

Focus

Public Management Newsletter

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

At the recent OECD symposium on accrual accounting and budgeting, a number of participants emphasised that the use of accruals is not merely a technical change to the accounting conventions applied in the public sector. The countries that have already adopted accruals have generally been at the forefront of public management reforms. These reforms aim to hold managers responsible for outcomes and outputs while eliminating controls on inputs. In this context, it is expected that managers should be responsible for all costs associated with the outputs produced, not just the immediate cash outlays. Only accruals allow for the capture of these full costs, thereby supporting effective and efficient decision-making by managers.

Accrual accounting and budgeting Major international symposium held in Paris

On 13-14 November 2000, the OECD and the Government of France co-hosted a major international symposium on accrual accounting and budgeting. Over 120 officials from more than 35 Member and non-member countries participated in the symposium. Ms. Florence Parly, French Budget Minister, delivered the keynote address.

The adoption of accruals is a significant and radical reform to the financial management of governments; it is also very recent. The first country to introduce consolidated financial statements on a full accrual basis did so in 1993; the first country to introduce budgeting on a full accrual basis did so in 1994. Over one-half of all OECD Member countries have now adopted accruals to some degree, and more are planning to do so. This is a testament to the merit countries see in this approach.

The objective of this Symposium was to allow senior officials responsible for accrual accounting and budgeting to discuss the key issues and share experiences. The Symposium was organised around five substantive sessions.

The application of accruals

This session focused on the relative merits of applying accruals to financial reporting only, or to both financial reporting and budgeting; and on applying accruals at the agency level only or to consolidated whole-of-government financial statements as well.

An overview of accrual accounting and budgeting practices in Member countries is available on the PUMA website at <http://www.oecd.org/puma/budget/>.

Valuation issues

Countries have applied different practices to the valuation of assets and liabilities, including the valuation of military, heritage and other non-commercial assets, and the treatment of pension liabilities. The different valuation methodologies applied -- historical cost versus current market value -- were also discussed in this session.

I believe accounting is not an end in itself, but an information tool to enhance [...] the sustainability of budgetary policies, performance measurement and the transparency of the State's financial position. These precepts need to guide accounting choices and should not become the exclusive preserve of technicians.

- Florence Parly,
French Budget Minister

Accounting standards

In this session, participants discussed the various ways accounting standards are set: application of private sector standards, application of international standards, the use of independent

national accounting standard-setting boards. The session also looked at audit procedures in relation to the standards.

Implementing accruals

Participants next discussed the process of moving from cash to accruals, including issues of timing and of systems and training requirements. The need for extensive information campaigns was highlighted as a way to ensure that all players are familiar with key accrual concepts.

The impact on transparency, fiscal policy-setting, the legislature and the public

This session focused on the impact of a move to accruals on transparency and how the legislature and the public understand and use this data. Participants also discussed how fiscal policy-setting is carried forward in an accrual environment.

Proceedings

The proceedings of the Symposium will be published in a forthcoming edition of the *OECD Journal on Budgeting*. The first issue of the *Journal* is currently under preparation and will be published in early 2001. To subscribe to the *Journal*, consult the OECD Online Bookshop <http://www.oecd.org/bookshop>. ■

● One-stop shopping for government services

In the **United States**, a government website that provides the public with one-stop access to all federal government online information and services was launched in September 2000. FirstGov provides an online portal that allows citizens to conduct searches faster and more efficiently, by topic or keyword rather than by agency. Via FirstGov, users can search 27 million federal agency web pages at once. The site provides access to the home pages of major agencies and entities in all three branches of government, and includes a section on topics of current interest to web users (e.g. a direct link to the Weather Service during hurricane season) as well as access to state and local government web pages.

Contact:

The FirstGov website: <http://www.firstgov.gov>

● Citizens' information kiosks

In **Spain**, the first citizens' information kiosks - *Puntos de atención al ciudadano (PAC)* - have been installed to provide the public with access to services available on the government website (<http://www.map.es>). More kiosks will be installed in the capital city of each province and elsewhere over the coming two years, and progressively all information, forms, procedures and proceedings will be made available on the Internet. This project will also ensure Internet access to government for all citizens, by installing equipment in public offices for those who do not have access at home. Permanently updated information on public employment offers and government subsidies and grants can be consulted at the kiosks. A new application, the Procedures, Details and Services Guide (GPSS), gives information on administrative procedures, services and benefits, and prints the corresponding application forms. The kiosks have magnetic and digital card readers, allowing for payment of fees and taxes by credit card in the future.

● Developing high-speed network connections

In early spring 2000, an interministerial task force published a report advising the **Norwegian** government on the need for a national effort to support the development of high-speed digital networks. The report concluded that the government should promote competition in the marketplace, and develop new applications for such networks. This, in turn, would stimulate demand to be met by commercial actors. The aim is to make high-capacity networking for multimedia applications accessible to citizens at affordable prices across the entire country by 2004. In particular, all elementary schools and high schools, all public libraries, hospitals, and local community administrations should be offered access to the high-capacity network by 2002.

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● Promoting electronic services for citizens

To support the development of access to public services by Internet, and the setting-up of Internet terminals in libraries and local government offices, the **Danish** government is implementing IT initiatives in three areas. The first area is service quality and accessibility to citizens and companies. This will include: considerable development of "danmark.dk", the Internet portal to public sector services; use of electronic central and local government forms by the end of 2002; aggregation of comparable information to assist citizens and businesses in evaluating public institutions; continuous assessments of Internet quality; a central telephone number to ensure easy access for everyone to central government; and free and easy access to Internet-based data resources. In the second area – safe communication on the Internet – the government is working on digital signatures and a single central approval authority for Internet security. Initiatives in the third area – increased efficiency in the public sector – cover e-commerce and analyses of efficiency gains through use of the Internet.

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More detailed information on country initiatives is available on PUMA's website: see <http://www.oecd.org/puma/country/>.

● Action plan for the information society

The **Greek** government, as part of its objective to create a more open, effective public administration providing better services and giving full access to public information, has launched a plan to introduce new technologies into the public administration on a massive scale. Pilot applications of information systems and intranets are first set up for the services that give citizens the most difficulty, before being applied overall. Other "e-developments" in Greece include the redesign and electronic formatting of administrative application forms; the creation of a website containing all these application forms (600 are currently available on the Internet); and setting up Citizen Information Centres in all Prefectures that are linked to each other and to the central database of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation. The latest revision of the Citizen's Guide, providing information on administrative issues, is now also available on the Internet at <http://www.gspa.gr>.

● Service Delivery Model (SDM)

As part of the **Irish** Government's action plan for implementing the information society, a Service Delivery Model (SDM) is being developed that sets out the preferred approach for the electronic delivery of public services. The SDM will minimise the knowledge and time required to access public services, and will also comply with data protection principles.

Packages of services and related public information will be organised around "episodes"; i.e. the interactions of a citizen or a business in relation to a life or business situation will be delivered as a single unbroken service, either on a self-service basis on the Internet or through authorised intermediaries such as call centres, one-stop shops, staff in agencies, etc. It is planned to offer services packaged around common themes such as licences and permits, registrations, health, education, etc. The SDM has a number of significant advantages:

- it will support all access channels (PCs, set-top boxes for the reception of digital television, mobile phones, etc.);
- users/clients will have a single entry point along with a single, secure electronic identity that will be used for accessing all public services;
- it will cater for a once-off submission of certain client information, e.g. changes in circumstances, addresses, etc;
- it will eliminate the need for a range of paper certificates provided by one public service for use by another;
- users/clients will be able to personalise aspects of service delivery to their own needs.

A central feature of SDM is the "e-broker", or gateway between users/clients and the public services they wish to access. The e-broker will act as services manager, and will include information about the services and a customer database. The e-broker will operate 24 hours a day, year round. Its development is essential to the successful implementation of the SDM and has been entrusted to Reach, a recently established unit that will address the challenging technical requirements of the e-broker and the selection of a service provider.

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● A fresh impetus for electronic administration

A new government portal giving users a single entry point to the **French** public service web site was launched in October 2000, at <http://www.Service-public.fr>. In 2001 all *préfectures* will have an Internet site; online procedures will be added to the 600 forms already online, and by 2003, 7000 free Internet access points will be made available, of which 2500 will offer free, general Internet training. All government Internet sites will be made accessible to the blind. Free access to legal texts as well as procedures for consulting citizens through the Internet will also be put in place.

● Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a quality management tool specifically designed to meet the needs of public administration. In November 2000 the CAF was presented to the Directors General responsible for public service in the **European Union** Member States, who will make a proposal for its implementation. CAF has been developed co-operatively under successive presidencies of the European Union since 1998 and was first published at the 1st EU Quality Conference in Portugal in May 2000. It incorporates the main features of both the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model and the Speyer model, and benefits also from the adaptations of the EFQM model that have been developed in a number of EU Member states. It includes nine criteria: leadership; policy and strategy; human resources management; external partnerships and resources; process and change management; customer/citizen-oriented results; people (employees) results; impact on society; key performance results. A translation of CAF into German is under way.

● Quality conferences

Following the EU conference in Lisbon on quality in the public services (see Focus No. 16, page 5), the **Belgian** government decided to carry out a similar experience on a national scale. At a conference in 2001, public services (including regional and local authorities) will present quality practices that have been validated by self-assessment based on the CAF (see above). The objective is to familiarise the public services with the use of ongoing assessment. For more information, see <http://mazfp.fgov.be/>.

Global Forum III: Fostering democracy and development through e-government

On 15-17 March 2001, Italy will host the Third Global Forum on Governance in Naples, building on the successful dialogues held at the 1999 and 2000 fora in Washington and Brasilia. The 2001 Forum will focus on the current and future roles of e-government in fostering democracy and economic and social development, and on its formidable potential for transforming the way public administrations perform and deliver. The Forum will be organised with the support of the OECD, the UN, the World Bank and the European Union, and in co-operation with major universities and foundations. It will bring together a host of government and non-government leaders and reformers, as well as representatives from the private sector, the media and academia, to discuss and compare innovative practices and analyse opportunities and difficulties presented by e-government. Examples of advanced ICT applications for government will be showcased, and short, high-level training sessions on e-government topics will be organised for officials from developing countries. For more information, see <http://www.globalforum.it>.

Why do governments fail? Managing large public IT projects

Governments fail

Most governments experience problems when implementing large IT projects. Budgets and deadlines are exceeded, and often the quality of the systems is very far from what was agreed upon when the project was undertaken.

The bad news is that almost all governments fail. Worse, governments are not alone: evidence suggests that private sector companies have similar problems, and that the problems are not confined a certain type of government. This was the point of departure at the recent OECD expert meeting on risk management of large public IT projects, held on 26-27 October in Paris. The meeting brought together representatives from 17 countries and focused on defining the problems and identifying possible solutions.

E-government at stake

Generally, large public IT projects pose great political risks. Ministers and governments are held accountable for any scandals and accompanying waste of taxpayer money. These big economic losses include not only the outright waste connected to exceeded budgets and abandoned projects, but also – and equally importantly – lost opportunities for enhancing effectiveness and efficiency.

Furthermore, the inability of governments to manage large public IT projects threatens to undermine efforts to implement e-government. Most OECD countries have formulated ambitious action plans for implementing e-government. The aim is to move service delivery to the World Wide Web, enhance information to citizens, and make the public sector more effective for the benefit of citizens, politicians and civil servants alike. Unless governments learn to manage the risks connected with large public IT projects, these “e-dreams” will turn into global nightmares. Governments need to get the fundamentals of IT right if they want to reap the huge potentials of going online.

The issues

A range of issues emerged as global lessons to be learned if governments want to deliver on IT:

- The risk of failure is almost directly proportional to the size of the project. Whenever possible, projects should be divided up into self-contained modules.
- Risk identification and management are paramount features of successful IT project management. Some countries have well-developed guidelines and practices in this field; others still have something to learn.
- It is interesting to note, however, that many failures can be explained by poor compliance with otherwise very good guidelines. Knowledge management and management control systems adapted to the national culture must be in place.
- A recurrent problem is the lack of IT skills in the public sector. In some countries this makes in-house development impossible and establishes asymmetric relations between purchasers and providers.
- New technologies and systems are prone to failure. Nonetheless, governments keep trying to develop elaborate systems based on new technologies. In some instances the potential benefits might warrant taking such huge risks; often this is not the case.
- Trust and communication are essential to managing large projects, but private vendors often see the public sector as incompetent and irresolute with regard to project specification. Governments, on the other hand, meet vendors with suspicion based on past scandals.

To get IT right, governments therefore should think small, focus on risks, ensure compliance with best practices for project management, recruit and retain talent, prudently manage knowledge, use known technologies, and establish environments of trust and communication.

Lessons learned

The general lesson is not that governments should not take any risks. The lesson is that governments should identify risk, determine which risks they are willing to take, and manage the relevant risk within appropriate governance structures.

Sharing knowledge

PUMA has established a website at <http://www.oecd.org/puma/Risk/> where information on risk management of large public IT projects will be published as products are finalised. The information will include country reports, presentations from the October expert meeting, definitions and a 20-page report summing up issues and good practices. This report will be published in early 2001.

For further information, please consult the web page or contact jens.kristensen@oecd.org. ■

Evaluating success and failure in public IT projects

Success and failure in major IT projects are assessed using three dimensions:

- Budget - Do *ex post* expenses lie within the budget?
- Timeliness - Is the project delivered on time?
- Usability or quality - Can the product be used, e.g. in regard to the business changes it was supposed to support?

Success and failure are therefore related to the end product and, in principle, failure can be measured as percentage deviations from initial budgets, deadlines and design requirements.

For more information, see <http://www.oecd.org/puma/Risk/>.

● Performance management and development

A new performance management and development system applying to staff at all levels is being implemented in the **Irish** civil service. The system was designed with the aid of consultants and in consultation with management, staff and their unions. It involves the setting of objectives and targets at individual and team level, based on the business plans derived from Departmental Statements of Strategy. It also includes identification and development of the competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills and behavioural attributes) needed to perform effectively. A more structured approach to staff training and development, on-the-job development assignments, coaching, etc., will be necessary as the performance process evolves. A study is currently being carried out with a view to devising an effective feedback system, including upward feedback. This study is expected to be completed by end 2000.

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● Surveying employee motivation

In **Denmark**, the Ministry of Finance's Government Employer Authority (GEA) is carrying out a review of employee-organisation relations, with a particular focus on employee motivation. The lessons learned should help improve government institutions' ability to recruit, develop and retain employees. By reviewing employees' attitudes to such areas as job content, development and education opportunities, salary, management conditions, work environment, image and culture, the GEA can identify problems that need to be addressed. Data on motivation has been collected from three different groups:

- employees in central government institutions;
- employees in the private sector; and
- young people aged 17-27.

During 2001 the GEA will introduce a number of initiatives to address issues raised by the results of the study.

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● Promoting leadership in the civil service

The **Japanese** National Personnel Authority has introduced a new training course for top executives in ministries and agencies to enable them to respond effectively to the rapidly changing social and economic environment. The central government now requires top executives to upgrade their professional skills and capacities as policy planners and co-ordinators, to cultivate an appropriate sense of balance, and to improve their competencies as leaders as well as managers of social change. The training course provides them with an opportunity to rediscover their role as senior executives and to strengthen their work ethics, thereby promoting public confidence in government. See <http://www.jinji.admix.go.jp/english/intro.htm>.

● New government agencies

Turkey has created three new agencies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the public administration:

- The banking regulation and supervisory agency was set up to protect the rights and interests of depositors, maintain confidence and stability in financial markets, ensure that the credit system operates efficiently, and prevent such operations as might significantly harm the economy.
- An autonomous telecommunications corporation has been established to determine prices, disseminate information on service quality, control the implementation of concession agreements and the issuing of telecommunications and other licences, and undertake financial investments.
- A general secretariat for the European Union has been established under the Deputy Prime Minister to co-ordinate the work of public institutions within the context of Turkey's aspirations for EU membership.

● Restructuring to modernise

The **Belgian** government is launching the "Copernicus" reform to create a public administration that revolves around the public. In Spring 2000 a complete inventory was taken of the missions, products, suppliers and clients of the different ministries. Based on this inventory, the administration will be restructured: ministries will be replaced with "federal public services" composed of management units and business units. The re-structuring should be completed by June 2003. The new structure will be composed of operational or "vertical" services, and support or "horizontal" services. The horizontal services are general co-ordination, budget and management audit, personnel and organisation, and information and communications technologies (ICT). Each federal public service will include three horizontal services (budget, personnel and ICT), thus creating a network of support and exchange of experience. Moreover, new structures will replace ministerial cabinets, allowing for a better working relationship between the political and administrative levels. For more information, see <http://www.mazfp.fgov.be/fr/copernic/>.

● Administrative reform

Greece has established a National Council for Administrative Reform. The Council consults with the social partners and political parties, evaluates the administration, and makes proposals for administrative reform. It is made up of representatives from social, scientific and financial institutions, labour unions, and political parties.

OECD-Southern African Governance Dialogue

PUMA, in co-operation with the Applied Fiscal Research Centre (AFReC) of the University of Cape Town and the South African Treasury, is launching a project to support reform in southern Africa. The project will establish a dialogue and provide access to the diverse experience of OECD Member countries in building robust institutional arrangements for the governance of public policy and public services.

Because of its size, technological capacity and potential political and economic clout, a peaceful and prosperous South Africa is crucial to the welfare of the southern African region, and is an important factor in the stability of the entire continent. South Africa has very modern constitutional arrangements in the formal sense.

The challenge for South Africa, and for other countries in the region, is how to convert constitutional and political aspiration into reality. The project has four elements:

- the OECD-Southern African Governance Dialogue series consisting of an annual high-level seminar on governance;
- seminars for ministers and parliamentarians on budget oversight;
- mentoring workshops for senior officials on key public management implementation issues;
- lectures at regional executive courses on budgeting and financial management for all levels of government.

This project is part of the OECD's Governance Outreach Initiative. Contact jens.kristensen@oecd.org for more information.

Governance of state agencies and authorities

While some countries have had a long history of using autonomous or semi-autonomous agencies and authorities, there has been a tremendous increase in their number since the mid-1980s in many OECD Member countries. This was generally motivated by the search for efficiency, additional savings and improvement in service delivery as well as a willingness to allow independent experts -- and sometimes affected citizens -- to be involved in decisionmaking in specific areas and in delivery of certain services.

Although the success of these agencies is rarely called into question, concerns have been raised about the possible loss of political control, weakened public accountability, poor policy co-ordination, and unethical conduct in the public sector.

PUMA is thus launching a project aimed at helping Member countries strengthen governance arrangements of these bodies, including: appointment processes and division of responsibilities at the top; information to and feedback from stakeholders; reporting mechanisms; internal and external auditing; the decision-making processes for governance arrangements and oversight of these arrangements; the budget process and financial management; and behavioural culture.

A group of national experts will be established to tailor the project to the different needs of OECD Member countries. By the end of January 2001, a template for country studies will be sent to members of the expert group. A meeting of the group will be held during the first half of 2001 to share the results of the country studies and draw preliminary conclusions.

For more information, comments and proposals, contact Hae Sang Kwon, Project Manager, Tel. + 33-1-45.24.90.88, Email: hae-sang.kwon@oecd.org, or Elsa Pilichowski, Tel: + 33 1 45 24 76 12, Email: elsa.pilichowski@oecd.org.

Knowledge management: experiences from private firms and public organisations

While many corporations have invested resources in the definition and implementation of knowledge management strategies, many public organisations seem to be lagging behind, at the risk of being marginalised in the new "learning economy." In this new economy, it is recognised that good knowledge management strategies will significantly contribute to strengthening competitiveness and service delivery, by improving individual effectiveness, transferring information and knowledge to the organisational level, and ultimately making knowledge easily accessible so that individuals can take effective and more informed action.

PUMA is launching a project on knowledge management in the public sector. The goal of this project is to help OECD Member countries strengthen the knowledge management strategies of their public organisations in order to enhance their competitiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as their attractiveness to potential job seekers. This project will be carried out in close collaboration with the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), which has been working on knowledge management and the learning economy since 1997.

To launch the project, the Danish government, CERI and PUMA are jointly organising a high-level forum on "Knowledge Management: 'Learning-by-Comparing' Experiences from Private Firms and Public Organisations", in Copenhagen on 8-9 February 2001. The goal of the forum is to improve understanding of knowledge management at organisation and enterprise levels in the public and private sectors through the examination of various concrete experiences in each sector. The forum will bring together 30-40 high-level participants from private firms, public sector organisations and academia.

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Painspots in the future of work

Committee for the Future, Finland, and Government Institute for Economic Research

October 2000, 82 pages, ISBN 951-53-2213-8

The Finnish Parliament's Committee for the Future conducted a debate in March 2000 on the topic of work as one of the most important factors defining the future. This publication includes: the Committee's discussion document "Ten Pain Spots in the Future of Work"; the long-term study from the Government Institute for Economic Research, "Globalisation and the end of work? The economy and employment up to 2030"; and several Committee submissions (including on the EU initiative "eEurope, an information society for all"). Available in English only from:

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Administrative capacity development: a race against time?

by A.J.G.Verheijen

Scientific Council for Government Policy, the Netherlands
June 2000, 64 pages, ISBN 90-346-3835-9

This study addresses the development of the general administrative capacity in Central and Eastern European countries. The study identifies deficiencies both in the candidate countries and in the administrative system of the Union itself, and subsequently explores ways to cope with these shortcomings. Available in English only from:

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Reaching out: the role of central government at regional and local level

Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office, UK

Crown copyright, February 2000, 144 pages,
ISBN 0-11-430163-8

This report recommends: a stronger role for the United Kingdom government offices in the regions in pulling together the different arms of central government; new arrangements in Whitehall; and new mechanisms to streamline the variety of different funding streams, initiatives and arrangements. Improving the co-ordination of services is a top priority, as is improving the coherence of national departmental policies delivered locally. Available in English only from:

The Stationery Office (see right)

Wiring it up: Whitehall's management of cross-cutting policies and services

Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office, UK

Crown copyright, January 2000, 103 pages,
ISBN 0-11-430160-3

Many of the biggest challenges facing the United Kingdom government do not fit easily into traditional Whitehall structures. Tackling drug addiction, modernising the criminal justice system, encouraging sustainable development, or turning around run-down areas all require a wide range of departments and agencies to work together. This report looks at: the role of leadership; improving the way policy is formulated and implemented; the need for new skills; budgetary arrangements; the role of external audit and scrutiny; and the importance of putting in place the right structure of accountability and incentives. Available in English only from:

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<http://www.itsofficial.net>

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Adding it up: improving analysis and modelling in central government

Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office, UK

Crown copyright, January 2000, 106 pages,
ISBN 0-11-430161-1

Getting policies right depends on accurate data and analysis. This report sets out a comprehensive and coherent programme for creating the conditions in which rigorous analysis is routinely demanded and delivered in the government of the United Kingdom. Elements include: leadership from ministers and senior officials; openness from analysts and policy-makers; better planning to match policy needs and analytical provision; spreading best practice across departments and professions; and innovative solutions to recruit and retain the best people. Available in English only from:

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Senior officials discuss policy coherence

On 6-7 October 2000, Senior Officials from Centres of Government (COG) met in Budapest, Hungary, at the invitation of the Prime Minister's Office, for an OECD meeting on policy coherence. The meeting was attended by officials from twenty-five Member countries, the European Commission, and Slovakia as an observer country.

The meeting was the occasion for a free and frank exchange of useful information and practical solutions on key issues for governance. Participants focused on:

- Government coherence and the role of the centre of government in this regard.
- How Hungary had designed, put in place and then restructured a centre of government with the capacity to carry out the various tasks assigned to it. Based on the Hungarian example of the use of new informa-

tion and communications technologies (ICT) in the public administration, the discussion centred on the problems of developing e-government in OECD Member countries.

- The two-part "free discussion" session covered two themes: relations between government, legislature and civil society; and risk management.

Participants decided that work in the OECD should be carried out on: government coherence; the many issues that the introduction of electronic govern-

ment raises for policymakers and administrators; and risk management and the lessons to be learned from Member countries' experience in this area.

They also expressed their interest in work on relations between government and citizens and between the executive and the legislature, a new PUMA activity.

Immediately following the COG meeting, a second meeting took place in Budapest, as part of the OECD Governance Outreach Initiative. Ten non-member countries were also invited to this meeting, at which 22 senior officials of centres of government had the opportunity to exchange views and establish or strengthen co-operation through bilateral relations. The exchange of views concluded that the governance priorities were the same for Member and non-member countries.

Next year's COG meeting will focus on risk management. ■

• A CITIZEN ORIENTATION •

• Closer to the citizen

Greece is undertaking several measures to make its public administration more accessible and open to citizens:

- A Citizens Panel is being created to allow the public to express its opinion on the quality of public services.
- A 24-hour information call centre already provides information to citizens; by 2001 citizens will be able to receive information on all areas of the Greek public administration by dialing a single access number.
- Opening hours for the most frequently used public services will be extended in 2001.

Consulting with Citizens

Participants in the recent meeting of the Working Group on Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections tackled a full agenda when they met in Paris on 30 November - 1 December 2000. Members of the Working Group reviewed the country case studies launched this year on public consultation in policy-making (Belgium - Flanders, Czech Republic, Norway and Korea), examined the proposed final report outline, and exchanged information on recent policy developments in their respective countries. The meeting paved the way for publication in early 2001 of the full set of project results, both as hard copy and on-line.

The meeting also launched the Working Group's dedicated Electronic Discussion Group (EDG) hosted on the OECD's OLISnet: a natural step for one of PUMA's first activities to examine the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT) in the context of government-citizen relations.

Finally, the meeting provided input to developing future activities on Strengthening Relations between Government and Civil Society, foreseen under PUMA's Work Programme for 2001-2002.

For more information see: <http://www.oecd.org/puma/citizens/index.htm>.

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