



SIGMA Ministerial Conference
Good Public Governance – Delivering for Citizens and Businesses
13-14 December 2017

Welcoming speech on 13 December 2017
Mari Kiviniemi, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD

Dear Ambassadors, Ministers and colleagues,

I am genuinely pleased to welcome you to the OECD. Tonight we open the SIGMA Ministerial Conference on Good Public Governance. I am impressed with the high-level presence here tonight and sincerely hope that this shows broader commitment for building a well-functioning public administration for your citizens and businesses. I thank you all for coming.

SIGMA was created in 1992 – 25 years ago. This is a quarter of a century of dedicated work for building good public administration in partnership with the EU and the OECD. For me, SIGMA is a testament that partnership between two large, international organisations can be productive, successful and long-lasting.

SIGMA has worked with reformers in 31 public administrations from Central and Eastern Europe and Northern African countries. When SIGMA was created it worked with five countries. Today we work with 18 genuine partners. And this partnership continues to grow.

SIGMA is unique in many ways. We offer our partners a long-term partnership with hands-on support by peers and expert practitioners from other countries. We analyse and advise in discreet or public ways, as needed and agreed. We support those who want to improve public governance.

SIGMA has already 13 “graduates”, all full-fledged EU member countries today, of which seven are also OECD members. We have achieved a lot together. Many of these countries are represented here tonight. Thank you ambassadors for joining us.

A well-functioning public administration is like the nervous system of the human body. If it does not function well, there are real consequences to the quality of life of people. Improving governance is a common characteristic for all countries wanting to progress and strive. There is a reason why the OECD slogan is “Better policies for better lives”. Let’s not forget for whom we are doing this work.

Dear guests,

Allow me another step back in time. The first SIGMA Paper published was on the topic of public service top management. It called for dedicated attention for ensuring the highest possible quality within top civil service. This is still a key topic today. Without professional and capable top managers, there is nobody to make the machinery of government work. Having a professional senior civil service provides any government with the necessary capacity to implement its political programme.

Distinguished ministers, leaders and managers of public administration,

You are the ones that can and will make a difference in building a strong and responsive public administration. I can truly say that SIGMA is an ambassador of good public governance. But seeing all of you here tonight make me realise that, in many ways, we are all ambassadors of good public governance. I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to network, share your lessons and inspire each other with new ideas.

Thank you very much.