



SIGMA

Support for Improvement in Governance and Management

A joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the EU

**FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC
OF MACEDONIA
POLICY-MAKING AND CO-ORDINATION
ASSESSMENT MAY 2009**

Summary

Main Developments since last year

During the past year, there was significant activity in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ in the area of policy-making and co-ordination. Within central institutions, there is a good understanding and appreciation of the need for better co-ordination and of the importance of involving ministries. The main developments since last year are the following:

- A new strategic planning methodology was introduced to ensure that the planning process is realistic and closely aligned with the budget and the National Plan for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA).
- “Regulatory Guillotine II” is now underway, following the success of the first phase. Phase II is focused on the Customs Service, and the plan is to focus next on Agriculture.
- The requirement for regulatory impact assessment (RIA) to support draft laws presented to the government came into force (January 2009).
- The electronic circulation of papers for sessions of the government has greatly improved, although it cannot yet fully replace paper circulation.
- Strategic planning sectors or units have been established in all ministries directly under the state secretary.
- The General Secretariat held training on planning and policy-making for more than 300 civil servants (25 full-day sessions).
- A “Manual on Transposition of the EU Legislation in the Macedonian Legislation” was published by the Legislative Secretariat (December 2008). Twenty training sessions for ministries on the use of the manual were carried out.

The Legislative Secretariat prepared a new guidebook on legal drafting, style and language. More than 300 civil servants were trained on the use of this guidebook.

Main Characteristics (strengths and weaknesses)

The main characteristics of the Macedonian policy system are the following:

- The organisation primarily responsible for policy co-ordination is the General Secretariat. The Secretariat of European Affairs and the Legislative Secretariat also play an important co-ordinative role in the policy system. The General Secretariat is well-structured and has the mandate and sectors required to perform the necessary functions of supporting the Prime Minister and the government in their collective responsibility for making policy decisions. However, it appears that the services of the General Secretariat are at present less than fully utilised by the government.
- The Legislative Secretariat is also well-structured and staffed and is capable of providing drafting support and of certifying compliance with EU legislation.
- The Secretariat of European Affairs (SEA) is far from fully staffed at senior levels and does not have an appropriate institutional design. As a result, it is not fully able to meet its responsibilities within the system.
- There is an excellent legal framework for the policy system, including the Rules of Procedure and numerous methodologies and instructions. The procedures for inter-ministerial consultations are clear, and it seems that ministries consult each other on important items well in advance of the formal consultations required by the Rules of Procedure.

¹ In this report the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will hereafter be referred to as “Macedonia”.

- The strategic and work planning systems are well-established and operational, and there are mechanisms to link the Strategic Priorities of the government with the Annual Work Plan, the budget and the NPAA. Three-year ministerial Strategic Plans are linked to the government-wide planning documents.
- Policy co-ordination is supported by a weekly meeting of the senior staff of the General Secretariat (“Expert Collegium”), followed by a weekly meeting of state secretaries (the “General Collegium”).
- The General Secretariat has developed procedures and capacities to provide solid logistical support to the decision-making system. Logistical preparation has been strengthened with the introduction of the electronic circulation of documents for the government session.
- There is a growing awareness of the importance of impact assessment in the policy process. However, complicated RIA procedures have been introduced without regard to the existing requirements for policy preparation and presentation to the government. As introduced, RIA is likely to create a serious burden on ministries and is not likely to contribute to better policy development.

Overall, the Macedonian policy-making and co-ordination system has the design characteristics and much of the human capacity required to produce good policy. In practice, however, the system is under-utilised. Due to over-politicisation of the policy process, policy decisions often by-pass the good processes and procedures, and accordingly the policy system as a whole is under-performing.

Recommendations for Reform

- It is urgent for the political leadership to make better and more consistent use of the structures, procedures, and human resources developed for policy co-ordination and planning in the General Secretariat and in ministries.
- Urgent attention should also be given to agreeing on a sound institutional design for the Secretariat of European Affairs, followed by appointment and training of senior management and professional staff.
- The newly established RIA process should be integrated into the rules for policy-making, especially the requirement for fiscal impact assessment (FIA) and the requirement to include the assessment of impacts in the Memorandum. Excessively complicated procedures and forms should be avoided at this stage in the development of policy capacity in ministries.
- Along with the integration of RIA into the normal policy process, all aspects of policy co-ordination should be unified within the Sector for Policy Analysis and Co-ordination in the General Secretariat. Fragmentation of similar functions within the General Secretariat should be avoided.

1. Coherence of the Policy-Making Framework

The legal framework for decision-making and policy formulation is set by the *Rules of Procedure for Operation of the Government*. Numerous amendments have been made since 2001 when the Rules of Procedure were first adopted. Some amendments have been of a technical nature and some substantive, supporting significant reforms in the work of the government.

The *Rules of Procedure* set the framework for an effective policy-planning system, ensuring links to the political priorities established by the government upon its election through the annual process of strategic planning and budgeting and translated into specific legislation presented in the Annual Work Programme. The Rules of Procedure also set up a clear and coherent policy development and decision-making system by clearly describing the responsibilities and roles of both administrative and political levels. The weekly meetings of state secretaries and the meetings of standing government commissions are effective mechanisms for the deliberation and resolution of any outstanding issues related to ministry proposals. The most recent amendments to the Rules of Procedure, adopted in February 2008, introduced compulsory regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and electronically-supported document distribution procedures, which have been in effect since January 2009.

In the past year, the strategic planning methodology was updated on the basis of past experience, particularly to ensure a closer link between the Work Plan, the budget and the NPAA.

A number of important documents supporting the strategic planning and policy co-ordination systems have been adopted by the government. A revised *Methodology on Strategic Planning and Preparation of the Annual Work Programme of the Government* and the *Strategic Planning Handbook* (February 2007) are intended to support ministries and other state administration bodies in their planning process. The *Methodology on Policy Analysis and Co-ordination*, adopted in 2006, was followed by the *Policy Development Handbook* (January 2007), and the *Manual on Situation Analysis in the Policy Development Process* (November 2008). The *Methodology on Regulatory Impact Assessment* and its supporting forms were adopted in March 2008 and according to the Rules of Procedure, RIA became a requirement as of January 2009.

The overall legal framework for the decision-making process is coherent and complete. The decision-making process – including the strategic planning and development of proposals in ministries, co-ordination, and monitoring by the General Secretariat – are adequate and accepted by all participants.

2. Inter-ministerial Consultation on Policy Proposals

The Rules of Procedure require proposing ministries submitting legislative drafts or other materials to the government to consult other “responsible, relevant and interested state administration bodies and other state bodies”. Depending on the issue, consultations include the ministries of Finance, Justice, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Environment and Spatial Planning, the Committee for Protection of Competition, the Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement, and the Legislative Secretariat. In practice, the comments of the Ministry of Finance and the Legislative Secretariat are compulsory. After expiry of the consultation deadline, the proposing ministry can submit the proposal to the General Secretariat for inclusion on the agenda of the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries.

In addition to the formal consultations, informal consultations take place prior to the preparation of legal drafts, especially in the case of important laws. Relevant ministries, as well as the Legislative Secretariat, are often consulted in the early stages.

Formal checks are made by the staff in the General Secretariat to ensure that the required consultation has taken place and has been reported. However, the General Secretariat does not have the authority to return the documents. The proposals are then discussed in the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries, which may decide to defer an issue if the relevant and interested parties have not been consulted.

The formal procedures for inter-ministerial consultations are appropriate. Informal consultations in the earlier stages are improving over time.

3. Work Planning

The Annual Work Programme includes legislative proposals and other materials that are planned to be presented to the government for deliberation and decision in the following year. According to the timetable set in the *Methodology on Strategic Planning and Preparation of the Annual Work Programme*, the Annual Work Programme is adopted by the government at the end of the current year for the next year. The Annual Work Programme is prepared by the General Secretariat based on the government's strategic priorities, the commitments in the NPAA, and the strategic priorities and programmes of the ministries. According to the Law on Budgets, the strategic priorities of the government should be adopted by 15 April each year for the following year, and the Annual Work Programme should be adopted by the end of the year once the budget has been set and ministries know which programmes (laws, policies, etc.) will be supported by the budget. This year, however, possibly due to the presidential elections in March, the Annual Work Programme has not yet been approved.

The General Secretariat is also responsible for monitoring the Annual Work Programme. It prepares an annual report on the level of implementation of the Annual Work Programme, including an assessment of implementation by each ministry. Since the Annual Work Programme has not been approved yet for 2009, there is no formal monitoring of the programme, although some ministries have reported in writing concerning the implementation of, or changes to, their draft work programmes for the year.

The agenda of the weekly meeting of the government is proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Prime Minister. The agenda is structured in three parts: (1) issues for deliberation and decision; (2) issues that have been previously resolved in the commissions and need only a decision; and (3) issues for information. This structure is intended to focus ministers' attention on important issues that require policy or political resolution. However, the assignment of items to these sections of the agenda is rather arbitrary and therefore does not help much in focusing the discussion on critical issues. Cases of ministers presenting proposals directly to the government meeting are rare.

The number of items per government meeting is high, normally about 50 to 60. This is probably due to the inclusion of less relevant, often administrative, issues that could be delegated and resolved at lower levels in the decision-making process.

There is a good framework for planning and monitoring the work of the government. This year's delay in approving the Annual Work Programme appears to be an exception. The government should take steps towards delegating issues to lower levels in the decision-making process so that the weekly session can focus on important policy discussions and decisions.

4. Dispute-resolution Mechanisms

Once the proposals reach the General Secretariat for presentation to the government, there are two levels in place to resolve disputes among ministries. The first level is the weekly meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries (chaired by the General Secretary of the Government), which constitutes a forum where proposals are reviewed from an expert point of view. The Collegium may defer an issue if additional co-ordination and consultations are needed. Senior members of staff of the General Secretariat participate in the meetings and may present their views on specific proposals. If no agreement is reached, this is indicated in a report, which is then presented to the standing government commissions. Recommendations formulated in the meeting of the General Collegium of State Secretaries are submitted in written form to the standing government commissions for further deliberation and decision.

The second level includes the standing commissions, which are ministerial commissions organised by topic – political system, economic system and policy, and human resources and sustainable development. They meet on a specific day before the weekly meeting of the government to discuss

and resolve issues that were not previously resolved. It sometimes happens, however, that commission meetings are not attended by ministers but by civil servants appointed to represent the views of the ministry. A report is prepared and distributed after the meeting of each of the standing commissions, together with the materials for the government meeting.

According to the *Rules of Procedure* and the *Methodology on Policy Analysis and Co-ordination*, the General Secretariat may offer relevant information and assist ministries in dispute resolution in the development stage of major legislative proposals or policies. Although state advisors in the General Secretariat have been appointed as contact persons for specific ministries and tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the ministries' proposals, their role as mediators in the event of a dispute is usually minimal. In practice, they focus mostly on checking the formal requirements related to the proposals.

The formal mechanisms for resolving disputes are appropriate. The General Secretariat should develop a more substantive role in offering advice and assisting in conflict-resolution at an early stage in the policy development process.

5. Central Co-ordination Capacity

The General Secretariat has a leading co-ordinative role in the decision-making process. It provides logistical and technical support to the sessions of the government. The General Secretariat also provides logistical and technical support to the Collegium of State Secretaries and to each of the standing government commissions. The General Secretariat's work in the handling of documents and their distribution to the sessions of all bodies involved in the decision-making process is quite effective. All materials that arrive for scheduling on the agenda of the next meeting of the government are then reviewed at the weekly meeting of the General Secretariat. A brief conclusion is formulated for the Secretary General concerning each of the materials in terms of its completeness or any pending issues.

Another body playing a co-ordinative role is the Legislative Secretariat. The Legislative Secretariat is an independent expert service that offers legal advice to the government. It has specific responsibility for reviewing all draft laws and secondary legislation from a juridical and constitutional standpoint to ensure their coherence and consistency within the body of normative acts. The Legislative Secretariat has issued a *Handbook on Legislative Drafting* and organised relevant training. It operates a website where ministries and other state administration bodies can find useful information and advice on legislative drafting and other normative issues.

Since the beginning of 2007, the handling of documents has been supported by special software, which enables electronic processing and distribution of documents to state secretaries and ministers. Unfortunately, this new system is not yet fully operational.

The General Secretariat is also responsible for recording all government decisions and for monitoring their implementation. The decisions of the government are recorded and distributed to all ministries and relevant state administration bodies within 24 hours of the meeting of the government. The implementation of decisions is monitored and early warning letters are distributed to ministries reminding them of their commitments. The government reviews overdue commitments in a special meeting scheduled once a month.

The General Secretariat has direct responsibility for some horizontal issues, such as public administration reform and regulatory reform. Amendments to the Law on Government introduced in September 2007 transformed the General Secretariat's former Sector for Implementation of the Framework Agreement into an autonomous secretariat under the political leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for implementation of the Framework Agreement.

The logistical and technical support for the business of the government is orderly and quite effective.

6. Central Capacity to Advise on Policy and Strategic Matters

The General Secretariat is playing an increasingly significant role in helping the government adopt strategic plans and create linkages between priorities and the budget. The strategic planning process represents a full planning cycle linking the government's strategic priorities to the budget, which are then reflected in the strategic plans of ministries and finally presented as concrete proposals in the government's Annual Work Programme.

The Strategic Planning Sector is responsible for co-ordination of the strategic planning process and for supporting ministries in the development of their own strategic plans and providing relevant training. The *Strategic Planning Handbook* adopted by the Secretary General in February 2007 and recent amendments in the structure of the strategic plans of ministries contribute to strengthening the process in ministries. Following recent amendments in the relevant regulations, all ministries have now established an organisational unit responsible for strategic planning and policy co-ordination, which reports directly to the state secretary in the ministry. All ministries have prepared their 2009-2011 Strategic Plans, and it appears that the quality is improving over time.

The role of the General Secretariat is more focused on supporting strategic planning and policy co-ordination than on offering substantive advice to the government on the strategic implications of proposals. State advisors in the General Secretariat have been given the responsibility of advising on the specific proposals of ministries, but in practice substantive strategic and policy advice remains weak.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is relatively small, with about 20 staff, most of whom are civil servants. The Prime Minister also has a number of national and international political advisers who, on request, offer advice on specific issues, but they are not part of his permanent team. Generally, the PMO offers expert advice on specific issues rather than strategic advice. The Head of the PMO attends the weekly government meetings. The PMO offers advice on specific proposals, communicates and co-ordinates with ministries on specific projects or issues, and offers administrative support to the Prime Minister. However, it is not involved in the content of the government's agenda on a regular basis. It also ensures the transparency of the Prime Minister's work and implements projects of special interest to the Prime Minister.

The General Secretariat has the legal underpinnings and the organisational structure that allow it to play a significant role in providing strategic and policy advice. However, it appears that at this time the General Secretariat is not called upon to offer policy and strategic advice to the government.

7. Co-ordination of European Affairs

The Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), established by the amendments to the Law on Government of June 2005, is an autonomous expert body of the government responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on progress in the EU integration process. It is led by the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European Integration.

However, the institutional development of SEA is lagging behind. The organisational structure proposed for the SEA is not logical. In any event, full-time or temporary staff have filled only one-third of the planned 210 positions, and most of the senior and middle-management positions remain unfilled. This staffing problem has a serious impact on the functioning of the SEA, as it impedes vertical co-ordination and requires the involvement of the Deputy Prime Minister in day-to-day administrative and co-ordination activities.

The National Plan for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) was adopted in April 2007 and has since been updated. It fully incorporates the commitments and responsibilities of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the European Partnership. It is now also well-coordinated with the Annual Work Programme of the government and the budget. The NPAA is regularly monitored and is updated annually to reflect progress in implementation and emerging priorities.

EU issues are a standing item on the agenda of the General Collegium of State Secretaries and of the government, and EU thematic meetings are organised to discuss progress. SEA staff members are regularly involved in the consultative process for ministries' proposals going to the government.

All ministries have an organisational unit responsible for EI co-ordination, but capacities in some ministries are still weak. The 35 working groups originally established to focus mainly on law approximation have been gradually assuming more responsibilities for policy analysis related to the relevant chapters of the *acquis*. However, capacities in the various working groups are not evenly distributed, and it seems that tasks are performed by a small number of capable but overburdened people.

The requirement to ensure the compatibility of national legislation with the EU *acquis* has now been fully implemented. The Legislative Secretariat checks proposals related to both primary and secondary legislation, offering advice to ministries in terms of the compatibility of the transposed legislation. The Statement of Harmonisation and the Tables of Concordance have been improved and are now compulsory for all EU-related proposals going to the government. As part of its effort in this area, the Legislative Secretariat issued in December 2008 a *Manual on Transposition of the EU Legislation in the Macedonian Legislation*, and has conducted training of ministry staff on the use of the manual.

The central structure for co-ordinating EU affairs (SEA) is not well-designed and far from being fully staffed. Other structures responsible for activities related to EU accession are adequate. There is greater consistency between the Annual Work Programme, the NPAA, ministries' Strategic Plans and the budget, which ensures that EU issues are better incorporated into the policy system.

8. Involvement of the Council of Ministers in Budget Decisions

Once the Decision on Strategic Priorities is adopted by the middle of April, the Ministry of Finance begins the budget process by developing a mid-term Fiscal Strategy. The Fiscal Strategy presents an overview of the macroeconomic framework and includes projections of the basic indicators for the next year. It reports on budget revenues and expenditures in the current year and provides projections for the next year. The Fiscal Strategy sets the general spending ceilings for the next year, and offers indicative ceilings for the following two years. The government adopts the Fiscal Strategy by the end of May.

The Ministry of Finance then sets the spending ceilings for each of the ministries, and releases the Budget Circular Letter to all ministries and budget-users, which includes the government programmes and forms for the budget submissions. The Ministry of Finance releases the Budget Circular Letter by 15 June. Together with the budget submission, each ministry is required to submit its three-year Strategic Plan, showing the relevant programmes that reflect government priorities and indicating how the ministry plans to spend the budget within the set limits. Ministries and other budget-users forward their budget submissions and Strategic Plans to the Ministry of Finance by 1 September. All of the Strategic Plans were submitted this year.

The next step in the process involves the negotiations with ministries. The budget analysts in the Ministry of Finance, discuss with the relevant ministries and other state administration bodies, and assist in the allocation of funds. This stage should be completed at the latest by 1 November, when the Ministry of Finance submits the proposed budget to the government. The negotiations continue in the government sessions, where the government finally decides on the priority programmes and budget allocations. The State Budget is adopted by parliament by the end of the year.

The budget process and its steps are quite clear and understood by all players, although the deadlines are not always met.

The mechanisms for the government's collective discussions and decisions on the budget are adequate and effective.

9. Impact Assessment

In accordance with the existing provisions in the Rules of Procedure, ministers are required to provide an assessment of fiscal impacts and other economic, societal and environmental impacts. The results of these analyses are summarised in the standardised Fiscal Impact Assessment (FIA) form and the Memorandum, which have to be submitted with all of the proposals presented to the government for decision. The Memorandum requires ministries to conduct impact assessment for all proposals going to the government session and encompasses a broad impact assessment framework. The Memorandum has fixed headings covering the justification of the proposal, options considered, results of impact assessments for each of the options, results of the consultations, harmonisation with EU legislation, and key communication messages. Ministries generally comply with the requirements, but in many cases they do not conduct an in-depth impact analysis. All ministries formally comply with the requirement to complete the Fiscal Impact Assessment form, and in general assessments have been improving but are still not up to the desired level of quality.

Recent amendments to the Rules of Procedure require ministries to perform and submit a regulatory impact assessment (RIA) with a proposed law. The government adopted a Methodology on Regulatory Impact Assessment and the supporting forms in March 2008. The provisions in the Rules of Procedure related to the RIA became applicable in January 2009.

Unfortunately, the methodology adopted for RIA is extremely complex and is probably beyond the capacity of many ministries. Although the methodology has now been in operation for four months, only two RIA documents have been prepared by ministries, both of which resulted from supported pilot projects. In addition, the RIA procedures and methodology were developed and adopted without regard to existing procedures, such as the FIA and the Memorandum. Both of these have been working progressively better, and it would be a pity if the RIA process were to reduce their effectiveness.

The General Secretariat has a consultative and co-ordinative role in the RIA process. The Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform is responsible for checking and advising ministries on RIA. Although formally within the structure of the General Secretariat, in reality the sector head reports directly to the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Economic Affairs. This arrangement, together with the separation of the RIA from the Fiscal Impact Assessment and the Memorandum, is likely to lead to a fragmentation of the policy process.

There is some discussion of plans to consolidate the Fiscal Impact Assessment form and the RIA forms so that ministries will be required to work with only one standardised form. The future relation of such a consolidated standard form with the Memorandum is not yet clear. Consolidation of these procedures should be an urgent priority.

Serious efforts should be made to strengthen the capacity for impact assessment, both in the General Secretariat and in ministries. The General Secretariat should align and harmonise all impact assessment requirements in order to avoid any duplication and overburdening of ministries.

10. Better Regulation

Macedonia does not have an explicit policy on better regulation. However, a number of elements of a better regulation policy have been put in place. For example, by a Decision of November 2006 the government introduced the regulatory reform generally known as the “regulatory guillotine”, with the key objective of minimising formalities and administrative obstacles for citizens and businesses generated by the existing legislation. The Decision also defined the procedure, institutional mechanisms and deadlines for implementation of the process.

This reform was implemented in three stages. The first stage was focused on identification of all valid primary and secondary legislation in the relevant policy areas and on an assessment of whether this legislation imposed administrative costs for citizens or businesses. A total of 2162 regulations were identified in both primary and secondary legislation. All legislation was reviewed by relevant working groups to assess the necessity of specific regulations, according to pre-defined criteria. A list of

existing regulations, prepared by the Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform, has been published in the Single Electronic Register of Regulations.

The second stage included an assessment of the recommendations of the working groups by the Regulatory Reforms Commission, mostly comprised of state secretaries. Broad consultations were conducted with NGOs, the business community, other interested parties, and experts in the relevant policy sectors. About 900 proposals for simplifying or abolishing regulations came from interested groups and businesses.

In the third stage, the Co-ordinative Committee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Economic Affairs, recommended 64 laws and 481 pieces of secondary legislation that needed to be simplified or abolished on the basis of previous assessments carried out in the process. By Decision the government abolished 341 pieces of secondary legislation that were obsolete or against the principles of a market economy. Amendments to the laws are underway.

The Sector for Economic Policies and Regulatory Reform continues to review proposals submitted to the government.

Significant progress has been made in simplifying or abolishing existing regulations that had created unnecessary burdens for citizens and businesses. The principles of better regulation are being integrated in the RIA process.

11. Transparency, Consultation and Communication with the Public

The February 2008 amendments to the Rules of Procedure introduced the Single Electronic Register of Regulations, which offers a consolidated overview of primary and secondary legislation by policy sector, thus ensuring transparency. The General Secretariat is responsible for publishing and managing the Register through the government website. The General Secretariat is also responsible for publishing in the *Official Gazette* the decrees, decisions and other documents formally adopted by the government. Parliament's secretariat is responsible for publishing the laws adopted by parliament in the *Official Gazette*.

Ministries are responsible for publishing all draft regulations on their websites and in the Single National Electronic Register of Regulations, thus giving an opportunity to all interested stakeholders to comment on the draft. In the case of amendments that change more than one-fifth of the provisions in the law, the ministry is responsible for publishing the complete law, clearly showing the amended provisions. All interested stakeholders may submit their comments within 10 days of the date of publication of the drafts. Ministries must prepare a report on the comments received and include a justification as to why comments were not accepted. The report is to be published on their website and in the Single National Electronic Register of Regulations. The proposed legislation and the reports on comments received should remain public (i.e. posted on the relevant website and in the Register) for one year after the law becomes effective. Once the RIA is operational, ministries will also be required to publish the results of the initial regulatory impact assessment in the Register.

In reality, very few ministries publish draft regulations on their websites or in the Single National Electronic Register of Regulations, which is still being developed. At the time of writing the Register included 703 laws and other regulations, listed at random.

A strategy to support co-operation with the NGO sector was adopted in January 2007, with the purpose of strengthening the participative policy process. A Unit for Co-operation with NGOs was established in the General Secretariat to support the implementation of the strategy and to serve as a link between the government and NGOs. In November 2008, the unit organised a seminar for NGOs on how to participate in consultations, in which 56 NGOs participated.

Regular information on weekly business and information on the positions of the government on specific issues are provided by the Government Spokesperson, who is supported by the Public Relations Sector in the General Secretariat. The Spokesperson co-operates with the Secretary General, state secretaries and the spokespersons in each of the ministries in order to provide co-ordinated information on all activities of the government.

The formal procedures and mechanisms for ensuring transparency are adequate and could allow for effective, participatory policy-making. These procedures have been partially implemented. The government should enforce the requirement that ministries comply with the rules and fully involve relevant stakeholders early on in the policy and law-drafting process.

12. Reform Dynamics

12.1 Indigenous reform actors, processes and powers

Strategic planning and policy development procedures and capacities have been developing over time and have reached the point when they can become the backbone of the reforms that link important processes, such as the budget process, the policy-making process and the EU integration process. There is a good understanding of the importance of a co-ordinated and analytical approach in the policy development process at all levels of the administrative system. Civil servants in ministries, the General Secretariat, the Secretariat for European Affairs and the Ministry of Finance appreciate the positive potential of such processes and are willing and able to implement them.

At this time, however, political support is critical for the full use and further development of strategic planning and policy development mechanisms and capacities. Unless fully utilised by decision-makers, there is a risk that these mechanisms and capacities will slowly decline. It is also important to maintain the continuity of well-trained staff in the General Secretariat and in ministries and to build capacity in the SEA.

12.2 Assistance activities

Further assistance to policy development capacities is needed. The projects planned by the Commission, the World Bank and the UK Global Opportunities Fund (Reuniting Europe) appear to be sufficient at this time (see details in section 3.2).

EC – Capacity-building of the General Secretariat (Sector for Strategy, Planning and Monitoring and Sector for Policy Analysis and Co-ordination) to strengthen the capacity of the government (and line ministries) to carry out strategic planning and policy-making, monitoring and co-ordination: The project will be implemented under the twinning light mechanism and supported by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) 2007.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK – Global Opportunities Fund (Reuniting Europe) – After the completion of the two previous phases, it is planned to continue the support over the coming three years. The third phase of the project will focus on four key components: (1) improving the quality of legislation through the development of capacities in ministries for RIA and for transposition of legislation supported by the RIA process; (2) strengthening of the NPAA Working Groups – which will represent the core supporting task groups for future negotiations – through the development of their negotiation skills and the implementation of a pre-screening procedure in three selected negotiation chapters; (3) further development of human resources management capacities in ministries; (4) Communication for Europe – development of an information management system disseminating information through regular briefing notes on key developments in the EU accession process.

World Bank – The general objective of technical assistance provided by the World Bank is to assist the General Secretariat, the Ministry of Finance and the Civil Servants Agency in developing and implementing a comprehensive strategic prioritisation process, which takes into account strategic planning and policy-making, budget formulation and public investment programming, and human resources management and links proposed strategies with achieved outcomes.