

SIGMA

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Support Government Goals

Developing
Administrations Under Law

French Public Finances and
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Forum Focus

Using NGOs to Improve
Public Policy

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Public Management Forum

A Bimonthly Newsletter for Public Administration Practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe

Broadening Inputs into the Policy-making Process

by *Michal Ben-Gera*

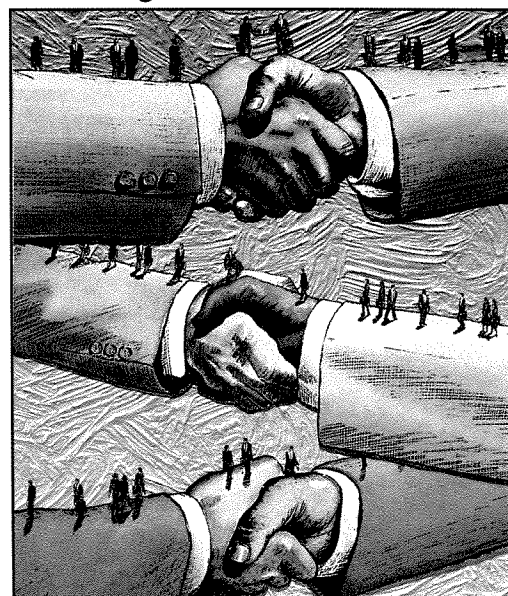
The process of public policy-making in democracies creates a continuous, dynamic link between the government, public administration, populace and institutions of civil society. Within the public administration, policy experts, analysts, researchers and senior advisers are responsible for developing policies for consideration and decision by the government.

Outside the government, the public at large, interest and lobby groups, media and a variety of institutes and organisations generate information, analysis and pressure with the objective of influencing both the policy developers and the decision-makers. Bringing these diverse elements together in an effective and productive way is crucial for democratic legitimacy and for good public policy.

It is often pointed out, however, that it is not easy to find the right balance and fruitful synergy between internal processes and outside inputs. Too much attention to outside inputs can lead to paralysis, policy distortions and the undermining of electoral outcomes. Yet too little attention can lead to a poor information base for policy, public disaffection and withdrawal of legitimacy. This is why many OECD Member country governments have developed procedures for public consultations to maximise their utility while still allowing the elected authorities to govern in the public interest.

The Contribution of Consultations

Good consultations can be costly and time-consuming, so it is important to ensure that any consultation process is carefully designed, proportionate to the contemplated policy and well-targeted. For example, for a policy on technical standards in a specific industry, informal consultations with firms affected in that industry is likely to be sufficient. But for a fundamental reform of social



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policy, such as pensions or health care, it is probably essential to design an inclusive, formal, multi-stage consultation process involving affected populations and their organisations, delivery agencies and their professional staff, local communities and authorities and the public at large.

In many countries, the most far-reaching policy -- constitutional reform -- requires a referendum, which is the ultimate -- and probably most expensive -- form of consultation. (Polish voters participated in just such a referendum in late May, approving a new Constitution proposed by the Government and the *Sejm*).

The objective of the consultations should also affect the process. Governments may carry out consultations for one or more of the following purposes: to gather information; to assess support for alternative policy options; to resolve conflicts among opposing interests; to build support for the government's preferred option and to ensure co-operation in implementation after the decision has been made. Each of these would require a different approach, and different types of materials and preparations to make it effective.

Continued on p.11 ➤

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Europe and Public Administration Reform

In recognition of the increasingly influential role that European integration has on the agendas of central and eastern European governments – not to mention its inseparable link with public administration reform – this issue of PMF introduces a new rubric entitled “Governance and European Integration.”

The first appearance of this new section is linked to the theme of policy-making. The rubric features an article by an experienced government communicator, Gábor Szentiványi, Spokesman at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who explains the importance of effective government communications in both domestic and foreign policy-making (the latter including preparation for EU accession).

“Governance and European Integration” also was the subject of a conference held as this newsletter goes to press. It was organised by the Netherlands which had focused on governance as a central theme for its Presidency. The conference (held in Rotterdam, 29-30 May 1997) launched a dialogue between representatives of EU Member states and the ten associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe on different aspects of governance, including the need for aspiring EU Members to have professional public administrations. The goal was to raise the priority given to governance improvement in the negotiation for EU membership. The argument is that good governance is recommended for European development in any case. Membership and accession negotiations increases its relevance.

The conference and outcome of the EU avis process as it relates to governance, will be addressed in the next issue of PMF, slated for distribution after the summer.

Bart W. Édes - Editor-in Chief

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Think Tanks Contribute to Government Policy-making

by Erik C. Johnson

Public policy research institutes or "think tanks" affect policy-making in democracies around the world. Usually acting independently of government, they concentrate on reconciling citizen needs with the realities of politics and limited resources – a job which is consistent with that of government.

Public policy guru Yehezkel Dror defines think tanks as "islands of excellence applying full-time interdisciplinary scientific thinking to the in-depth improvement of policy-making, as a main bridge between power and knowledge." As this definition emphasises, think tanks strengthen the decision-making capacity of government by transmitting policy-relevant information (knowledge) from a variety of sources to the ears and eyes of policy-makers (power). Their work benefits policy-makers by casting light on problems as well as possible solutions.

Think tanks make policy-making less political. By providing policy-makers with information backed up by research, think tanks allow leaders to make enlightened decisions. Using empirical studies, opinion surveys, cost-benefit analysis and various forecasting techniques, think tanks develop objective proposals for the improvement of public policy. This is a service not only to policy-makers but to society as a whole.

Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe

The role of think tanks in stimulating the flow of ideas is becoming increasingly important in Central and Eastern Europe. Among the larger of the increasing number of such institutions in the region are the Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Financial Research Ltd. (Hungary); Lithuania Free Market Institute; Gdansk Institute for Market Economics; and Institute for Economic Studies (Czech Republic).

Some of the region's think tanks existed in one form or another under communism, while others have been created from scratch. The older

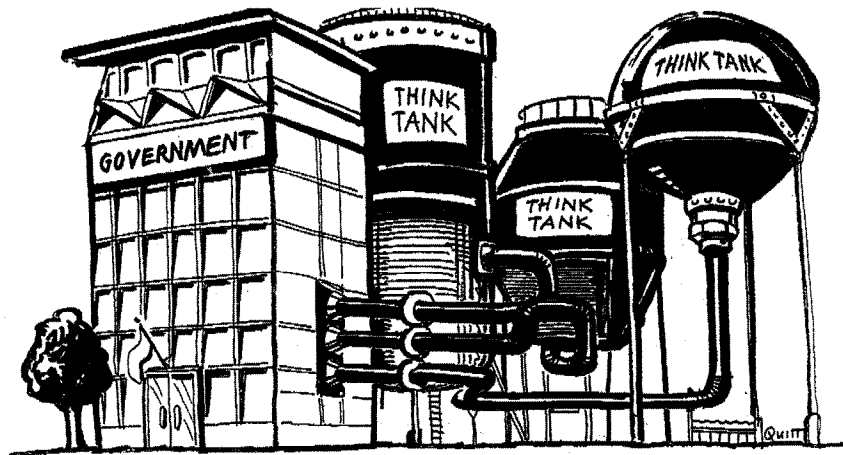


Illustration: Lucie Quin

institutions were generally government agencies until budget cuts forced them to find alternative sources of funding. In Hungary, this occurred more than once. For example, Financial Research Ltd. was once the arm of the Ministry of Finance charged with the task of reforming the country's financial system. When the institution was cut from the government in 1987, a few leading researchers sought funds for its survival. Since that time, Financial Research has diversified its funding sources while maintaining strong links to policy-makers.

Most central and eastern European think tanks emerged after 1989, drawing founding members from a variety of backgrounds. Perhaps the strongest impetus was the exodus of often underpaid researchers from academia. Coming from a broad range of disciplines, researchers sought to escape the often stagnant and inflexible academic environment, driven by the hope of playing a more active role in shaping the new institutions and policies of democratic society.

Different Approaches

Think tanks use a broad range of approaches to the improvement of policy-making: some direct, others more indirect. *Advocacy-oriented* groups represent one distinctive approach. These think tanks make recommendations or offer criticism of existing policies. Once proposals are made, they are typically pursued by think tank staff members until a decision is reached. At the other end of the spectrum are the *education-oriented* groups. Their

approach to influencing public policy uses means, such as conferences and workshops, books and articles, and interaction with the media. These activities do not aim to affect specific policy decisions, but rather guide scholarly debate and shape the perceptions of future leaders.

Services to Government

The principal customer of think tanks is government. Since their agenda focuses on the improvement of public policy, think tanks must strive for close relations with government. Even though some think tanks are careful to protect the independence of their research from government influence, they must still be capable of determining the priorities of policy-makers. Otherwise, they risk producing policy recommendations that are either unpopular or irrelevant.

Think tanks also offer government education and training through conferences, workshops and seminars; the capacity to prepare documents in legal format and draft legislation; and a recruitment pool of potential public servants skilled in policy research, analysis and formulation. ♦

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Europe and the Administration of National Public Finances in France

by Benoît Chevauchez



Courtesy Pignon

Benoît Chevauchez

As a founding member of the European Communities, France played a part in setting up European institutions. For example, the French administration inspired and contributed to the shaping of the European Commission's legal and financial procedures. The inverse is also true. As the European Union was established, it progressively and deeply modified French public administration, specifically those bodies in charge of managing public finance. Such changes, however, have not always proved to be smooth. Indeed, French experience shows that administrative changes are not achieved once and for all, but that they are part of an on-going process.

European budgetary regulations have led to some major changes in French financial administration. In matters of revenue, the main change has been in the field of customs. Not only have Member countries lost their hold on customs duties, but the elimination of borders and the lowering of tariffs have reduced the financial importance of duties. These changes have fundamentally altered French traditions: the collection of customs duties is no longer the primary duty of customs officers. France has shifted new tasks to these officers, such as the management of excise duties and the

surveillance of illegal trading (drugs, capital, counterfeit goods and money, etc.). Europe has partially transformed customs from a financial service into a police force.

On the expenditure side, the Community budget has led to new developments within the French administration. For agricultural expenditure -- which is very high in France -- a key role has been given to agricultural agencies (*offices agricoles*) that are directly funded by the Community. But under French law, these are public agencies under the control of the French Government. Such an awkward situation creates a significant problem for the national budget. The European Commission requests that Member states reimburse European agricultural funds that have been dispersed by agricultural agencies in conditions that the Commission deems irregular. Thus, the national budget of the Ministry of Agriculture regularly receives heavy European "fines". The reform of the Community Agricultural Policy (PAC) carries along with it the risk of financial difficulties between the Commission and national administrations. European requirements related to programming of structural funds spending also present challenges for national administrations.

In the field of indirect taxes that are harmonised at the Community level, the development of European institutions has important administrative consequences. Concerning VAT (which accounts for 40 per cent of French budget income), national legislation is totally subordinate to the Union. French legal texts must be negotiated in Brussels. For VAT collection, daily co-operation among colleagues of tax administrations must take place. Fears of tax evasion connected to the present system of intra-Community VAT increase the need for shared information and databases, co-ordinated cross-border operations, etc.

Two major conclusions may be drawn from the French experience.

1) It is essential that financial administrations develop relationships based on trust with their colleagues in the Commission. Trust is an absolute necessity for efficient management, and it develops over the long term. Negotiations on EU enlargement will be an occasion to further strengthen these working relationships.

2) Training in European matters for civil servants specialising in financial administration is a lengthy undertaking. They are usually highly specialised experts with knowledge and experience limited to the French system. First, they must be exposed to other administrative traditions. Then, they must acquaint themselves with the mass of legislation that is the *acquis communautaire*.

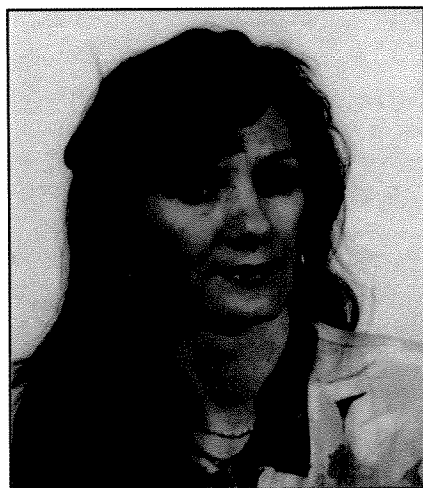
Linguistic training is also important. While French is commonly used for work performed in Brussels, cross-border co-operation requires some knowledge of other European languages. The building of the "large single market" together with the increased risk of fraud, whether in the field of taxes or Community subsidies, make it an absolute necessity to be able to communicate on a daily basis with neighbouring administrations.

At a later stage, membership of the European Monetary Union will give rise to considerable institutional changes in Member states. This again demonstrates that the adaptation of financial institutions to Europe is never complete. It is an on-going process that closely follows the pace of Community-building. ♦

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NISPAcee Conference Highlights Professionalism Among Public Servants

by Jak Jabes



Courtesy Photo

Ludmila Gajdosova, NISPAcee

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (NISPAcee) was held in Tallinn on 23-25 April. One hundred public servants, trainers, academics and researchers attended this year's conference whose general theme was the 'professionalisation' of public servants in Central and Eastern Europe. The programme was divided into four simultaneous workshops where specialists converged to discuss themes on which they had written papers or in which they were interested. The conference proceedings will be edited by Jak Jabes and published in 1997.

"See you in Prague next year where we will discuss public administration and social issues." With these words, Alena Brunovska closed NISPAcee's fifth annual conference. Brunovska stepped down as chair of the network's Steering Committee after two successful, action-filled years. The Committee elected László Varadi of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences to fill the spot. Ludmila Gajdosova, pictured above, continues in her staff post as NISPAcee Executive Secretary.

Workshops Stimulate Discussion

Conference organisers had set out the

premise that institutes of public administration should promote the architecture of professional administration and deepen the understanding of how public administration fits into a system of constitutional safeguards and effective governance. During the three-day event, European accession and its impact on the public administration were discussed in various workshops.

In workshops addressing public servants' attitudes, ethics and corruption, and productivity and service quality, participants highlighted how transition had affected their systems. The conference's general theme found its way into the different workshops; topics were strongly interrelated.

For example, the process of privatisation and how it affected public attitudes was discussed in the workshop on attitudes, while the same topic was debated from the perspective of ethical behaviour in the workshop on ethics and corruption. This varied treatment and analysis of issues provided a complementary picture of a complex topic.

Participants in one workshop studied the role of technical assistance in training, identifying the linkages between the donor community and recipients, and pointing out the pitfalls which both parties to the process should take care to avoid. Developed as guidelines, these principles could have positive implications for how aid contributes to training and development of civil services.

Planning for Next Year

During the closing plenary meeting, and the business meeting which followed, participants made various suggestions for the future. Given the fruitful work undertaken in the workshops, some suggested that the same topics be kept for next year's

conference. Future work on a code of ethics, the role of public opinion surveys in advancing reforms, training of mayors, and a serious (in contrast to an impressionistic) study of bureaucratic behaviour during the communist era were all suggested.

At the business meeting, Martin Potucek of Prague's Charles University and Tiina Randma of Tartu University (Estonia) were elected to become Steering Committee members. Prague will host NISPAcee's Sixth Annual Conference in 1998.

The next major event on the Network's activity schedule is the annual "summer school workshop." NISPAcee has decided that the focus of this year's workshop, to be held in Budapest in September, will be the teaching of law in public administration programmes.

NISPAcee's "Civil Service Forum" devoted to improving training systems for a professional civil service will take place 23-24 October in Paris. This event will be funded by the French government through the *Institut international d'administration publique*.

NISPAcee has grown to become a professional association with 60 institutional members in 17 countries. Many western institutions are associate members. In addition to the French Government, the Austrian Government, SIGMA, the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, and the Pew Charitable Funds support NISPAcee activities. ♦

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Administrative Procedures and Supervision of the Administration

by Professor Denis Galligan

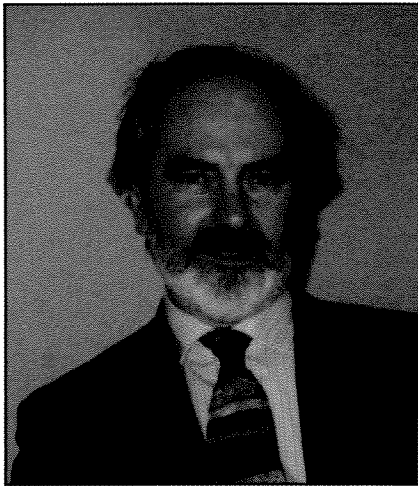


Photo: Bethinda Hephlin

Professor Denis Galligan

Many central and eastern European governments are working to establish oversight bodies to provide a check over actions of the executive and to ensure that the administration's treatment of citizens is in accordance with the law. A forthcoming SIGMA publication looks at administrative procedural acts and the supervision of administration in five countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

These are interesting and important times for administrative government in Europe's formerly communist countries. A professional, stable and effective public administration is recognised as being a vital part of a modern, democratic society. The realisation of that objective depends very much on a properly trained civil service, the creation of sound administrative departments and agencies and the provision of adequate resources.

Good administrative government also has a legal dimension, since it is fundamental that government and administration should be conducted within a framework of legal standards, by responsible institutions and according to suitable procedures.

The idea of administration under law means that ministers, departments and agencies should be created by law, have their powers and duties clearly

stated in law and should be answerable, when challenged, to the law. Administration under law also means that the relationship between the citizen and the administration should not depend on the will or the whim of officials, but should be mediated by legal principles. And, finally, administration under law means that any minister, official or agency ought to be subject to the supervision and scrutiny of other institutions and authorities of both a judicial and non-judicial kind.

Comparative Study Forthcoming

This is the background against which a forthcoming report, *Administrative Procedures and the Supervision of Administration in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia and Albania*, has been prepared. The report, which I authored at the request of SIGMA, consists of two distinct parts. The first half of the report addresses primary acts and decisions of administrative bodies in the five countries covered, while the second concentrates on the institutions and mechanisms of supervision of the administration in those countries. Research for the report included interviews with officials and practitioners in the region, as well as close observation of the daily workings of the administration in each of the countries.

The main purpose of administrative procedural acts is to regulate the way administrative bodies of various kinds make their decisions. In most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, general codes of administrative procedure have been adopted, some dating back to the communist period. Others have been devised in more recent years. The report's objective is to analyse the current codes of procedure or, where there are no general codes -- as is the case in Albania and Estonia -- to analyse any general laws relating to administration procedures.

The basis of analysis is, first, to identify the general approach and structure of each system; secondly, to examine each set of procedures against certain basic procedural values, such as the participation

of parties, the openness of the process, the need for impartiality, the giving of reasons and the provision for appeal and recourse. The analysis concludes in each case with a comparison with other countries and the identification of areas and issues which need attention.

Supervision of the Administration

The second part of the report is concerned with the various forms of supervision of the administration. These divide very broadly into supervision by judicial bodies; supervision by special authorities, such as ombudsmen or parliamentary commissioners; and supervision by parliamentary committees. The objectives of this section are to analyse the forms of supervision, assess how they work in practice, offer some comparisons across countries and identify issues which ought to be considered by each country.

All five countries have introduced judicial review of administrative action, although how it is working in practice varies greatly. Some countries have adopted the ombudsman idea in respect of certain areas of administration, but others remain cautious about it. All countries have a comprehensive system of parliamentary committees, but in general their effectiveness in scrutinising the administration is rather limited.

It could be useful to practitioners interested in administrative oversight to extend the analysis of this report to other countries of the region. This report, it should be mentioned, attempts to go beyond purely legal analysis. In any system, there is always a great gap between the law as it appears on the statute book or in the judicial decision, and the reality. The gap is often particularly wide in the area of public administration reform. ♦

Professor Denis Galligan is Director, University of Oxford's Centre for Socio-Legal Studies (Wolfson College), and visiting professor at Budapest's Central Eastern University. He may be reached in England at tel (44.18.65) 28.42.20; fax (44.18.65) 28.42.21. The report cited in this article will be available from SIGMA in the summer of 1997.

Integrating Multiple Interests into Policy

by Sally Washington

More open participatory and transparent decision-making has become a feature of modern governance. Recently, democratic governments have confronted increasing demands of the citizenry to have a greater say in what public officials do and how they do it. This subject is addressed in a new PUMA publication, Consultation and Communications: Integrating Multiple Interests into Policy, Managing Media Relations.

In response to pressure from citizens demanding a greater say in policy formulation, OECD Member country governments are becoming increasingly proactive in soliciting views of the public using a variety of consultation and information mechanisms. In doing so, these governments have become increasingly aware that involving the public in the decision-making process can improve policy effectiveness, enhance responsiveness to citizens, and strengthen the legitimacy of policy outcomes.

Yet consultation is not risk-free. Public involvement in policy deliberation can lead to costly delays, administrative and information overload and subsequent decision-making inertia. There also are dangers that well-organised and vocal interest groups will "capture" the policy process, or at least overshadow the views of the silent majority or the overall public interest. Moreover, the direct involvement of the public in policy-making raises important issues for public accountability and decision-making quality.

Senior Officials Deliberate

In autumn 1996, senior officials from centres of government in OECD

countries -- cabinet secretaries, and heads of offices of prime ministers and presidents -- met in Mexico to analyse how governments are involving the public in policy deliberations through various consultation and information mechanisms. They also examined how the media affects the work of government.

A new PUMA report, authored by policy-making systems expert Sally Washington, is based on issues papers prepared for the discussion by these senior officials. The report's first part, to which Professor Glyn Davis of Griffith University (Australia) contributed, addresses the integration of multiple interests into policy. The first section raises issues related to four main themes:

1. What pressures are driving the demand for greater public participation in the policy process?
2. What are the benefits and costs of greater public involvement?
3. How can governments best manage public participation through effective consultation?
4. What are the implications of greater public participation for public accountability and decision-making quality?

The second part of the report focuses on the government's relationship with the media, including what governments can do (and are doing) to establish a more constructive and symbiotic relationship with the media. On page 10 of this issue of *PMF*, Gábor Szentiványi addresses the role of the media and government communications in establishing public policy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Government Must Arbitrate

The PUMA report concludes that public consultation -- in more interactive, inclusive and innovative forms -- will be increasingly important as public demands and the possibilities of new technology increase the pressures, and the opportunities, for governments to go straight to the people in search of policy solutions. But the fact remains that government is the only legitimate policy arbitrator, and must be accountable for final decisions.

Government's role in a democracy must be to define and defend the public interest. This requires more than simply summing up multiple views. It requires governments to analyse the overall impacts of policy options and to weigh up and choose between competing demands from diverse groups.

Government leaders have a balancing act in front of them. In particular, they must react to demands for more public participation while countering criticism of pandering to public opinion. In addition, they have to respond to calls for strong and decisive leadership while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to defining policy blueprints. ♦

To order a copy of Consultation and Communications (Public Management Occasional Paper No. 17), contact OECD Publications Service, 2, rue Andre-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France. Tel: (33.1) 49.10.42.83; fax (33.1) 49.10.42.76; e-mail: compte.pubsing@oecd.org. See also articles on pages 1, 3, 8 and 10.

NGOs Make An Important Contribution to Policy Development

by Jonathan Kimball

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are an important part of any functioning democracy. NGOs provide valuable services for citizens, filling the gap that exists between the state sector and the business sector. They can, for example, care for mentally-handicapped children, advocate the rights of minorities or monitor the media.

NGOs can also play an important role in producing and advocating public policy. This can be done in a number of different ways, including drafting new laws or commenting on existing legislation, developing new ideas or solutions for existing problems, increasing the role of citizens in the decision-making process or acting as a "watchdog" to ensure that laws that were passed are correctly implemented.

NGOs as Legislative Assistants

The specialisation of an NGO's staff allows the organisation to focus on researching, understanding and developing solutions for specific issues. This is in contrast to government officials who are often constrained by agendas covering a wide-range of topics affecting all segments of the population.

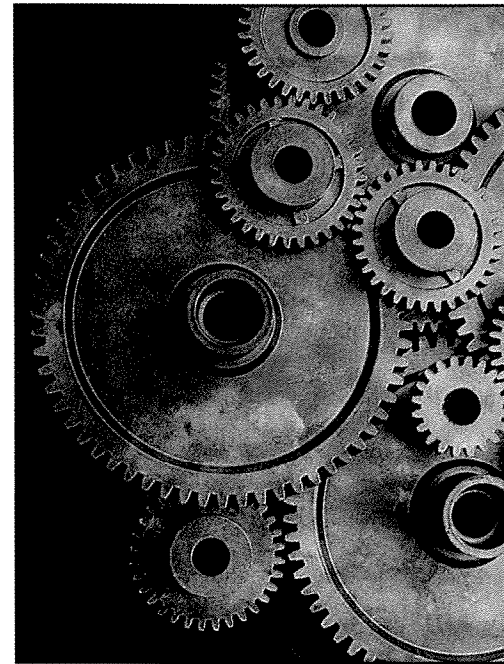
This point is especially pertinent for central and eastern European legislators, their staff and other government officials. For example, unlike their counterparts in Western Europe and North America, parliamentarians from Central and Eastern Europe are rarely able to employ more than one staff person. In fact, many parliamentarians rely solely on party-employed researchers for the background information needed to tackle complex problems that arise in emerging democracies. By working with NGOs, these parliamentarians can increase their effectiveness in promoting public policies, effectively approaching a level similar to legislators in older, more established democracies.

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, NGOs and government officials have co-operated in order to improve existing or pending legislation. In Hungary, for example, the Ministry of Culture and Education approached the Hungarian office of United Way International (which administers the Democracy Network Program in Hungary) to organise a series of public debates on the proposed *Law on the Activities of Public Use Organisations*. As a result of these debates, amendments were presented to the ministry officials and parliamentarians, effectively bringing the public's concerns into the decision-making process.

A second example involved the Lithuanian Council of Youth Organisations (CLYO). In 1995, CLYO held a series of seminars to discuss the development of youth programmes in Lithuania. One seminar called "Youth Policy in Lithuania" involved two members of the Lithuanian Parliament. During the seminar, the participants agreed that CLYO would prepare proposals and recommendations for legislating youth policy. The two parliamentarians agreed that they would then introduce those policies onto the floor of the Parliament. Not only was this proposal passed, but a Commission for Youth Affairs was established to continue to monitor the state of Lithuania's youth.

NGOs as Innovators

In the increasingly competitive market for funding and influence, NGOs are forced to develop innovative approaches to complex problems. Elected officials, their staff, and other government employees can look towards NGOs in order to turn these ideas into action. Policy-makers, working with the NGO or on their own, can use an NGO's proposals to further develop specific policies, and provide legitimisation for their own ideas. In 1996, for example, Lithuania's ruling party used the research and recommendations of the

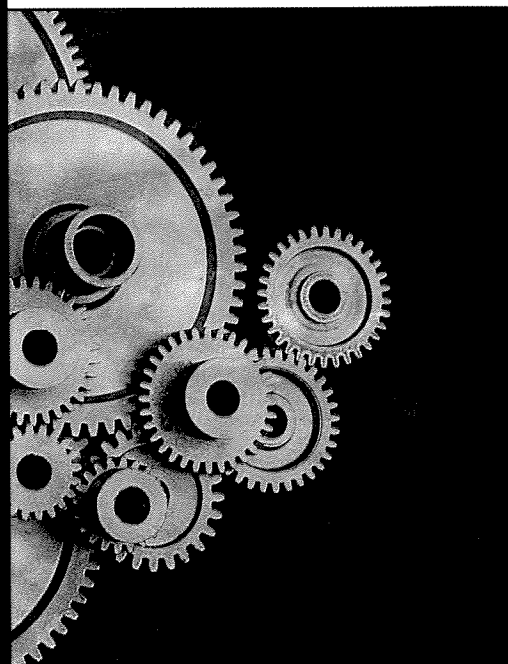


Lithuanian Free Market Institute (LFMI) to design its tax policy.

After conducting extensive research, LFMI documented that one of the largest barriers to economic growth in Lithuania was its inhibiting tax system. To draw attention to this issue, LFMI invited leading domestic and international tax experts, government officials, parliamentarians, and journalists to a December 1995 conference focusing on the Lithuanian tax system.

During the conference, the participating government officials and parliamentarians were introduced to possible policy alternatives that could improve the effectiveness of the country's tax structure. LFMI capitalised on this new awareness by submitting, to the appropriate governmental offices, a comprehensive tax reform proposal that would, among other things, replace indirect taxation with direct taxation.

In the months following the conference, one of the participating government officials, Mindaugas Stankevicius, became Lithuania's



The Image Bank/G © Y. Chapman

Prime Minister. When developing his party's tax-reform programme, he sought LFMI's advice and guidance in implementing some of the ideas voiced by LFMI at the conference and in their proposal.

The extensive research undertaken by LFMI provided the ruling party with well-documented, trustworthy data that could be used to further their political and economic goals. The co-operation between the ruling party and LFMI was not based on party affiliation, but rather on LFMI's innovative approach to solving problems inherent in Lithuania's tax system.

NGOs as Cost-savers

NGOs can also offer innovative solutions to problems that save the government money, while at the same time insuring the interests of the community. Often, government officials are too far removed from the effects of government policies to fully understand the impact of their policies on the community. This is not the fault of the officials, but merely a consequence of their sizeable legislative portfolios.

NGOs, on the other hand, tend to work much closer to their constituents. As a result, solutions to problems that NGOs develop are often more realistic, less bureaucratic, and more cost-effective and efficient than can be developed within a government institution. In the spring of 1997, a Slovak NGO, People and Water, produced just this kind of a result.

After more than 25 years of discussion and proposals, the Slovak government decided to build a large dam outside of the eastern Slovak village of Tichy Potok. The purpose of this dam was to improve the quality and quantity of drinking water in eastern Slovakia. The government apparently did not, however, take into consideration all of the negative effects that building such a dam might have on the community itself. Although the villagers understood that under a democratic government they had the right to express their views on the proposal, they did not understand how to exercise this right. This is where People and Water entered the debate.

People and Water undertook a large study to determine the state of drinking water in Slovakia and how the proposed dam would improve or degrade the quality of water, and life, for the surrounding villages. The study determined that overall consumption of drinking water in Slovakia had declined by 25 per cent over the past four years; 30 per cent of all drinking water was lost due to bad pipes; and the Starina dam, already active in eastern Slovakia, was only operating at 38 per cent capacity.

With the involvement of the local population, national media and local and national politicians, People and Water convinced the Ministry of the Environment to replace the dam proposal with its own "Blue Alternative." This plan, which cost one-tenth the cost of building the dam, used the region's natural water resources, thus posing no threat to the region and the villages.

NGOs as Watchdogs

Finally, NGOs can play an important role in ensuring that existing legislation is properly enforced. Whether monitoring the government, business or citizens, NGOs are able to devote a large amount of effort and attention to tracking legislation that affects, for example, the environment, elderly, minorities or local businesses. This can benefit policy-makers since the results of the NGO's scrutiny can be used to justify the action of their own policies, or as ammunition for a call to repeal or introduce legislation.

By monitoring the Romanian Parliament, for example, the Romanian Helsinki Committee (RHC) has influenced legislation and pressured the government to adhere to the Helsinki Accords. By producing honest and well-documented accounts of parliamentary activities, the RHC has gained the trust and respect of most legislators. In fact, RHC's documents were welcomed in both chambers of the Parliament, and in many cases MPs sought the opinion of RHC staff in order to bolster their knowledge of certain human rights issues.

By working closely with NGOs, government officials are able to increase their ability to develop well-researched and responsible legislation. This is especially important in central and eastern European countries since well-paid, large staffs are not available to the majority of ministries or elected officials. Thus, NGO and government co-operation not only serves the community, but it also serves the politician. This co-operation, as seen in the examples above, can contribute to the development of a mature and consolidated democracy. ♦

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Effective Government Communications Supports Transition a

by Gábor Szentiványi

Democratic governments have an obligation to provide information to the population. To reach large numbers of people, they rely heavily on the media, which filters and analyses information from authorities before disseminating it to the public. Central and eastern European (CEE) governments must develop well-planned, co-ordinated communications activities to reinforce policy goals related to transition and European integration. Moreover, government information campaigns (typically for "safety" messages about wise rules for the road, smoking, etc.) and porte-parole activities (which communicate political party messages or "propaganda") should be carried out by distinct communications offices in order to maintain government's credibility.

If the Latin saying "*Navigare necesse est*" meant for centuries that growth was unattainable without shipping, the slogan at the very end of the 20th century should be, "Communications *necesse est*," or, more bluntly, "you won't succeed without communications."

For CEE governments, communications is not only an obligation set by participatory democracy to provide information to the citizenry, but also a key to success in the complicated and unfinished task of transition to a full multi-party democracy and market economy.

Governments from Lisbon to Tallinn are taking measures aimed at meeting – or at least approaching – Maastricht criteria. For some states this means making welfare societies more competitive to meet EMU requirements. For others, like the majority of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, it includes fundamental changes to meet EU membership requirements.

Most CEE countries have set ambitious goals to join European/Euro-Atlantic political, economic and defence structures in a relatively short time. Well-designed, co-ordinated and properly-timed communications activities are essential not only to succeed in these enormous tasks, but also to secure confidence among easily shifting voters; avert or

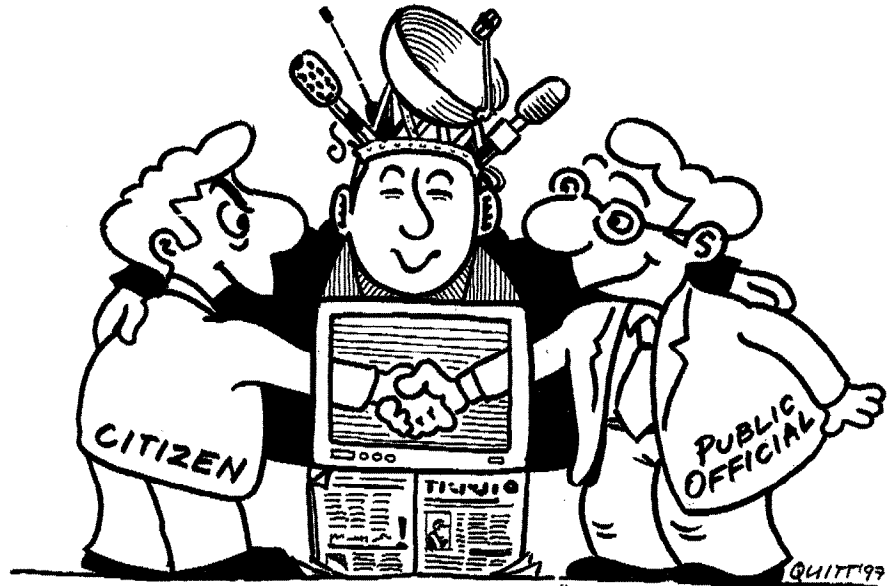


Illustration: Ilusko Quitt

manage crises that always seem to occur and to help co-ordinate among different interest groups.

These functions of communications are more often understood by government leaders since they are vital to their paramount goal: re-election. Thus, taking all of the above into consideration, government communications should play a role in:

- surveying opinions and interests during the period of drafting legislation and preparing government decisions;
- implementing decisions by securing public support and understanding through explaining the motives behind and benefits of a given decision;
- preventing crises and finding solutions for unexpected developments and
- formulating the image of the government in general and of its key politicians in particular.

Resistance to Centralisation

The scope of transition and the complexity of many government projects would warrant centralised, tightly-controlled communications activities. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, "centralised information policy" is a sensitive matter. Before the changes of 1989-

1990, government information offices acted as "licensing authorities," spreading propaganda and occasionally exercising censorship.

The newly independent free media in this part of Europe remains overly cautious about "being fed" centrally-packaged information. The general trend of decentralisation of government and decision-making also counters efforts to centralise information services.

Our experience in Hungary shows, however, that strategic communications programmes are possible to develop and implement if the parties involved realise that they benefit from it; co-ordination is voluntary; implementation is decentralised to a large extent and government agencies work closely with fast-delivering, results-oriented private sector firms.

The only centrally-provided addition that is always welcome is funding. Areas that offer possibilities for such co-ordinated and concerted efforts in Hungary are the internal communications strategy for EU accession (partly financed by Phare); the communications strategy to promote NATO membership; matters related to the country's external image or a major national programme to transform the social welfare system.

! European Integration

Sharing Makes Sense

To make government communications work effectively, both political appointees and senior civil servants must be convinced of its benefits. They should realise that in a democratic society, the practice of holding back information must be supplanted by the sharing of information. This is true not only because it is “nicer” to reporters and the public, but because withheld information inevitably leaks, and to enter into lengthy explanations afterwards is always worse (time- and resource-consuming, undermines intended message, etc.) than being pro-active and setting the agenda.

The media, both public and private, play an outstanding role in relaying information because of their accessibility, efficiency and low cost – even if they distort the message to a certain degree. To be able to use the media, one has to package one’s messages as newsworthy information and be quick in responding to developments. Though government services cannot keep up with the speed of electronic media, being late in addressing issues might lead to missing important opportunities.

Strategic decisions and key actions of the government should be explained in depth to senior writers, national columnists and other opinion-formers. These people appreciate involvement, insider information and an exchange of views – sometimes personalised – as opposed to direct government information. In the Hungarian Foreign Service, we witness that sharing information, and explaining the options before – and motives after – a foreign policy decision is made, generates support through understanding, regardless of the political orientation of the given media.

On more complex, long-term issues, such as EU or NATO accession, a whole range of non-governmental organisations, research institutions, think tanks and experts should be involved. They could serve as intermediaries between government

and society, and also act as credible third-party endorsers.

Need to Train Personnel

If all of the above-mentioned elements of a co-ordinated government communications programme are in place, we face this obvious question: who will conduct it?

My experience in Central and Eastern Europe shows that most government agencies lack professionally trained communications personnel. They fill posts either with “general purpose” civil servants who are sometimes too reserved for the job, or former reporters who usually lack the confidence of the bureaucracy with which they must work.

Until we attain a professional government communications system with well-trained personnel – as in, for instance, the United Kingdom – my suggestion is to combine the skills of in-house staff with a variety of private sector communication firms and professional research institutions. ♦

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► *continued from p. 1*

For example, if the purpose is to collect information, it might be more efficient to consult interest groups separately. But if the objective is to resolve conflicts regarding policy options, it may be useful to meet with them together to increase their mutual understanding and thus the chances of a compromise.

External Research

Another consideration is the use governments might make of outside

institutions, such as non-governmental organisations, universities, research institutes and think tanks. In many cases, these organisations can make a valuable contribution to policy-making by conducting scientific analysis and developing policy options. If they are seen by interest groups and the public at large as politically unbiased and intellectually respectable, they can also act as valuable and relatively inexpensive legitimators of policy choices.

A number of articles in this issue of *PMF* examine some of these questions. While they approach the subject of broadening inputs into the policy-making process from different perspectives, they all provide insights on how a balance might be achieved between listening, analysing and deciding.

Another input into policy-making is Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) or the *ex ante* assessment of how proposed legislation and regulations will affect a country’s economy, society, budget and existing laws, international agreements, etc. RIA provides factual information on the expected outcomes of decisions. Decision-makers should take this information into account in addition to other considerations which affect government decision-making, such as constitutional requirements, political commitments, ideology or international agreements. RIA is especially relevant for countries of Central and Eastern Europe in light of European integration and the need for economic management.

New SIGMA publications on the topic of RIA and law drafting include: *Assessing the Impacts of Proposed Laws and Regulations* (SIGMA Paper No. 13); *Checklist on Law Drafting Procedures and Techniques*; and *Civil Service Legislation: Checklist on Secondary Legislation (and Other Regulatory Instruments)*. ♦

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Public Administration in the News

Estonia Axes EuroMinister Post

The Estonian Government has voted to eliminate the post of European Affairs Minister. Prime Minister Mart Siiman has assumed responsibility himself for issues related to European integration. Source: RFE/RL.

Change at Centre of Government in Warsaw

At the request of Marek Pol, Government Plenipotentiary for State Economic Administration Reform, the Council of Ministers abolished the post of the Plenipotentiary. Further monitoring of the reform will remain the task of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. Sources: *Polityka*, Polish government sources.

Poland's Civil Service Qualification Commission

The Prime Minister appointed the Civil Service Qualification Commission. The Commission is composed of 35 members, and includes public servants, lawyers, economists, specialists in organisation, management, and political science. It will be subdivided into seven groups of five members which will conduct the examinations, while the final decision on admittance will be made by the full Commission. Sources: *Rzeczpospolita*, *Polityka*.

Romanian Ombudsman Named

Romania's Parliament elected Supreme Court Judge Paul Mitroi as the country's first Ombudsman on 20 May. Mitroi,

60, has served as a judge since the 1989 revolution, and served during 1996 as the head of the election board overseeing general elections. The Ombudsman is elected to a four-year term to defend individual rights, fight abuses of authority and violations of law and address maladministration. He may intervene with local authorities if he feels an individual's rights have been infringed upon, and may also demand changes in legislation. Source: Romanian Press Review.

Bucharest Restructures Defence Ministry

The Romanian Government will restructure the Ministry of Defence to bring it into line with NATO standards. In a significant departure from past practice, the ministry's structure will no longer be considered a state secret. It will include a Directorate for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, subordinated to its Political and Defence Department. The Directorates for Human Resources, Information and Public Relations, and Medical Corps, will be directly subordinated to the Minister of Defence. Other ministerial structures dealing with the military as a whole will also come directly under the minister's jurisdiction. Source: Romanian Press Review.

OECD Ministers Endorse Regulatory Reform

Ministers from OECD countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, participated in the OECD's Annual Meeting of the Council at Ministerial Level, 26-27 May 1997. The meeting's final communiqué included the following paragraph on regulatory reform (a subject addressed in *PMF*, Vol. III, No. 1). This is especially relevant to central and eastern European countries in light of European integration.

"Ministers agreed that the attack on structural rigidities in their economies should encompass comprehensive regulatory reform, including higher quality regulation and deregulation where existing regulation is excessive. Regulatory reform aims at improving economic efficiency and the ability of economies to adapt to change and to become more productive. By enhancing competition, it can create new businesses and jobs, speed the diffusion of new technologies and business methods, enhance trade and investment opportunities, and reduce the scope for trade frictions. Reform can also provide more cost-effective means of attaining important social and environmental goals. Ministers took note of the OECD work which suggests that some countries can expect to see significant increases in real GDP levels from comprehensive reform."

"You can go anywhere you want if you look serious and carry a clipboard."

From "Dilbert's Laws of Work", <http://www.cynical.net/hypermail/bryans-list/1363.html>.

Committees and Governance

Shaping European Law and Policy: The Role of Committees and Comitology in the Political Process, by Robin H. Pedler and Guenther F. Schaefer

As explained in this publication's foreword, committees are an integral part of modern government and are often set up to solve problems, but also sometimes to obscure them. They are designed to bring to bear expertise on difficult technical problems which is not available inside government, or is available inside government but only within various separate departments or organisations.

Throughout the development of the European Community, committees have been an essential feature of the system of governance that has been evolving from the beginning. Various

Community institutions have used committees for the same purpose. The Council, the Commission and, of course, the Parliament -- where specialised committees have been a feature for a long time -- have used committees as an instrument for solving specific problems, gathering advice, collecting expertise and preparing (political) decisions.

On the initiative of the European Centre for Public Affairs, Templeton College (Oxford), and the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), three research teams -- from the University of Bremen, University of Rotterdam, and EIPA -- conducted a workshop aimed at discussing the "state of the art" in comitology. The three different approaches taken to the subject were: i) behavioural (ignoring legalistic and institutional typologies); ii) interdisciplinary

(analysing a subset of committees in the area of foodstuffs and technical standardisation from a legal and political science perspective); and iii) "institutional-functional," (development of a typology of committees on the basis of the function which these committees perform in the Community's political process).

EIPA has brought together the papers from the workshop in this volume. The first part of the publication presents three conceptual frameworks, while the second provides a discussion of initial empirical results, history and development of comitology and case law of the Court of Justice of the European Communities in this field. ♦

Shaping European Law and Policy: The Role of Committees and Comitology in the Political Process, 200 pages, ISBN 90-6779-104-0. To order: EIPA, O.L. Vrouweplein 22, P.O. Box 1229, 6201 BE Maastricht, The Netherlands.

INBOX:



A COMPENDIUM OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES

Note: All publications below are available in English unless otherwise noted.

From SIGMA

SIGMA Papers: No. 12. *Country Profiles of Civil Service Training Systems*, 1997, 245 pages. Also in French.

SIGMA Papers: No. 13. *Assessing the Impacts of Proposed Laws and Regulations*, 1997, 93 pages. Also in French.

Checklist on Law Drafting Procedures and Techniques, 1997, 26 pages. French version forthcoming.

Civil Service Legislation: Checklist on Secondary Legislation (and Other Regulatory Instruments), 1997, 17 pages. Also in French.

To order: SIGMA Information Services, SIGMA-OECD, 2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris, Cedex 16, France. Tel: (33.1) 45.24.13.16; fax: (33.1) 45.24.13.00; e-mail: sigma.contact@oecd.org.

From NISPAcee

JABES, Jak (ed). *Developing Organizations and Changing Attitudes: Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe*, 1997, 325 pages.

REINERMAN, Heinrich and Mirkó VINTAR (eds). *Information and Communication Technology as a Driving Force of Change in Public Administration*, 1997.

To order: NISPAcee, Hanulova 5/B, 840 02 Bratislava, Slovak Republic; tel/fax: (421.7) 785.357; e-mail: nispa@nispa.sk

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

COOMBES, David and Tony VERHEIJEN. *Public Management Reform: Comparative Experiences from East and West* (based on research undertaken with support of the European Commission's Phare/ACE project), 1997, 407 pages.

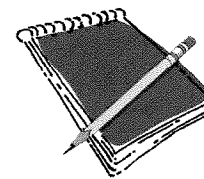
GOLDSMITH, Arthur A. "Private-Sector Experience with Strategic Management: Cautionary Tales for Public Administration," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 63, No. 1, March 1997, pp. 25-40.

PASTUSIAK, Longin. "Sub-Regional Co-operation Among Central European Countries and Their Struggle Towards Membership of Transatlantic Structures," *North Atlantic Assembly Political Committee 1996 Reports*, November 1996.

To Order: NAA, International Secretariat, place du Petit Sablon 3, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. Fax: (32.2) 514.18.47.

ROOT, Hilton R. *Small Countries, Big Lessons: Governance and the Rise of East Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996, 246 pages.

Slovene Daily Gives Extensive Coverage to Public Administration



by Alenka Burja

During the first half of 1997, the Slovene press has frequently reported on the public administration. Journalists have highlighted changes in the public administration since Slovene independence, and reported on new laws.

One of Slovenia's largest circulation newspapers, *Delo* (The Work), claimed that after every new election, employment in the public administration increases. Some argue in favour of this phenomenon as the modern state needs more skilled personnel; while others argue against, saying that modernisation primarily means administrative efficiency. But what do the facts indicate?

Academy Established

At the beginning of 1997, there were 28 000 employees in State administration: a three-fold increase since 1991. This number is even higher, 43 000, if one includes those employed in local public administration, funds, agencies, associations and political organisations. The major rise in employment occurred after public administration reform and a new law on local self-government were introduced in 1995. (These employment figures can be evaluated in light of a population estimated at 2 million.)

Last December, a roundtable held at the Slovene Faculty of Administration issued an appeal to raise the quality of public service and administration outputs at the central and local level, and to reduce costs per administrative unit. In the new Government -- formed after the last parliamentary elections in November 1996 -- a number of changes occurred, including the merger and abolishment of some ministries, as well as the creation of new ministries, governmental services

and offices, etc.

In a few *Delo* articles, readers learned about the establishment of the new Administrative Academy working within the Ministry of the Interior. The Academy plans to offer basic training for public servants, 2 000 top-level public sector managers, and research and development of new methods and work techniques. The Academy's work follows on the footsteps of the now completed MASTER programme, a joint Swiss-Slovene programme aimed at training selected public servants in the Slovene public administration. By the end of 1996, more than thirty public servants had completed training offered through the MASTER programme.

One research project carried out within the framework of the MASTER programme, and reported on by the press, concerned the training of public servants for work with the European Union. The study's authors determined that the need for education and training of public servants for preparation of pre-accession strategies is generally recognised, but in practice each ministry works alone and with a shortage of personnel.

The study noted that co-operation among different state administrative bodies was missing. The journalist reporting on the research project stressed four aspects of modern administration: personal responsibilities of employees; management of complex information; co-operation and co-ordination within the entire public administration and strict separation of political and professional functions.

Over the past few years there has been considerable media coverage of the debate on the incompatibility between the functions of public office and profit-

making activities. While a law addressing this on the national-level had been passed in 1991 (along with other laws when Slovenia became an independent state), local communities brought forth the issues this spring. The press reported that a Constitutional Court was expected to make an important ruling on this controversial issue.

Ombudsman Report

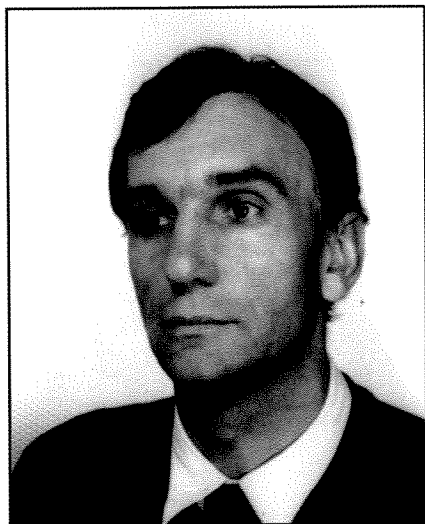
In the development of a new democracy, a number of questions arise in the context of state relations with the citizenry. The press critically reported that the Office of Human Rights received one-third more complaints (830 in total) during the first quarter of 1997 than it did in the same period one year before. According to *Delo*, the Ombudsman reported that the security of citizen rights is undermined by the failure of administrative bodies to adhere to legal deadlines, delays in decision-making, and poor organisation of legal support to underprivileged members of society. At the same time, the Ombudsman was said to have reported that there is absolutely no general violation of human rights in the country.

Delo and other leading papers have been active this year in reporting on preparations by the Slovene Government and public administration for joining the European Union and alignment with NATO. Although Slovene prospects are perceived as high, articles have appeared criticising the slow pace of preparing pre-assessment strategies and the delay in parliamentary approval of the EU Association Agreement. ♦

Alenka Burja is a freelance reporter in Ljubljana. She regularly contributes to Delo and the magazine Svobodna misel. Ms. Burja may be reached at tel: (386.61) 168.17.21; e-mail: alenka.burja@guest.arnes.si.

Donor Collaboration on Fiscal Decentralisation

by Michael Engelschalk



Courtesy Photo

Michael Engelschalk

Public sector decentralisation and the development of subnational government capacity has emerged as one of the critical features in transition from a command to a market economy. However, despite the convergence of political and economic forces driving a demand for decentralisation, the reality is far from the goal that is legislated in nearly every central and eastern European country, the establishment of "local self-government".

A major reason for the gap between the stated goal of local self-government and the system in practice in Central and Eastern Europe is that local governments -- many of which are newly formed -- lack the capacity to be truly autonomous. This problem is compounded by a parallel lack of central government knowledge of the implications of sorting out roles and responsibilities between the centre and its subnational units.

This need for an in-country capacity building sets the context for the Fiscal Decentralisation Initiative (FDI). FDI is a collaborative effort of the OECD, the World Bank and the Council of Europe, in co-operation with donor countries, to provide central and eastern European institutions (governmental and non-governmental alike) with the technical and

financial resources to analyse problems, develop solutions and implement ideas to improve intergovernmental policy, and to strengthen local government financial management. The initiative also aims to support the creation of a "new" public sector that supplements, rather than competes with, the goals of economic decentralisation, including privatisation.

Within this context, the Fiscal Decentralisation Initiative has three goals:

- *Build local capacity* through the vehicles of direct funding of workshops, seminars, and commissioned research plus the "twinning" of client country experts with experts from FDI donor-partners;
- *Promote shared experiences* through regional activities and
- *Identify and promote best practices* by drawing on the special opportunity to bring to the discussion the best intergovernmental fiscal practices of multilateral and bilateral donors.

Demand-Driven by Design

The unique feature of FDI is that it supports activities identified and carried out by central and eastern European institutions and experts. The programme is introduced to a country only upon formal invitation by some representative body in a client country. In 1996, the first full year of FDI operations, there were five clients: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania. In 1997, the client country list will be expanded to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovakia, Slovenia and possibly Albania.

FDI serves as both a learning development and dissemination centre, as well as a donor-coordinating organisation, whereby partner institutions establish an FDI trust fund (supplemented by parallel and twinning funding) for the distribution of small grants in response to proposals received from persons in client countries to carry out specific activities.

Grants typically range from US\$ 5 000 for research papers to US\$ 20 000 for a national or regional seminar. The decision to fund an event is jointly made among the donor-partners -- currently, apart from the three international organisations, Canada, Denmark, Germany and the United States. All FDI programs require client cost-sharing. The client country/FDI cost-sharing ratio is usually in the range of ten to fifteen per cent of total programme costs.

Client proposals for FDI funding are solicited from persons associated with local governments, institutions working in local government training and policy analysis, regional and national associations of local authorities, non-governmental organisations active in community development, and central government ministries and agencies involved in the development and monitoring of intergovernmental arrangements.

Range of Activities

During 1996, FDI organised in each of the five initial client countries a national forum on fiscal decentralisation. The forum brought together experts from the different organisations and institutions involved in the reform of local government finance existing in the country and allowed to discuss priority issues and problems in the reform process.

A number of regional experience-sharing workshops were also held on topics such as property taxation and intergovernmental fiscal transfers. Country-specific projects supported by FDI were, for example, the publication of local government budget data in Latvia, a municipal energy efficiency workshop in Lithuania, and a forum on community development in the Czech Republic. ♦

Michael Engelschalk is a tax lawyer in the OECD Directorate for Financial, Fiscal and Enterprise Affairs. He may be reached in Paris at tel: (33.1) 45.24.96.60; fax: (33.1) 45.24.18.84; e-mail michael.engelschalk@oecd.org.

SIGMA

SIGMA -- Support for Improvement in Governance and Management in Central and Eastern European Countries -- is a joint initiative of the OECD Centre for Co-operation with the Economies in Transition and the European Union Phare Programme. The initiative supports public administration reform efforts in thirteen countries in transition, and is mostly financed by Phare. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an intergovernmental organisation of 29 democracies with advanced market economies. The Centre channels the Organisation's advice and assistance over a wide range of economic issues to reforming countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Phare provides grant financing to support its partner countries in Central and Eastern Europe to the stage where they are ready to assume the obligations of membership of the European Union.

Phare and SIGMA serve the same countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Established in 1992, SIGMA works within the OECD's Public Management Service, which provides information and expert analysis on public management to policy-makers and facilitates contact and exchange of experience amongst public sector managers. SIGMA offers beneficiary countries access to a network of experienced public administrators, comparative information, and technical knowledge connected with the Public Management Service.

SIGMA aims to:

- assist beneficiary countries in their search for good governance to improve administrative efficiency and promote adherence of public sector staff to democratic values, ethics and respect of the rule of law;
- help build up indigenous capacities at the central governmental level to face the challenges of internationalisation and of European Union integration plans; and
- support initiatives of the European Union and other donors to assist beneficiary countries in public administration reform and contribute to co-ordination of donor activities.

Throughout its work, the initiative places a high priority on facilitating co-operation among governments. This practice includes providing logistical support to the formation of networks of public administration practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe, and between these practitioners and their counterparts in other democracies.

SIGMA works in five technical areas: the Reform of Public Institutions, Management of Policy-making, Expenditure Management, Management of the Public Service, and Administrative Oversight. In addition, an Information Services Unit disseminates published and on-line materials on public management topics.

ON THE AGENDA



Upcoming Programmes

21-25 July, Steyning, West Sussex, England. "Diplomacy: Profession in Peril?" Contact: Jackie Nicholls, Wilton Park/Wiston House. Tel: (44.1.903) 81.50.20; fax (44.1.903) 81.59.31. In English.

26-30 July, Philadelphia, PA, USA. "American Society for Public Administration's 58th National Conference." Contact: ASPA, 1120 G St., NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA. Tel: (1.202) 393.7878. In English.

17-21 August, Seoul, Korea. "International Political Science Association XVII World Congress." Contact: Dr. I.W. Zartman, SAIA, Johns Hopkins University, 1740 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA. Tel: (1.202) 636.56.00; fax: (1.202) 663.56.83. In English, French, and Korean.

25-28 August, Kyoto, Japan. Sessions on "Public Finance and Investment in Transition Economies" at the 53rd International Institute of Public Finance Congress. Contact: Sessions' Chairman Professor Bruno S. Sergi, Strada Statale 106 - km 27, 89060 Saline Joniche, Reggio Calabria, Italy. Tel: (39.965) 787.066; fax: (39.965) 48.798. In English and Japanese.

28-31 August, Washington, DC, USA. "1997 APSA Annual Meeting." Contact: American Political Science Association, 1527 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, USA. Tel: (1.202)483.25.12; fax (1.202) 483.26.57; e-mail: apsa@apsa.com. In English.

Please note that not all of the programmes included in this calendar are open to every public administration practitioner or the general public. Details are provided directly by the organiser, who may be contacted for further information. If your organisation is planning an event of interest to Public Management Forum readers, please send details to the editors (address on page 2).