consists of two parts: the first part gives names of contact persons concerning news items in *Focus* Number Eleven; the second provides information on recent PUMA publications.

To know more about a news item in **Focus**, the **Public Management Gazette**, first, please check the detailed information reported in **Focus On-Line**, an electronic newsletter published monthly on PUMA's Web site: <http://www.oecd.org/puma/focus>. If the information given there is not sufficient, contact the persons listed below, who kindly reported the developments in their countries.

## PAGE THREE

### **Reforming infrastructures**

**Mary Kotronia**

Ministry of Transport and Communications  
GR-10191 Athens, Greece  
Fax (30-1) 32.47.400

### **Stronger strategic management**

**Derek Gill**, Branch Manager,  
Strategic Development Branch  
State Services Commission  
P.O. Box 329, Wellington, New Zealand  
Fax: (64-4) 295.66.99  
Email: derek.gill@ssc.govt.nz

### **A new government structure**

**Dr. István Balázs**,  
Government Chief Councillor for  
Administrative Development  
Prime Minister's Office  
4 Kossuth ter, Budapest, Hungary  
Tel. (36-1) 268.32.01  
Fax (36-1) 268-32.18

### **Connecting Berlin and Bonn**

**Rolf Krost**, Ministerialrat in BMI  
Federal Ministry of the Interior  
Dept. O13 (KBSt)  
Postfach 170290, 53108 Bonn, Germany  
Tel. (49-228) 681.2902  
Fax (49-228) 681.2202  
Email: ivbb@kbst.bund400.de

### **New uses for IT**

**Barry Forrester**, Cabinet Office  
Horseguards Road  
London SW1P 3AL, United Kingdom  
Tel. (44-171) 270.1989

## PAGE FOUR

### **Human resources database**

**Enga. Maria Iracema Barreto**, Chairman  
Estrada das Laranjeiras, 197-205  
1600 Lisbon, Portugal  
Tel. (351-1) 727.47.35  
Fax (351-1) 727.47.26

### **Managing the government workforce**

**Su-Wan Jang**, Deputy Director  
Organisation Policy Division  
Administrative Management Bureau  
Ministry of Government Administration and  
Home Affairs (MOGAHA)  
Republic of Korea  
Tel. (82-2) 720.4349  
Fax (82-2) 3703.55.29  
Email: jangsuwan@hanmail.net

### **Devolving pay determination**

**Gunnar Björnsson**, Director-General  
Department of Personnel Policy  
Ministry of Finance, Iceland  
Fax (354) 562.36.90  
Email: gunnar.bjornsson@fjr.stjr.is

### **Managing attendance**

**Mr. Brian Avery**  
Efficiency and Effectiveness Group  
Cabinet Office  
Horseguards Road  
London SW1V 3AL, United Kingdom  
Tel. (44-171) 270.52.55  
Fax (44-171) 270.554.35  
Email: BAVERY@cabinet-office.gov.uk

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### **Evaluating the public sector**

**Ms. Marja Lemne**, Secretary  
Ministry of Finance, Sweden  
Tel. (46-8) 405.15.88  
Fax. (46-8) 10.65.91  
Email: marja.lemne@finance.ministry.se

### **Analysing compliance**

**drs. H.M. Klaasen**  
Inspectie voor de Rechtshandhaving  
Ministerie van Justitie  
Postbus 20301, 2500 EH Den Haag  
The Netherlands  
Tel. (31-70) 37.07.410

### **The Values Commission**

**Fred-Olav Sørensen**, Norway  
Tel. (47-22) 24. 68.20  
Email: fred-olav.sorensen@krd.dep.telemax.no

### **Studying government management**

**Mark A. Abramson**, Executive Director,  
The PwC Endowment for the Business of  
Government  
1616 Fort Myer Drive,  
Arlington, VA 22209, USA  
Tel. (1-703) 741-1077  
Fax (-1703) 741.1076  
Email: endowment@us.pwcglobal.com

### **Committee on citizen's choice**

**Peter Kjærsgaard Pederson**, Head of  
Section, Ministry of Finance, Denmark  
Tel. (45-33) 92.38.20 Fax (45-33) 15.01.27  
Email: pkp@fm.dk

Or

**Nina Husfeldt Clasen**, Head of Section  
Ministry of Finance, Denmark  
Tel. (45-33) 92.38.14  
Fax (45-33) 92.38.14  
Email: nhc@fm.dk

### **Guidelines on governance**

**Seppo Tiihonen**, Counsellor  
Public Management Department  
Ministry of Finance  
P.O. Box 286, 00171 Helsinki, Finland  
Email: seppo.tiihonen@vm.vn.fi

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### **Managing Commonwealth property**

**Stephen Allen**  
Department of Finance and Administration  
Australia  
Tel. (61-2) 62.75.39.48  
Email: stephen.allen@dofa.gov.au

### **Performance agreements**

**Yolanda Hellmund**, Mexico  
Email: caspyde@energia.gob.mx

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## **new from OECD**

## **MODERN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

This document discusses recent innovations in financial management practices for national governments. It highlights two incentive regimes which have been used by governments to improve their financial management systems: the capital charge regime to improve asset management and the interest rate regime to improve cash management.

The paper has five sections. The first section describes an accountability framework for management issues generally, and explains the application of this framework to cash management. The second section describes the issues which need to be addressed in the design and operation of cash management systems. The third and fourth sections outline two incentive regimes which have been used by governments to improve their cash management systems: the capital charge regime and the interest rate regime. The fifth and final section provides conclusions as to the success of the incentives described in the paper and considers possible future developments in cash management practices.

**new from OECD**

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM: A STUDY OF FIVE OECD COUNTRIES**

This study explores how new information technologies (IT) are impacting public management reforms and government programmes in five OECD countries -- Australia, Finland, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom. To the extent that governments are heavily reliant on IT to perform basic production functions, it seems inevitable that it must be a major element or instrument of those reforms. Perhaps more importantly, there seems to be a growing recognition that it can be an instrument of reform, both in enhancing efficiency (doing more with less) and changing the way government delivers services and even redefining what it does. It is hoped that conclusions reached regarding principles and factors that influence success, emerging issues and implications for public management and governance, and some early "lessons learned" may be broadly applicable to IT-related public management reforms across all OECD Member countries. Descriptions of promising practices in each country studied, and contact points for further information are also provided.

**new from OECD**

## **IMPACT OF THE EMERGING INFORMATION SOCIETY ON THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND DEMOCRATIC QUALITY**

This report explores how the new information and communications technologies and the emerging "Information Society" are changing the way OECD governments handle information in the policy-making process, and the issues these changes raise for the conduct of democratic government. Based on a review of eight OECD countries' experience, the report highlights the complex forces in play, and the different ways in which major players in the policy and democratic process are affected. Although several major players (e.g. the media, interest groups, and bureaucrats) are adopting these new technologies and have become force multipliers in the policy arena, the ICTs have not so far improved the links to decision-makers or the democratic quality of policy and governance. From the perspective of decision-makers, it appears that most OECD countries are in a period of transition where the Information Society and the new technologies on which it is based are feeling their way into the paper-based and oral worlds of policy and governance. Nevertheless, governments are experimenting with new modes of "electronic democracy" and consultation with the public, and the report advocates further use of such tools. Their effective use, however, is not dependent so much on technology as on social and cultural change, government priorities, political will and the structure of institutions.

These documents are available on the PUMA Web site: <http://www.oecd.org/puma/online.htm>

**new from OECD**

## **IMPROVING EVALUATION PRACTICES: BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION AND BACKGROUND PAPER**

A focus on results is a central element in recent public sector reforms in OECD countries. Evaluation is important in a results-oriented environment because it provides feedback on the efficiency, effectiveness and performance of public policies and can be critical to policy improvement and innovation. In essence, it contributes to accountable governance. As a part of its work on Performance Management, the Public Management Service has studied evaluation in Member countries in order to identify key issues and practices to improve the use of evaluation. This report contains *Best Practices Guidelines for Evaluation* and a background paper, *Improving Evaluation Practices*. The aim of the Guidelines is to identify key issues and practices that OECD Member countries should consider when seeking to improve the use of evaluation.

**Coming soon**

## **PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PROFILES -- CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THIRD EDITION**

SIGMA will soon begin posting chapters of the third edition of the *Public Management Profiles of Central and Eastern European Countries* on to the Internet at <http://www.oecd.org/puma/sigmaweb>. This on-line document has been prepared by SIGMA in close collaboration with participating governments, and covers the following 12 countries: Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

*Public Management Profiles* serves as a convenient reference guide for civil servants, political leaders, donors and others with an interest in governance in Central and Eastern Europe. The individual country chapters comprise ten sections, allowing for international comparison: Political Background; The Constitutional Framework; Legislative Authority; Central Executive; Executive Linkages (eg to the presidency and parliament); Personnel Management; Administrative Oversight and Control; Administering European Integration; Plans for Reform and Modernisation; and Key Statistics (on the state budget and employment in the administration).

*Public Management Profiles* have been updated through autumn 1998, and take into account such recent events as the elections and change in governments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Latvia and Slovakia. The text has been enriched with the insertion of several "hyper-text links" to other Internet sites offering additional details about particular subjects.

These documents are available on the PUMA Web site: <http://www.oecd.org/puma/online.htm>