SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24TH SESSION OF THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

5-6 November 2001, Château de la Muette, Paris

For further information please contact Edwin Lau, Tel: (33-1) 45 24 80 36; E-mail: edwin.lau@oecd.org

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Item 1 – Approval of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted without change.

Item 2 – Approval of the Summary Record of the 23rd Meeting
of the Public Management Committee

2. The summary record of the 23rd meeting of the Public Management Committee, held on 27-28 March 2001, was approved without amendment.

Item 3 - Opening remarks by the Chair

3. The Chair noted the special nature of this meeting as it was the first time the PUMA Committee had opened up a dialogue with non-member countries. A day and a half session was scheduled to follow on from the PUMA Committee meeting to include 17 non-member countries in a broad-ranging discussion on the Modernisation of Government. In preparation for the meeting with non-members, the Committee agenda for the second morning was devoted to a retrospective look at progress made in the area of public management reform and to developing an understanding of implications for future work.

4. The Chair noted the tragic events of 11 September. Such events provoked a need to reflect on the implications for PUMA work as well as the broader work of the OECD. The PUMA Committee had a collective responsibility to interpret and promote good governance in a world where the environment was unclear.

5. The Chair noted the departure of long-standing Committee and Bureau member Eric Embleton of Ireland and acknowledged his efforts over many years in public management. The Chair also noted that this meeting would be the last for Graça Pombeiro of Portugal and thanked her for her contribution.

6. The Chair asked the Committee to consider a replacement for Mr Embleton and to put forward nominations for the upcoming vacancy for Chair following completion of his term at the Spring meeting in 2002. Nominations should be sent to the Secretariat before Christmas, and in the New Year a process will be undertaken to finalise new membership of the Bureau to take effect after the Spring meeting.

Item 4 – Director’s Overview

7. Mr. Hutton drew the Committee’s attention to the document “Description of Major PUMA Activities and Outputs January – November 2001” [PUMA(2001)11]. He also outlined the activities undertaken by the Committee’s Working Parties:
8. The Working Group on Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections held its last meeting in June 2001 when it approved its report for publication. The Working Group also identified a set of key issues for future work including: evaluation, development of frameworks for engaging civil society in policy making, and on line consultation. For this purpose, an Expert Group on Government Relations with Citizens and Civil Society will be convened in December 2001 to provide expert input and guidance to the Secretariat in implementing the PUMA Work Programme in 2002. Mr Hutton advised the Committee that a recent publication Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making was a key product of the work of this group, written by practitioners for practitioners. It was accompanied by practical handbook for government officials charged with putting information and consultation policies into practice and the PUMA Policy Brief no. 10 Engaging Citizens in Policy-making for senior policy makers.

9. The Senior Budget Officials Working Party (SBO) has moved its focus to the role of budget in structuring government decision-making for coherence, the future, transparency and accountability. In 2001, two internationally significant papers on the role of parliaments in the budget process and one on the history and trends in budgeting in OECD countries were produced under the aegis of the SBO. This group also finalised a set of best practices for budget transparency, and provided expertise for outreach programmes in China, Indonesia and South Africa. The SBO established two networks: Chairs of Parliamentary Budget Committees; and the Network on Accountability and Financial Management which was strongly supported because of the widespread interest amongst countries to move budgets and/or accounts to an accrual basis.

10. The Human Resource Management Working Party was broadening its focus to embrace a larger view of public governance and capacity building. The Working Party planned to put HRM in a modernisation context – with a focus on the Learning Government, Lessons from Modernisation and Building Public Trust. This recognised the critical role human relations plays in all aspects of public management. In addition, a knowledge management survey was being launched by PUMA to develop an understanding of the problems and issues knowledge management is posing for governments.

11. Centres of Government meeting (CoG) was convened in Reykjavik 22-23 October. Its agenda had added significance given the events of 11 September. The issues of security and the ways governments react in times of uncertainty as well as relations with their citizens, risk management and public/private sector interfaces were key debates during this session.

12. Regulatory Reform work has advanced considerably with four peer reviews undertaken this year (Poland, United Kingdom, Canada and Turkey). Additionally four thematic projects were being pursued:

- Flagship Report on Regulatory Policy in OECD countries. This report assesses 10 years of experience in OECD countries in designing and implementing regulatory quality.

- Work on efficient, transparent and accountable independent regulators is a contribution to both the regulatory reform discussion and the broader debate on agencies.

- Design, enforcement and monitoring of compliance-friendly regulation will examine the generic issues on the basis of case studies in the area of environment and food safety.

- Administrative Simplification – best practices in OECD countries aims at dissemination of best practices in simplification policies and instruments. There are strong links to the e-government programme.
13. Mr Hutton outlined the main areas of work for PUMA and discussed the major outputs for 2001. Recent publications include: Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making; Businesses’ Views on Red Tape: Administrative and Regulatory Burdens on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises; Public Sector Leadership for the 21st Century; and the OECD Journal on Budgeting.

14. In line with the Ministerial Communiqué for 2001, Mr Hutton advised that PUMA would continue to pursue an active Outreach Programme. He assured the Committee that work on outreach was well grounded in the core programme, and did not distract from this work but complemented it.

15. Mr Hutton outlined the resource position for PUMA: 29 permanent staff, 14 temporary staff and 2 project posts (45 in total). This did not include SIGMA. In terms of voluntary contributions, 274K Euro and 534K Euro were received respectively during 2000 and 2001.

16. Mr. Hutton outlined the PRAS proposals submitted by PUMA as part of an Organisation-wide exercise to prioritise spending. In a +5% scenario, two additional studies would be undertaken by PUMA:
   - E – Government and democracy; study of the impact of ICT on democratic institutions;
   - Capturing efficiency gains: how ICT in government contributes to efficiency and resource savings and its measurement.

17. In a -5% scenario, PUMA would suspend work on parliamentary aspects of governance which covers issues such as parliament and citizens, budgetary oversight, transparency and better regulation.

18. Mr Hutton advised the Committee that no application had been made currently for Central Priority Funds. A further suggestion was made to continue to work on more rigorous indicators and milestones for the work presented. It was agreed this would be picked up in the planning and review work to be undertaken by the Bureau early next year.

Item 5 – Request for Observership at the Senior Budget Officials Meetings from Israel and Slovenia

19. The Chair brought to the Committee’s attention a recommendation of the Senior Budget Officials (SBO) Working Party [PUMA(2001)12]. The recommendation supported the applications made by Israel and Slovenia for observership to the SBO, noting that the technical requirements of being considered a major player in the field and that mutual interest exists between the applicants and PUMA had been satisfied in the opinion of the SBO. The Committee endorsed the recommendation and noted that the final decision would be taken by Council.

Item 6 – Government Citizens Relations: Conclusions of Report and Discussion

20. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item and indicated that its purpose was to review results to date and chart future work. The Working Group on Strengthening Government Citizen Connections had conducted two major surveys which looked at general frameworks and use of ICTs. Nine country case studies were undertaken all of which provided rich data and information across a wide array of policy sectors. The outputs of the project included four publications: the resource book; a handbook for government officials which will be provided free on line; a PUMA Policy Brief for senior policy makers;
and a set of country reports. The Secretariat is continuing to look at how to disseminate and share the research results which led to these reports.

21. The Secretariat outlined the analytical framework, developed to analyse government-citizen relations across OECD Member countries. This work demonstrated that information provision had increased greatly in terms of quantity in recent years. While the use of consultation in policy-making was also on the rise there were large variations across policy sectors and between OECD countries. Efforts to engage citizens in policy making through active participation on a partnership basis were still rare. There was also a striking imbalance between efforts to provide information, consultation and engage in active participation and efforts to evaluate their impact and effectiveness. This stood out as an area in need of attention for future work.

22. The study demonstrated that governments had certain obligations to fulfil in engaging citizens in policy making. These were articulated in the set ten guiding principles suggested in the publications. The issues identified for the future included: evaluation, engaging civil society organisations in policy making, e-consultation and outreach work to share the findings with non members.

23. Ms Debbie Cook, Senior Adviser on Consultation in the Privy Council Office of Canada and founding member of the PUMA Working Group, made a presentation on Canada’s experience in the field of government-citizen relations in policy-making. Ms Cook noted that Canada's initiatives were in response to citizens’ expressed desire for meaningful involvement. A central point for consultation and horizontal co-ordination across government had been created in the Privy Council Office. The Privy Council Office also had responsibility for building the capacity of its civil service to work with citizens and has developed a range of programmes and tools to share knowledge within government and to develop these skills.

24. To date, work in Canada has led to a draft consultation policy, a voluntary sector accord, a key programme for Connecting Canadians, the Social Union Framework and policies on communications, access to information and privacy. Ms Cook underlined the value of exchanging experience with peers from the PUMA Working Group and the positive reciprocal impact of such joint efforts. Future directions included consideration of e-participation, evaluation, global civil society and work on the evolving relationships between citizens, public servants and elected officials.

25. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee agreed that issues of evaluation, interaction with civil society organisations and on line consultation were areas of priority for future work, and encouraged the future PUMA Expert Group on Government Relations and Civil Society to continue to explore the opportunities and limits of on-line consultation and ensure that the valuable work to date fed into and supported the overall e-government project.

Item 7.- E-Government; Progress Report and First Discussion

26. At the last Committee meeting the Secretariat was asked to develop a project on e-government. The Secretariat had responded with a project proposal [PUMA(2001)10] which was distributed electronically to Committee members in June 2001. Following their endorsement of a PUMA-led project on e-government, the OECD Ministerial Council had provided a mandate for e-government work and the Organisation had allocated 500KF in seed funds in 2001 to launch the project.

27. The Secretariat outlined the e-government project as described in document PUMA(2001)10/REV1. The project, which will be directed by the PUMA Committee, will also receive close guidance and review from the E-Government Working Group. The working group met for the first
time on 21 October 2001 and involved representatives from 9 Member countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Mexico). Three other Working Group members – Hungary, Netherlands, United States – were unable to attend this first meeting. The project will be conducted by an E-Government Task Force made up of PUMA staff and draw on the experiences of other OECD Directorates and take account of work done in other international organisations. The project will also tap into the range of expertise in the field through an Associates Group of experts from government agencies, private sector firms, academic institutions, civil society organisations and individual experts.

28. The E-Government Project will run until 2003. The objectives for the project seek to:

- identify how e-government strategies and solutions assist information age good governance;
- understand where Member countries are now and where they are going;
- identify the pathways to identifying a longer term vision.

29. Consistent with these objectives, the themes for analysis will be understanding the vision and context for e-government, developing a sense of the issues about potential reforms made possible by e-government, understanding the operational strategic imperatives and implications of e-government implementation such as skills and leadership and the use of public and private partnerships. Finally the project will develop an evaluative framework and develop indicators and success criteria to measure the impact of e-government.

30. A flagship report will be finalised by the end of 2002 for publication in early 2003. A major e-government conference is planned as a culmination of efforts in May 2003.

31. The Committee welcomed the project and the progress made in establishing a work programme and agreed that the project should maintain a practical focus on governance issues, rather than on technical ones.

**Item 8 – Taking Stock of Ten Years of Reform: What has Been Accomplished**

32. The Secretariat has commenced a review of lessons learnt from ten years of modernisation efforts. The review aims to provide Member countries with better tools for adapting their governments to changes in their society, and to assist them to diagnose the dynamics of public management and provide an approach to public management interventions relevant to that setting.

33. Mr Hutton acknowledged the country specific nature of reforms, but noted that many countries faced similar imperatives and drivers for change, but may have pursued different strategies. In taking a broader retrospective, different approaches emerged which provided a useful framework for analysis. This was not an attempt to develop or promote a “best practice” model. Drawing from a book on reform of public administration by Professor Bouckaert, he identified three models across the spectrum:

1) Countries who were content with their public administrations and who, during this period, sought to make internal adjustments and improvements;

2) Countries who could be identified as reformers who sought to make some structural changes, and pursue the agenda emerging through public dissatisfaction;
3) The group of countries who were the marketeers, with an ambitious and high risk agenda, one of questioning the essence of public administration itself. Functions were outsourced, privatised and performance pay and initiatives were introduced for the senior executives.

34. Mr Hutton identified a number of drivers for change which could be categorised under several broad headings:

- Fiscal and budgetary pressures/crises;
- Citizen pressure and loss of public trust;
- Focus on management and performance;
- Political vision, market orientation and quest for smaller government;
- Globalisation and/or regionalisation;
- New technology.

35. As with any change, obstacles and resistance emerged which governments had to deal with and these influenced governments’ relations with unions, the public and staff themselves. Countries' strategies were either comprehensive with clear milestones, objectives and all-embracing plans, a “frontal attack” with a hard nosed confrontationist approach; a broad visionary or ideological position inspired by the need for a smaller state, or a piecemeal approach that has probably been the more widely followed one over time. This latter approach allowed for adjustments to be made along the way and because of the smaller steps, saw achievements and consolidation before the next steps.

36. Many countries agreed that civil services have changed, that a more service-oriented culture had emerged and that the boundaries of the state have been, and continue to be, redefined. Less hierarchical and more transparent organisations were evident. There was generally better budgetary control and clearer regulation although there were also lessons to be learnt from what did not go so well.

37. Finland, France, Japan and New Zealand each outlined their experiences in undertaking reform programmes over the past ten years and observed some similarities either in what provoked the reform or the elements they pursued. Their presentations were framed around a discussion of the factors that led to the undertaking of a reform process, the elements of the programme, how it was managed and the issues which needed to be dealt with along the way. The countries not only outlined the features of success but also what could have worked better. Finally, attention was given to where they thought their programmes would take them next.

38. In terms of strategic or explicit strategic intent, all four countries indicated a strong political resolution, which saw either direct driving by the Ministers/Ministries or establishment of key structures to support the planned changes. They also indicated that a strategy or design was in place at the outset. Reforms have increased client orientation, improved the image of public services in the minds of the citizens, and a new managerialism has developed in the public sector. However, the areas of weakness identified were the protracted process for finalising the public enterprise law reforms, ministries still needed to orientate themselves to a steering role as owners, and there was a view that service delivery was still not equitable across the country.

39. The four countries were in agreement as to the directions to be pursued for the future. When governments stood back and assessed their achievements, the path for continuation of reform and building for the future were identified as:

- Developing a strategy with clear goals and objectives;
− Understanding that structure was clearly an element that needed consideration and clear decision;

− Attending to a systematic set of processes for management and reporting on progress

− The importance of consolidation.

40. Each country acknowledged that the implications and challenges of e-government needed to be considered assiduously for the future as it had the potential of reaping efficiencies and improved administration.

41. Following the country presentations, the Committee engaged in an active exchange of experiences, which bore out similarities and differences in approaches to the four country studies. Many acknowledged the critical role politicians and ministers played in the underpinning of reform. In any future work, the key questions need to be: “where are we going; what targets; what are we striving for”. We also need to be mindful of the environment we are now entering in terms of fall-out from the events of 11 September.

42. The Chair summed up the various experiences identified by the four countries. In the cases of Finland, France and New Zealand, the emergence of agencies and the push for decentralisation was evident. Japan by contrast had demonstrated a direction of horizontality with their structural reforms. We need to determine the means by which we understand the place of grand strategic design, strive for better co-ordination and use tools as a support not a driver. A key issue for countries was the role of the centre in pushing forward reform.

43. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the excellent background document [PUMA(2001)13] and set of issues which contributed to a productive debate. The Chair also thanked the country experts for their honest and thought-provoking presentations and congratulated the Committee for its active and honest interventions, which will assist the work of this review project for the future.

44. The Committee agreed to pursue the review as outlined in PUMA(2001)13 and noted that the retrospective study had implications for the future. Papers would be commissioned by the Secretariat, and further data gathering and consultation with Members countries would be pursued on various aspects of modernisation particularly as it pertained to “performance” in different cultures. This work would be published in a flagship report by the end of 2002.

**Item 9 - Update on SIGMA**

45. Following questions on SIGMA activities during the Director’s Overview, Mr Bonwitt made a presentation to outline recent activities. Mr Bonwitt provided an update on contract status with the European Commission, work in the candidate countries, initiatives in the Western Balkans, Russia and the Ukraine.

46. Mr Bonwitt advised that priority was being given to rebuild capacity for candidates, but in reduced areas. SIGMA has re established links with EC, but there has been redivision of responsibilities.

**Conclusions of the Meeting**

47. To conclude the meeting, the Chair noted that:
- The agenda for this meeting had been a little over-ambitious. The format was in line with previous requests for substantive issues to be included, however there were probably too many presentations. More time for discussion and interaction should be incorporated into the agenda.

- The next meeting should be scheduled for two days.

- The retrospective look at reform efforts proved to be a successful item and a successful format.

- The next meeting of the PUMA Committee would be used to undertake a mid term review.

- As discussed earlier in the meeting, nominations for Bureau members and Chair are being sought and should be provided to the Secretariat or to the Chair by 21 December 2001.
## List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allemagne/Germany</strong></td>
<td>Mr. Klaus-Henning Rosen</td>
<td>Director General, Organisation of the Administration, Information Technics, Local Government Affairs, Protocol, Civil Defense, Statistics</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of the Interior, Alt-Moabit 101 D, D-10559 Berlin</td>
<td>Tel: 00 49 1888 6812170, Fax: 00 49 1888 6811649, E-Mail: <a href="mailto:KlausHenning.Rosen@bmi.bund.de">KlausHenning.Rosen@bmi.bund.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Joachim Hacker</td>
<td>First Counsellor, German Delegation to the OECD</td>
<td>9, rue Maspéro, F-75116 Paris</td>
<td>Tel: 0155745705, Fax: 0155745740, E-Mail: <a href="mailto:joachim.hacker@germany-oecd.org">joachim.hacker@germany-oecd.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australie/Australia</strong></td>
<td>Mr. Emmerich Bachmayer</td>
<td>Director-General, Department for Public Service</td>
<td>Federal Ministry for Public Service and Sports, Wollzeile 1-3, A-1010 Wien</td>
<td>Tel: 00 43 1 501907100, Fax: 00 43 1 501907470, E-Mail: <a href="mailto:emmerich.bachmayer@bmols.gv.at">emmerich.bachmayer@bmols.gv.at</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AUTRICHE (suite)/
AUSTRIA (continued)

Mrs. Elisabeth Dearing
Director, Division for Administration
Development
Department for Public Service
Federal Ministry for Public Service and
Sports
Wollzeile 1-3
A-1010 WIEN

Tel: 00 43 1 501907148
Fax: 00 43 1 501907490
E-Mail: elisabeth.dearing@bmols.gv.at

BELGIQUE/
BELGIUM

M. Michel Damar
Secrétaire général
Ministère de la Fonction publique
Rue de la Loi, 51
B-1040 BRUXELLES

Tel: 00 32 2 7905500
Fax: 00 32 2 7905590
E-Mail: michel.damar@mazfp.fgov.be

Mr. Frank Franceus
Conseiller général, Bureau ABC
Ministère de la Fonction publique
Rue de la Loi, 51 Boîte 3
B-1040 BRUXELLES

Tel: 00 32 2 7905400
Fax: 00 32 2 7905499
E-Mail: frank.franceus@mazfp.fgov.be

M. Luc Rifflet
Conseiller
Délégation de la Belgique près l'OCDE
14, rue Octave-Feuillet
F-75116 PARIS

Tel: 0145249905
Fax: 0145249925
E-Mail: belocde@wanadoo.fr

CANADA/
CANADA

Mr. David C. Elder
Senior Advisor
Privy Council Office
Langevin Block
80 Wellington Street
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1A 0A3

Tel: 00 1 613 9575389
Fax: 00 1 613 9575034
E-Mail: dcelder@pco-bcp.gc.ca
Ms. Debbie Cook
Senior Advisor, Consultation
Privy Council Office
85 Sparks Street, Suite 600
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1A 0A3
Tel: 00 1 613 9575118
Fax: 00 1 613 9575791
E-Mail: dcook@pcobcp.gc.ca

Mr. Kang Soon Shin
Minister-Counsellor
Delegation of the Republic of Korea to the OECD
2-4, rue Louis David
F-75782 Cedex 16 PARIS
Tel: 0144052408
Fax: 0144052175
E-Mail: ksshin01@mofat.go.kr

Mr. Nark-Jo Park
Director
Administrative System Division
Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs
77 Sejong-Ro, Chongro-Ku
110-760 SEOUL
Tel: 00 82 2 37034661
Fax: 00 82 2 37035531
E-Mail: nj-park@hanmail.net

Mr. Ha-Kyun Kim
Deputy Director
Organization Management Division
Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs
77 Sejong-Ro, Chongro-Ku
110-760 SEOUL
Tel: 00 82 2 37034647
Fax: 00 82 2 37035530
E-Mail: khkzeus@mogaha.go.kr

Mr. Jae-Ha Choi
Deputy Director
Economic Organization Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
77 Sejong-Ro, Chongro-Ku
SEOUL
Tel: 00 82 2 7202330
Fax: 00 82 2 7227818
E-Mail: jhchoi71@mofat.go.kr
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CORÉE (suite)/KOREA (continued)</td>
<td>Mr. Jun-Wook Hwang</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td>Administrative Reform Team 2 Ministry of Planning and Budget 520-3 Banpo-dong, Seocho-ku 137-756 SEOUL</td>
<td>Tel: 00 82 2 34807751 Fax: 00 82 2 34807653 Email: <a href="mailto:hjunwook@hanmail.net">hjunwook@hanmail.net</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANEMARK/DENMARK</td>
<td>Mr. Adam Wolf</td>
<td>Deputy Permanent Secretary for Public Management Ministry of Finance Christiansborg Slotsplads 1 DK-1218 COPENHAGEN K</td>
<td>Tel: 00 45 33924270 Fax: 00 45 33924105 Email: <a href="mailto:awo@fm.dk">awo@fm.dk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Elisabeth Hvas</td>
<td>Head of Division Public Management Division Ministry of Finance Christiansborg Slotsplads 1 DK-1218 COPENHAGEN K</td>
<td>Tel: 00 45 33923860 Fax: 00 45 33924055 Email: <a href="mailto:evh@fm.dk">evh@fm.dk</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPAGNE/SPAIN</td>
<td>Mr. Rafael Ponz</td>
<td>Technical Adviser International Relations Office Ministerio de Administraciones Publicas Paseo de la Castellana, 3 E-28071 MADRID</td>
<td>Tel: 00 34 91 5861195 Fax: 00 34 91 5861018 Email: <a href="mailto:rponz@galiano.subs.map.es">rponz@galiano.subs.map.es</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÉTATS-UNIS/UNITED STATES</td>
<td>Mr. Jonathan D. Breul</td>
<td>Senior Advisor to the Deputy Director for Management Office of Management and Budget Executive Office of the President Room 10235 NEOB 725 17th Street, N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20503</td>
<td>Tel: 00 1 202 3955670 Fax: 00 1 202 3956974 Email: <a href="mailto:jonathan_d_breul@omb.eop.gov">jonathan_d_breul@omb.eop.gov</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Juhani Turunen
Under-Secretary of State
Ministry of Finance
P.O.Box 28
FIN-00023 GOVERNMENT
Tel: 00 358 9 1603007
Fax: 00 358 9 1604742
E-Mail: juhani.turunen@vm.vn.fi

Ms. Katju Holkeri
Counsellor
Public Management Department
Ministry of Finance
P.O.Box 28
FIN-00023 GOVERNMENT
Tel: 00 358 9 1603258
Fax: 00 358 9 1603235
E-Mail: katju.holkeri@vm.vn.fi

Mr. Simo Juva
Counsellor
Finnish Delegation to the OECD
6, rue de Franqueville
F-75116 PARIS
Tel: 0145247309
Fax: 0145206304
E-Mail: simo.juva@formin.fi

M. Michel Pinauldt
Préfet
Délégation interministérielle à la réforme de l'Etat
Ministère de la Fonction publique et de la Réforme de l'Etat
72, rue de Varenne
F-75007 PARIS
Tel: 0142757207
Fax: 0142758385
E-Mail: m.pinauldt@dire.pm.gouv.fr

Ms. Céline Chol
Chargé de mission à l'IGPDE
Recherche, études, veille à l'Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique
Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie
Bâtiment Atrium
5, place des Vins de France
F-75573 PARIS CEDEX 12
Tel:
Fax:
E-Mail:
FRANCE (suite)/FRANCE (continued)

Mme Françoise Cochet
Assistante
Délégation interministérielle à la Réforme de l'Etat
Ministère de la Fonction publique et de la Réforme de l'Etat
72, rue de Varenne
F-75007 PARIS

Tel: 0142758447
Fax: 0142758385
E-Mail: f.cochet@dire.pm.gouv.fr

Mr. Bernard Flury-Herard
Chef de la mission
Utilisation des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication par l'administration
Ministère de la Fonction publique et de la Réforme de l'Etat
72, rue de Varenne
F-75007 PARIS

Tel: 
Fax: 
E-Mail: 

Mr. Yves Gallazzini
Chargée de mission
Délégation interministérielle à la Réforme de l'Etat
Ministère de la Fonction publique et de la Réforme de l'Etat
72, rue de Varenne
F-75007 PARIS

Tel: 0142757207
Fax: 0142758385
E-Mail: y.gallazzini@dire.pm.gouv.fr

Mme Françoise Waintrop
Recherche, études, veilles à l’Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique
Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie
Bâtiment Atrium
5, place des Vins de France
F-75573 PARIS CEDEX 12

Tel: 0153442458
Fax: 0153442446
E-Mail: francoise.waintrop@dpma.finances.gouv.fr
FRANCE (suite)/
FRANCE (continued)

Mr. Marc Estournet
Stagiaire ENA
Délégation de la France auprès de l’OCDE
21 rue Octave Feuillet
75116 Paris

Tel: 01 45 24 15 81
Fax: 01 45 24 15 89
E-Mail: estournet@ena.fr

GRÈCE/
GREECE

Ms. Vasileia Tselenti-Karantoni
Director
General Directorate for Public Administration
Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation
15, avenue Vassilissis Sofias
GR-106 74 ATHENS

Tel: 00 30 1 3393499
Fax: 00 30 1 3393100
E-Mail: gddo.ggdd@syzefxis.gov.gr

HONGRIE/
HUNGARY

Dr. Istvan Balazs
Conseiller principal du Gouvernement chargé du développement d’administration publique
Secrétariat d’Etat pour l’administration publique et la politique régionale
Office du Premier ministre
V. Kossuth Lajos tér 4
H-1055 BUDAPEST

Tel: 00 36 1 4413204
Fax: 00 36 1 4413202
E-Mail: istvan.balazs@meh.hu

Dr. Zsofia Czoma
Director for International Affairs
State Secretariat for Public Administration and Regional Policy
Prime Minister's Office
V. Kossuth Lajos tér 4
H-1055 BUDAPEST

Tel: 00 36 1 4413217
Fax: 00 36 1 4413202
E-Mail: zsofia.czoma@meh.hu

Dr. József Sivak
Deputy Permanent Representative
Hungarian Delegation to the OECD
140, avenue Victor-Hugo
F-75116 PARIS

Tel: 0153656500
Fax: 0147558060
E-Mail: hundeleg005@olis.oecd.org
IRLANDE/ Ireland
Ms. Carmel Keane
Principal Officer
Corporate Services Division
Government Buildings
Merrion Street
DUBLIN 2
Tel: 00 353 1 6045529
Fax: 00 353 1 6682182
E-Mail: carmel_keane@finance.irlgov.ie

ISLANDE/ Iceland
Mr. Baldur Gudlaugsson
Secretary-General
Ministry of Finance
Arnarhvall
IS-150 REYKJAVIK
Tel:
Fax:
E-Mail:

Mr. Gunnar Björnsson
Director-General
Department of Personnel Policy
Ministry of Finance
Arnarhvall
IS-150 REYKJAVIK
Tel: 00 354 5609346
Fax: 00 354 5623690
E-Mail: gunnar.bjornsson@fjr.stjr.is

ITALIE/ Italy
Dr. Pia Marconi
(Vice Chair)
Director General, UIPA
Ufficio per l’innovazione delle pubbliche amministrazioni
Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica
Via del Sudario, 49
I-00186 ROMA
Tel: 00 39 06 68997583
Fax: 00 39 06 68997411
E-Mail: p.marconi@palazzochigi.it

Mr. Stefano Pizzicannella
Direttore, Servizio per le politiche di innovazione amministrativa
Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica
Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, 116
I-00186 ROMA
Tel: 00 39 06 68997230
Fax: 00 39 06 68997411
E-Mail: s.pizzicannella@funzionepubblica.it
JAPON/ JAPAN

Mr. Tokiharu Yoshida

Director for Policy Planning
Policy Planning Division, Minister’s Secretariat
Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications
2-1-2 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
TOKYO 100-8926

Tel: 00 81 3 52535156
Fax: 00 81 3 52535160
E-Mail: tyoshidab@soumu.go.jp

Ms. Orie Hirano

Official
Policy Planning Division, Minister’s Secretariat
Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications
2-1-2 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
TOKYO 100-8926

Tel: 00 81 3 52535156
Fax: 00 81 3 52535160
E-Mail: o.hirano@soumu.go.jp

Mr. Tetsuya Yamada

Official, Second International Organizations Division
Economic Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2-1-1, Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
TOKYO 110-8919

Tel: 00 81 3 35810018
Fax: 00 81 3 35819470
E-Mail: tetsuya.yamada@mofa.go.jp

Mr. Kenji Sato

First Secretary
Japanese Delegation to the OECD
11, avenue Hoche
F-75008 PARIS

Tel: 0153766143
Fax: 0145630544
E-Mail: sato@deljp-ocde.fr
LUXEMBOURG/LUXEMBOURG

Mr. Ralph Letsch
Director
Ministry of Public Administration and Administrative Reform
63, avenue de la Liberté
L-1012 Luxembourg

Tel: 00 352 4783216
Fax:
E-Mail: ralph.letsch@ape.etat.lu

MEXIQUE/MEXICO

Mr. Bernardo Avalos
Coordinacion para la Alianza Ciudadana Presidencia de la Republica
Constituyentes No.161
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec
CP11850 MEXICO, D.F.

Tel: 00 52 5 2823221
Fax:
E-Mail:

Ms. Liliana Mejia
Counsellor
Mexican Delegation to the OECD
140 Avenue Victor Hugo
F-75116 PARIS

Tel: 0156285173
Fax: 0147270733
E-Mail: shcpmeji@worldnet.fr

NORVÈGE/NORWAY

Mr. Odd Bøhagen
Deputy Director General
Department of Employers Affairs
Ministry of Labour and Government Administration
Postboks 8004 Dep.
N-0030 OSLO

Tel: 00 47 22244820
Fax: 00 47 22244889
E-Mail: odd.bohagen@aad.dep.no

Mr. Terje Dyrstad
Deputy Director General
Department of Management Policy and Administration
Ministry of Labour and Government Administration
Postboks 8004 Dep.
N-0030 OSLO

Tel: 00 47 22244975
Fax: 00 47 22244814
E-Mail: terje.dyrstad@aad.dep.no
Mr. Derek Gill
Branch Manager
Strategic Development Branch
State Services Commission
100 Molesworth Street
P.O.Box 329
WELLINGTON
Tel: 00 64 4 4956663
Fax: 00 64 4 4956699
E-Mail: derek.gill@ssc.govt.nz

Mr. Lute Van der Linde
Deputy Secretary General
Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations
Postbus 20011
NL-2500 EA DEN HAAG
Tel: 00 31 70 4266090
Fax: 00 31 70 4266868
E-Mail: lute.linde@minbzk.nl

Mr. Koos Roest
Adviser on Strategic Policy
Directorate-General on Constitutional
Affairs and Kingdom Relations
Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations
Postbus 20011
NL-2500 EA DEN HAAG
Tel: 00 31 70 4267179
Fax: 00 31 70 4267634
E-Mail: koos.roest@minbzk.nl

Dr. Jacek Czaputowicz
(Vice Chair)
Deputy Head of Civil Service
Office of Civil Service/Urzad Sluzby
Cywilnej
Aleja J. Szucha 2/4
PL-00-582 WARSZAWA
Tel: 00 48 22 6947120
Fax: 00 48 22 6947488
E-Mail: jacek_czaputowicz@taranis.usc.gov.pl

M. Cezary Bąjka
Premier Secrétaire
Délégation de la Pologne près l’OCDE
86, rue de la Faisanderie
F-75116 PARIS
Tel: 0145040107
Fax: 0145043589
E-Mail: ploecd@compuserve.com
PORTUGAL/PORTUGAL
Mrs. Graça R.M.L. Pombeiro
Deputy Director
Secretariat for Administrative Modernisation
Ministry for Reform of the State and the Public Administration
Rua Almeida Brandão, 7 - 3
P-1200-602 LISBOA CODEX
Tel: 00 351 21 3921537
Fax: 00 351 21 3921596
E-Mail: graca.pombeiro@sma.pt

Mme Maria Irene Silva Paredes
Conseiller technique
Délégation du Portugal près l'OCDE
10 bis, rue Edouard Fournier
F-75116 PARIS
Tel: 0145033100
Fax: 0145032203
E-Mail: irene.paredes@ocde-portugal.com

RÉPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE/SLOVAK REPUBLIC

RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE/CZECH REPUBLIC
Mr. Jiri Marek
Director
Department for Modernisation of Public Administration
Ministry of the Interior
U Obecniho domu 3
CZ-112 20 PRAHA 1
Tel: 00 420 2 61446347
Fax: 00 420 2 61446356
E-Mail: jmarek@csu.notes.cz

Mr. Daniel Trnka
Administrative Advisor
Department for Modernisation of Public Administration
Ministry of the Interior
U Obecniho domu 3
CZ-112 20 PRAHA 1
Tel: 00 420 2 61486204
Fax: 00 420 2 61486817
E-Mail: dtrnka@mvcr.cz
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role and Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| République Tchèque (suite)/Czech Republic (continued) | Miss Blanka Fajkusova | First Secretary  
Delegation of the Czech Republic to the OECD  
40, rue de Boulainvilliers  
F-75016 PARIS  
Tel: 0145203514  
Fax: 0145203554  
E-Mail: oecd.paris@embassy.mvz.cz |
| Royaume-Uni/United Kingdom | Mr. Stephen Dugmore | Employment Conditions and Statistics Division  
Cabinet Office  
Admiralty Arch  
The Mall  
LONDON SW1A 2WH  
Tel: 00 44 20 72761641  
Fax: 00 44 20 72761642  
E-Mail: stephen.dugmore@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk |
| Suède/Sweden | Mr. Knut Rexed | Director General  
Swedish Agency for Public Management  
Statskontoret  
Box 2280  
SE-103 17 STOCKHOLM  
Tel: 00 46 8 4544601  
Fax: 00 46 8 4544603  
E-Mail: knut.rexed@statskontoret.se  
Mrs. Helene Ränlund | Head of Section, Budget Department  
Ministry of Finance  
SE-103 33 STOCKHOLM  
Tel: 00 46 8 4051870  
Fax: 00 46 8 4110835  
E-Mail: helene.ranlund@finance.ministry.se |
| Suisse/Switzerland | Mr. François Mayor | Counsellor  
Swiss Delegation to the OECD  
28, rue de Martignac  
F-75007 PARIS  
Tel: 0149557457  
Fax: 0145510149  
E-Mail: francois.mayor@pao.rep.admin.ch |
TURQUIE/TURKEY
Ms. Ilgin Atalay
Head, Foreign Affairs Department
Prime Ministry
Mesrutiyet Cad.No.24, Kat.5, Kizilay
06640 ANKARA
Tel: 00 90 312 4191152
Fax: 00 90 312 4191156
E-Mail: ilgin@basbakanlik.gov.tr

COMMISSION/EUROPÉENNE/EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Mr. Maurizio Mancini
Advisor, Relations with National Civil Services
DG Personnel and Administration
European Commission
200 rue de la Loi
B-1049 BRUXELLES
Tel: 00 32 2 2951389
Fax: 00 32 2 2962822
E-Mail: maurizio.mancini@cec.eu.int

OBSERVATEURS/OBSERVERS
BRÉSIL/BRAZIL
Ms. Evelyn Levy
Secretary
Secretariat of Public Management
Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management
Esplanada dos Ministerios - Bloco K
4 andar - CEP
70.046-900 BRASILIA, D.F.
Tel: 00 55 61 4294918 / 4294905
Fax: 00 55 61 4294917
E-Mail: evelyn.levy@planejamento.gov.br

Mr. Fernando Muggiatti
Head of the Human Resources Development Division
Ministry of Foreign Relations
Divisão de Desenvolvimento de Recursos Humanos (DRH)
Ministério das Relações Exteriores
Anexo I - Salas 631 e 632
70170-900 BRASILIA D.F.
Tel: 00 55 61 4116428
Fax: 00 55 61 3216569
E-Mail: fmuggiatti@mre.gov.br
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRÉSIL (suite)/BRAZIL (continued)</td>
<td>Mr. Antonio Francisco Da Costa e Silva Neto</td>
<td>Counsellor, Head of the OECD Liaison Section</td>
<td>Embassy of Brazil 34, cours Albert 1er F-75008 PARIS</td>
<td>Tel: 0145616331 Fax: 0142890345 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:adacosta@bresil.org">adacosta@bresil.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Luciano da Costa Pereira da Souza</td>
<td></td>
<td>Embassy of Brazil 34, cours Albert 1er F-75008 PARIS</td>
<td>Tel: 0145616327 Fax: 0142890345 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:lpsouza@bresil.org">lpsouza@bresil.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILI/CHILE</td>
<td>Mr. Jorge Chateau</td>
<td>Proyecto de Reforma y Modernizacion del Estado</td>
<td>Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia Agustinas 1291 - Piso 6° SANTIAGO DU CHILI</td>
<td>Tel: 00 56 2 6945951 / 6945808 Fax: 00 56 2 6945965 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:jchateau@minsegpres.cl">jchateau@minsegpres.cl</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Marcelo Garcia-Silva</td>
<td>Conseiller Economique Représentant permanent près l'OCDE</td>
<td>Ambassade du Chili 2 Avenue de la Motte Picquet 75007 PARIS</td>
<td>Tel: 0144185935 Fax: 0144185961 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:echile@amb-chili.fr">echile@amb-chili.fr</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Jean-Jacques Duhart</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ambassade du Chili 2 Avenue de la Motte Picquet 75007 PARIS</td>
<td>Tel: 0145666249 Fax: 0144185961 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:duhart@ena.fr">duhart@ena.fr</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service de la gestion publique / Public Management Service

Mr. Tony Hutton  Director  Tel: 0145249060  E-Mail: tony.hutton@oecd.org

Mr. Rolf Alter  Deputy Director and  Head of Programme,  PUMA Activity and Horizontal Activity on Regulatory Reform  Tel: 0145241410  E-Mail: rolf.alter@oecd.org

Mr. Bob Bonwitt  Head of SIGMA Programme  Tel: 0145241310  E-mail: bob.bonwitt@oecd.org

Mme Hélène Gadriot-Renard  Chef de programme,  Gestion publique et rôle de l’état  Tél: 0145249460  E-Mail: helene.gadriot-renard@oecd.org

Mr. Alex Matheson  Head of Division,  Budgeting and Management  Tel: 0145249085  E-Mail: alex.matheson@oecd.org

Mr. Edwin Lau  Administrator  Tel: 0145248036  E-Mail: edwin.lau@oecd.org

Ms. Carmel McGregor  Consultant  Tel: 0145249409  E-mail: carmel.mcgregor@oecd.org

Ms. Marie Murphy  Documentation  Tel: 0145249052  E-Mail: marie.murphy@oecd.org