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**USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO STRENGTHEN
GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS**

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USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS

Part I: Status of PUMA work to develop Indicators of Government Use of Information Technology

1. To complement the qualitative information to be obtained from an initial, general questionnaire on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections”, PUMA is planning to launch a follow-up questionnaire later in the year **to develop more quantifiable, comparable and detailed data on the use of new information technologies as a tool of growing significance in these efforts.** The follow-up questionnaire will be a first step toward developing indicators allowing countries to benchmark government progress in using IT to support provision of information, consultation and services to citizens, with the intention of following progress over time. The results will support PUMA’s work on Government-Citizen relations by providing empirical data that can serve as a basis for further analysis of what kind of IT tools are being used, and what may work, and under what conditions. A separate aspect of the work is intended to contribute to the OECD’s horizontal initiative on electronic commerce, by developing a better understanding of how it is impacting on government services.

2. Indicators can be based on both **qualitative and quantitative information.** They can result from yes-no answers, numbers, or brief explanations of how a tool is being used. No indicator by itself can give a complete view of progress or development of a government’s use of IT. But a range of indicators addressing a variety of services and government practices can provide a complementary perspective, used in combination with other qualitative research, to develop an overall picture and track progress over time.

3. **Input from the working group at the upcoming 17-18 June meeting will be crucial** to determining how such indicators can be most usefully developed. **The list of possible topics in this paper is merely intended as a menu of potential areas to choose from, and is probably far more extensive and detailed than will be feasible, particularly in the first year of such a project.** Long, complicated surveys are less likely to yield good, useable information than simple, well-targeted ones, so clarification of country priorities will be essential. In addition, different countries collect information in different ways, making international comparisons difficult. Input from the working group can help to determine where there is consensus on common definitions, and where it may be too ambitious to establish common definitions at this stage.

4. In order to develop a more manageable questionnaire that yields the most useful results possible, participants at the meeting are therefore asked to address the following questions relating to their own government’s use of IT indicators and the “possible topics” highlighted in Part II of this paper:

- What types of government IT indicators have been or are being collected, and how are they defined?
- What policy sectors do these indicators address?
- What different institutional structures are in place for collecting and managing these IT indicators?
- How often and how recently were these data collected?
- Is any of this information used in relation to policy or programme development, and if so, how?
- What types of indicators would be most useful to have on an internationally comparative basis?

5. To provide further context for consideration of these questions, the Secretariat has also undertaken a preliminary scan of existing data. A separate document, PUMA/CIT(99)5, on “Existing ‘Information Society’ Comparative Data” provides a summary of this PUMA research in progress.

Preliminary indications from country representatives are requested confirming or clarifying the existence of such data within their own countries, particularly regarding government use of IT.

6. If possible, written comments in advance of the meeting would support attention to the details of country experience and concern. Such comments should be submitted to Daniel Blume of the PUMA Secretariat prior to the meeting, by e-mail at Daniel.Blume@oecd.org, or by fax at 33.1.45.24.87.96.

7. The actual IT questionnaire will be developed in response to country input and disseminated for a final round of written comments by early September. This questionnaire would also take into account results obtained from the initial, more general questionnaire on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” that is to be carried out over the next two months. The formal IT questionnaire is scheduled to be disseminated to obtain a response by late October or early November, to be co-ordinated by “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” working group participants and, for those countries not participating in the working group, by PUMA Committee delegates.

Why develop internationally comparative indicators of government use of information technology?

8. Most, if not all, OECD countries have recognised the importance of exploiting information technologies to support the competitiveness of their economies and the quality of life of their citizens. They have generally developed explicit national “information society” strategies setting out legal, regulatory and policy frameworks to encourage the development of the information industry and use of IT. These strategies also usually call for governments to lead by example, employing IT to demonstrate what is possible and to better accomplish their service objectives. IT is seen as an important tool to support closer government-citizen relations – through easier access to government information on electronic databases, more convenient and integrated access to services, and new opportunities for government-citizen dialogue.

9. Though comparative international indicators of IT development do exist, they are almost entirely focused on use within the economy and population as a whole, rather than in relation to government communications and services. This makes it difficult to determine whether governments are in a phase of experimentation on selected projects or have begun to generalise use of IT in government more broadly, whether they are keeping up with their own economies, or where they are in relation to other countries. This matters for policy-makers, who may need such information in determining priorities and adapting national initiatives. It matters for managers, who may want to look to the examples of leading countries or those with systems and cultures most comparable to their own to consider what may be feasible, and to learn further about what has contributed to their success or failures.

Possible future work

10. Comparable quantitative and qualitative information could support a range of alternatives for follow-up work. For example, PUMA could provide empirically-based analysis and assessment related to questions such as:

- How accessible is government information to the average citizen, and how are governments changing what they do to make such information more accessible and user-friendly? Building upon initial information provided in a first government IT questionnaire, a comparative “benchmarking” study of selected government Web sites could provide significant insight to these questions .
- What appear to be emerging best practices in the electronic provision of information and consultation with citizens in relation to government programmes and policies? Data gathered

on overall government IT use would provide an important context for understanding where and how best practices are likely to emerge. For example, are they more likely to emerge where citizens and civil servants have high Internet access rates? Are these isolated cases or part of a larger trend within the government toward provision of on-line information and interactivity?

- **How are public services changing to be more responsive, accessible and individualised to meet citizen needs?** The use of IT and services on-line are not the only elements involved, but represent a significant aspect of how government service delivery is changing. The study would be most likely to yield concrete, useable results by focusing on countries' approaches for delivering a few specific services, such as information to support income tax filing, searching and applying for jobs or others (see proposed indicators to be applied to "a specific subset of services" in Part II). Alternatively, such a study could take a broader sectoral approach, looking at how the health, education or tax collection agencies function as a whole in their use of IT across multiple countries.

11. Working group participants are encouraged to express their own ideas and preferences for follow-up work at the meeting that would be of greatest use and interest to them. The Secretariat can then develop possible frameworks for carrying out such studies as a next step in the work development process.

Preliminary definitions

Definitions may need to be refined, but the following are provided to give a general indication of what is meant by particular terms:

- **"IT"** refers in this context to new information technologies -- computers, other screen terminals such as kiosks or television, and the associated networks and technologies that connect them to information databases (the Internet, intranets, microchips, CD-Roms, "smart cards", etc.). The telephone and fax are **not** considered new technologies in this context.
- **"On-line"** in this context indicates that citizens have access to computer-mediated information, service delivery or dialogue in liaison with government at any level. It is not necessary that a telecommunication link be involved, e.g. regularly updated stand-alone kiosks could fulfil an on-line government function.
- **"Information"** in this context refers to government information provided to the citizen (one-way).
- **"Services"** generally involve two-way transactions (e.g. payments, reception of permits or licenses, tax filing, administrative transactions, etc.)
- **"Public servants"** refer to those at the national (central and decentralised) level of government paid for by public funds. It **does not** include government employees at sub-national levels of government due to the difficulty of collecting information from such dispersed sources.

Part II: Possible topics for Questionnaire on Government Use of Information Technology

Actual figures are not sought at this stage for the items listed below, but if possible, it would be helpful for countries to specify availability of data, how each item is measured, source, and frequency of collection. Information is sought only for the national (central and decentralised) level of government.

Section 1. Measures of government and citizen IT “connectedness”

Public access

- Citizen ownership of home PCs;
- Citizen access to Internet;
- Surveys of user demographics (attach);
- Number of “public access” terminals with Internet connections:
 - In schools (Total number/total student population at primary and secondary levels)
 - Public libraries (Total number vs. number of libraries)
 - Public buildings (Total number of screens)
 - Electronic kiosks (Total number operational)
 - Other _____

Public servant electronic access to support provision of information and services to the citizen:

- Number of personal computers/number of public servants;
- % of public servants and departments with access to e-mail;
- % of public servants and departments with access to government intranet;
- % of public servants and departments with access to World Wide Web;
- % of public servants and departments with e-mail addresses made available to public.

Section 2. Government information and services on-line

Government Web sites

Citizen access should be measured in terms of average number of “user sessions” (users) per month over the most recently available six months (exact dates to be determined when survey goes out).

- Number of government ministries and departments with Web pages out of total number of government ministries and departments (%);
- URL (WWW address) and access figures for main gateway(s) or portals to government information and services;
- Access figures and URL for most popular government Web site (a “site” encompasses all pages operated by a Ministry, department or dealing with a specific issue or service);
- Example(s) and URL(s) of “model” government Web site(s).

Government forms on-line

- Availability of government forms on-line (may be measured in terms of % of total number of forms available, or % of government transactions involving forms for which forms are available on line);
- Extent to which government provides opportunity for citizens to submit government forms electronically (e.g., % of total number of forms or form transactions where electronic submission is feasible)

- Extent to which citizens actually submit forms electronically (e.g. % of total number of forms filed overall).

Government services on-line

- What future targets, if any, have the government set for moving government services on-line?
- What services are currently **available** electronically at no charge? If there are too many to list, can this be quantified (e.g., number of services available and % of total)?
- To what extent are these services actually **obtained** on-line (e.g. number of services provided/month and/or % of total)?
- Surveys of demands for government on-line information and services;
- Surveys of users' satisfaction with on-line vs. off-line services;

Indicators of the impact of IT on a specific subset of on-line services:

Examples of possible services are cited below with choices to be made, based on country priorities and means:

- Filing income tax declarations
- Searching and applying for jobs
- Reporting of changes of address
- Applying for passports
- Applying for permits or licenses
- Availability of electronic forms and on-line assistance for business
- Telemedicine
- Use in education
- Electronic delivery of social benefits
- Procurement
- Others to suggest?

For each service, information is to be sought regarding:

- Stage of development:
 - ◆ On-line service does not exist
 - ◆ Planning phase
 - ◆ Pilot project launched
 - ◆ Service available
- If available, number of services provided on-line vs. off-line
- Average time required to process service on-line vs. off;
- Average cost to process on-line vs. off.

PUMA wishes to contribute to OECD 's work on electronic commerce through development of indicators on how electronic commerce is impacting the public sector. Possible areas to address could include:

Government "electronic" sales of information and services

- Is government information sold electronically involving financial transactions carried out on-line. Is its volume measured, and if so how?

- What services, if any, are sold electronically involving financial transactions carried out on-line (e.g. paying of user charges on-line to obtain licenses or permits or enrol in fee-for-service public programmes)?
- Is there differential pricing between information/services provided electronically and provision by paper? If so, can you provide details on the government's policies (and actual practices) for determining these pricing differences?

Government electronic purchasing

- Have electronic data bases been established to provide publicly available information to potential bidders for government contracts and provision of supplies?
- What is the policy for providing public procurement tendering information on-line (e.g., all contracts/purchases above a certain monetary value? For specific categories of procurement such as defence, computers, etc.?)
- To what extent, if at all, does public procurement take place electronically:
 - Through use of the Internet;
 - Through use of EDI (Electronic Data Interchange).
- Has the government evaluated the cost-effectiveness of on-line vs. off-line public procurement?

Section 3. Electronic tools for public consultation:

- Is policy consultation carried out electronically, and if so, to what extent:
 - number of policy consultations (on what issues, e.g. regulations, laws, budget, etc.)?
 - number of participants?
 - electronic consultation in proportion to other means such as telephone, mail, in-person?
- Do decision-makers (politicians or high-level government officials) participate in electronic policy discussion groups with citizens? To what extent?

Section 4. Other measures of government IT use to suggest on a comparative basis.

For example:

- Budgets for information systems over last five years;
- Use of smart cards;
- Use of electronic signatures