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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE WORKING GROUP MEETING ON  
"STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS",  
17-18 June 1999**

*This document provides a summary of the key points and conclusions emerging from the 2nd Session of the Working Group on "Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections", held 17-18 June 1999.*

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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE WORKING GROUP MEETING ON  
“STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS”**

17-18 June, 1999

1. The Working group on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” at its meeting of 17-18 June set out to clearly define future directions for the different sub-projects being undertaken within this activity. The meeting resulted in several positive, overall conclusions: the general questionnaire was finalised, plans for case studies were defined and priorities were established for the development of indicators of government use of information technologies.

**General questionnaire on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections”**

2. Six countries involved in the pilot phase of responding to the general questionnaire on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” summarised the results and lessons learned from their experience: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Greece and the United Kingdom. Most of the participating countries underlined their **interest** in the exercise. They considered it important to acquire comparative data in this area, which helped motivate development of their own responses.

3. The discussion led to the following conclusions regarding the general questionnaire:

- **Two months** are needed for countries to reply to the questionnaire;
- The explanatory **annexes** should be integrated into the questionnaire to better clarify the questions;
- The **definition** of the areas covered by the questionnaire was specified. The questionnaire is aimed not at understanding how governments relate to users as “clients” of services, but more generally at how governments interact with citizens in the development of policy. In other words, the study is not centred on services, but on the information, consultation and active participation of citizens in determining government action and public policy;
- Countries should feel free in their responses to be **flexible**: this will allow taking into account the diversity of national contexts. This aspect will be reflected in the introduction to the questionnaire. Countries will be invited to specify and describe their traditions, culture and particular contexts (concerning, for example, the division of responsibilities between national and local governments), to cite examples, and also to group questions together if appropriate in order to avoid repetition. Moreover, if they consider that a question is not relevant to their situation, countries are free to explain this in their response; they can also decline to respond to a question if it seems to them to be irrelevant.
- If countries encounter difficulties in interpreting a question, they may contact the Secretariat to have further clarification.

4. The following **time-line** was established in relation to the general questionnaire:

- Distribution of the revised questionnaire in late June or beginning of July at the latest
- Responses requested by mid-September;
- Publication of responses on the PUMA Web site as they are received, subject to the agreement of the country involved;
- Analysis and synthesis to be undertaken by the Secretariat for consideration by the Centres of Government meeting of 7-8 October, and by the working group at their next meeting of **29-30 November, 1999**.

### Case studies

5. A summary of case studies under way and planned in the near future was outlined. These studies will address a range of aspects of “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” within a particular policy sector. The choice of sector is to be determined by the country involved, will not necessarily involve a service, and may address local as well as national levels.

6. The following countries have begun studies or tentatively agreed on sectors for studies to take place in the coming months:

- **Hungary -- Public employment.** This study is being developed based on interviews with approximately 40 individuals both within and outside of government carried out in June, 1999. It addresses efforts to strengthen relations between the government and citizens at national and local levels within the framework of a government jobs programme aimed at reducing unemployment and supporting work that promotes the overall public good.
- **France -- Public housing.** This study is centred on how the government informs, consults with and involves citizens in carrying out its rental housing programme, which is managed by the offices of Housing at Moderated Rent. Interviews for this study began in June

### *Planned studies:*

- **Canada -- Health care.** This study will examine Canada’s efforts to inform, consult and engage citizens nationally as well as consideration of policies at the provincial level regarding its “Medicare” national health care system.
- **Denmark -- Health care.** [*tentative*] This study would take into account how government is interacting with users of the health care system at the county level, as well as any broader consultation efforts at the national level.
- **United States -- Environment.** This study will examine how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has used information databases and other tools to promote citizen action in support of the government’s environmental objectives, both directly and through related work by non-governmental organisations

7. Working group representatives were invited to identify sectors within their own countries that could be the subject of additional case studies to be carried out later in 1999 or early in 2000. These may be similar to the sectors above, to promote comparability, but are not limited to those sectors, since the

main interest is in identifying areas where innovation and promising practice is occurring that other countries can learn from. The case studies will be disseminated on the Internet, considered at the next working group meeting, and will contribute to the overall analysis and conclusions of the activity.

### **Indicators of government use of information technologies**

8. **Consensus** was quickly apparent regarding participants' support for developing indicators of information technology use on an internationally comparable basis. After reviewing the experience and availability of information on indicators in each participating country, the group focused on areas of highest priority.

9. The **priorities** that were ultimately established will enable the Secretariat to develop the list of proposed topics [PUMA/CIT(99)4] into a questionnaire that responds more precisely to participating countries' demands. Areas to be addressed include data on overall IT infrastructure in place relating to levels of government and citizen "connectedness;" information on government Web sites; development of on-line services, including efforts to "charge" for information and services on-line; and on-line consultation. The questionnaire will also provide opportunities for countries to explain the context and overall policy in place in each of these areas. Consideration of on-line services will focus on a few specific sectors and services to promote comparability: these could include tax declarations, employment programmes, on-line support for business, education, and social services.

10. In addition, consideration of country experience and the work of other international organisations and institutions, including the survey under way by UNESCO (presented by Joshua Zammit of COMNET-IT), will enable PUMA to further focus the questionnaire and avoid duplication of existing work. An updated version of PUMA/CIT(99)5 on existing IT indicators will be disseminated following additional research over the coming two to three months.

11. The following **timeline** was established in relation to future development of IT indicators and related analysis:

- Dissemination of the IT questionnaire in September for review and written comment by the working group;
- Dissemination of the finalised questionnaire for a response from all Member countries who wish to participate a few weeks later;
- Responses will be sought by late November or December;
- PUMA would undertake related and more in-depth analysis thereafter in three main areas:
  - Comparative analysis and "benchmarking" of government Web sites;
  - Study of promising practices in the use of the Internet and other new technologies in public consultation;
  - Comparative analysis of how IT is impacting two or three specific sectors, such as education or health.
- The working group at its next meeting of 29-30 November will consider a more detailed framework for this follow-up work.

**REUNION DU GROUPE DE TRAVAIL SUR LE “RENFORCEMENT DES RELATIONS ENTRE  
LES ADMINISTRATIONS ET LES CITOYENS”** (Développement d’indicateurs portant sur  
l’utilisation par l’administration des technologies de l’information)

**WORKING GROUP MEETING ON “STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN  
CONNECTIONS”** (Developing Indicators of Government Use of Information Technologies)

**Réunion des 17-18 juin 1999, OCDE, Paris  
Meeting of 17-18 June 1999, OECD**

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