

SIGMA

P M F

Public Management Forum

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

Governments Confront
Millennium Bug

International Action
Against Corruption

Overcoming the
Implementation Gap

Hungarian County
Improves Access
to Information

Building Institutions to Improve General Governance Systems

To succeed in their bids for European Union membership, Candidate Countries have not only to adopt the *acquis communautaire*, but also to implement and enforce it. This requires them to invest heavily in professional administration. Candidate Countries and the European Commission are now in the "screening" stage of the accession process. This stage deepens the analysis in the Commission *avis*, and covers both conformity of law and institutional capacities. It will reveal the extent of the accession challenge.

Mutual Dependence

Each Member State relies upon the administrative performance of all the others. The functioning of the internal market relies on the quality of national administrative institutions. The accession of the Candidate Countries, whose administrations carry the burden of their recent history, poses a new, difficult problem for the Union. Administrative quality is bound to be a key element in negotiations. Screening can certify the existence of an implementing institution, but it is more difficult to judge actual or potential performance.

The frame of reference for screening is the *acquis communautaire*, which addresses the needs of open economies. It has been built up over decades with the full participation of the sophisticated administrations of the Member States, which have themselves changed with the evolution of the *acquis*. The *acquis* is essentially sectoral. It is not directly concerned with basic administrative values, such as, reliability or efficiency.

Special Effort Required

National Programmes for the Adoption of the *Acquis* and screening have lesser scope than the

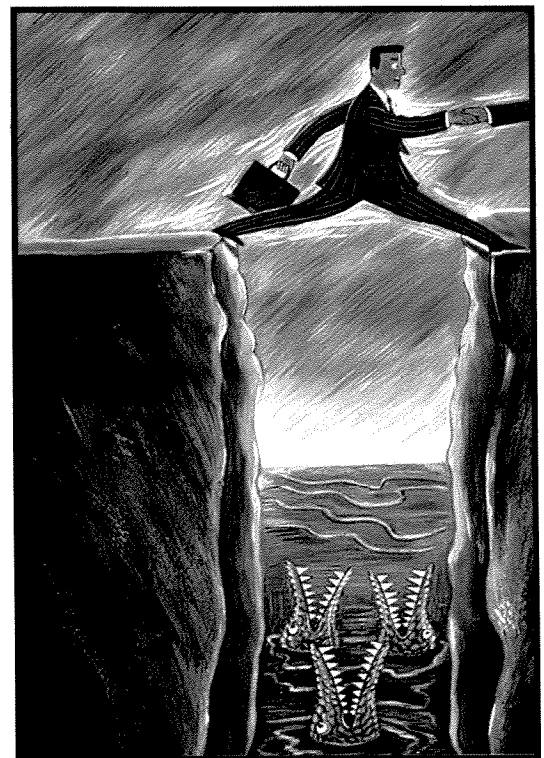


Image: Bink/Hemel Hamilton

"Copenhagen criteria", or national reform programmes which concern the modernisation of the public sector. A special effort is needed to ensure that the process of building institutions recognises the need to improve general governance systems. The failure to do so could lead to a widening of the gap between the legal norms and the capacity to implement and enforce them according to EU standards.

Aspects of improving these systems -- including strengthening of policy cohesion and co-ordination, training of personnel, building up control mechanisms, and creating transparent public procurement systems -- are given special attention in the article beginning on page 4. Such issues were at the centre of deliberations held by public administration practitioners attending the annual SIGMA Liaison Group meeting in June 1998 (see Forum Focus). ♦

Forum Focus

Practitioners Deliberate
Needs for EU Accession

Vol. IV - N° 4
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Phare



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SIGMA Internet Site Grows

For more than two years, the SIGMA Internet site has provided the full text of SIGMA publications, news about upcoming conferences and seminars, links to other Internet sites, and information about the SIGMA Programme. The site offers a modern medium through which comparative information of use to public administration practitioners can be shared.

Keeping in mind the evolving environment of administrative reform, and the growing number of persons with access to the Internet, we are adding many more pages to the SIGMA site. In doing so, we are taking advantage of the interactive and dynamic nature of the World Wide Web, which allows for quick additions and regular updating. New features on the site include profiles of centres of government, and special pages devoted to audit and financial control issues.

The Internet document, Centre of Government Profiles, was prepared by national authorities with SIGMA support, and is now on the SIGMA site. The profiles describe the architecture of the centre of government, including policy co-ordination and decision-making procedures, in central and eastern European countries. The pages on audit and financial control, to be made available in the coming months, will facilitate the exchange of information and experience among auditors and financial control officers. These pages will cover recent activities, such as the meeting in March 1998 of presidents of central and eastern European supreme audit institutions and the European Court of Auditors (see page 12). They also will provide links to useful Internet sites, including those of SAIs and other financial bodies in current and prospective EU Member States.

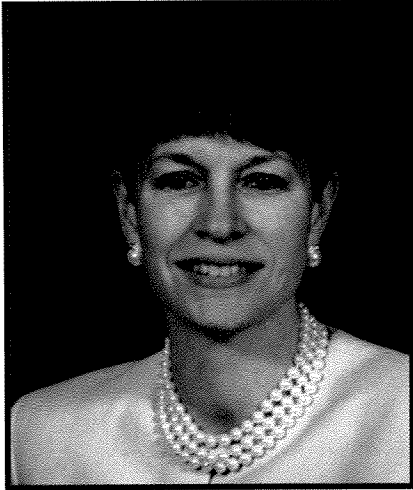
Laurie Chamberlain, SIGMA Webmaster

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Year 2000 Problem Threatens Governments with Disruption

by Joanna Shelton



Photo/OECD: Danyf Evans

Joanna Shelton

There is a growing consensus -- and concern -- that many countries are inadequately prepared for the possible breakdown of information systems and related problems that may occur as a result of the "Year 2000 Problem". Governments everywhere need to find financial resources in their tight budgets to invest in the resolution of this problem (through the use of corrective software programmes, etc.). If governments do not act now, they may find that the costs of disruption in a couple of years far outweigh the expense of preventative action taken today.

The "Year 2000" or "Y2K" problem refers to the situation whereby most computer systems currently in operation are set up to identify calendar dates only through the last two digits of the year. This arose because of early programmers' need to save memory in writing software or designing chips. Without conversion, many existing systems will fail to understand the Year 2000 date change, possibly misinterpreting "00" as "1900".

Assessing the Risk

Worst-case scenarios portray the arrival on 1 January 2000 of power outages, air traffic

control failures, disruptions to telephone communications and financial transactions, and problems affecting transportation, health and other systems that play a critical role in ensuring public health and safety. The problem involves not only computer software and data exchange, but also the embedded chips integrated into industrial control systems and myriad household appliances and motor vehicles. Computers that encounter difficulties dealing with date-related matters could either stop functioning or start producing wrong information. Possible impacts on government services include delivery failures, delayed cheques, and blocked transactions -- affecting tax administration, customs, payroll, pension, social benefits, hospitals, procurement systems, and many others.

Analysts have had difficulty assessing the true scale of the risks. Some experts, including the Gartner Group, have estimated the cost of a "global fix" between US\$300-600 billion (excluding consequential disruption losses), half of which may be ascribed to exhaustive system testing. Standard & Poor's DRI has estimated potential US losses between 1998-2001 at US\$119 billion. These losses are accounted for by slower growth, reduced productivity and increased inflation. In contrast to these larger estimates, the US Federal Reserve has forecast smaller negative impacts on the US economy in the range of 0.1 per cent per year. Regardless of the precise value of the problem, there is no doubt about the potential for disruption in a great many areas.

Meeting the Challenge

Ministers of OECD Member countries have recognised these concerns. In their April 1998 communiqué, they agreed on "the importance of rapidly adapting computer

systems in order to avoid the potential for significant disruption due to the so-called 'millennium bug'. They stated their intention to meet this challenge and recognised the need to exchange information among governments and to work with the private sector, as appropriate, to ensure that the problem is resolved in a timely and comprehensive manner." More recently, Heads of State and the President of the EC agreed at the G8 Summit on the need for further action to address the problem and cited Russia's state of readiness as a particular concern.

While awareness of the problem has been increasing, the public management challenges involved are formidable and will require government leadership at the highest levels to: build awareness both within government and the private sector; develop a clear assessment of the scope of the problem; prioritise, co-ordinate and motivate action across government and allocate the necessary resources to achieve needed fixes; organise the testing of systems to ensure they are in compliance (and to encourage business to do the same); and develop contingency plans for action in the event of system failures. Even if a government decides to focus as a priority on the functioning of its own systems, it must necessarily devote attention to the readiness of the private sector as well, since many government programmes are reliant upon data and software from outside of the government. The problem is also a serious international concern, because telecommunications networks, financial flows, and data exchanges do not stop at national borders.

Information and Guidance

Fortunately, information and guidance for addressing the problem is available from a variety of sources.

Continued on p.12 ➤

Overcoming the Implementation Gap and Steering Reform

*To achieve membership of the European Union, Candidate Countries have not only to adopt the *acquis communautaire*, but also to implement and enforce it. This requires them to invest heavily in professional administrations with the capacity to steer institutional development.*

Now that negotiations on EU membership have begun, the process of accession is accelerating. There are some 100,000 pages of the *acquis communautaire*. Although the legal aspect of each country's National Programme for Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) may be given priority, governments must do much more than pass laws or adopt regulations to satisfy membership requirements.

Mind the Gap

As Candidate Countries take on the *acquis*, an implementation gap may open up. This is the deficit between the set of legal norms and the capacity to implement and enforce them to EU standards. A gap may appear for several reasons, including:

- developing and passing norms is easier than building effective implementing institutions;
- the system for preparing legal norms may have biases against the systematic consideration of implementation issues, such as identification and design of delivery systems;
- budgetary aspects may not be fully considered when preparing legal norms; and
- laws have to be explained to these public servants in direct contact with the citizens and entrepreneurs.

Because of the interdependency in the "European construction," an implementation gap will threaten the accession timetable, and the ability of Candidate Countries to secure

and properly use financial assistance, including EU funds. But that is not all. A gap can facilitate corruption, encourage low value-added "exploitative" investment, and hinder development of market exchanges. Weak implementing institutions also can reduce economic efficiency and competitiveness, and deprive citizens of the service and protections which their fellow Europeans enjoy.

An implementation gap signals a weak commitment to the rule of law and can have heavy consequences. The potential "civic education effect" of implementing law is lost to citizens, the administration and economic agents. Indeed, if the state is seen not to be able to carry out policies, its overall legitimacy will decline, political participation rates may fall, and politicians may find other ways to achieve their ambitions.

Common Administrative Values Across Europe

Constant contact amongst public servants of EU Member States and the European Commission, the need to apply the *acquis* at equivalent standards across the EU, and the emergence of a Europe-wide system of administrative justice have led to convergence among national administrations. This evolving "European Administrative Space" (EAS) is about basic institutional arrangements, processes and values.

Candidate Countries need to modernise their administrations to meet EAS levels of reliability. Part of this process involves imbedding key administrative values -- reliability, transparency, predictability, accountability and efficiency -- in institutions and administrative processes at all levels. These values must be defended by independent control bodies, by systems of justice and judicial enforcement, and by parliamentary scrutiny.

Functions, Performance and Costs

The *acquis* generates functional demands (eg the need to ensure that automobiles meet pollution controls and are fit to drive on public roads). This requirement is translated into processes, such as annual inspections. In most EU Member States, such inspections are carried out by private garages, operating under license. For these and other functions, governments need to decide on an appropriate delivery system. Responsibilities will be assigned to administrative organisations either to carry out the function or to control execution carried out by others.

In assigning responsibility, governments need to determine a performance standard, such as how well the responsible agency must perform its tasks. This implies deciding the performance measure in relation to the goal sought and the actual performance level. In designing an implementation approach, a decision also must be made about the division of costs.

Administrative regulation imposes budgetary cost, paid by tax payers, and economic costs, paid by enterprises and reflected in costs to consumers. The limited state budget acts as an incentive to pass on costs to users or other levels of government, but it is not certain that they are ready for such "delegated delivery" approaches. Improper implementation can open the door to corruption. The possibility of an implementation gap and certainty of budget restraints implies that priorities must be set to ensure sustainable and reliable implementation.

Steering Institutional Development

Building institutions for EU membership implies three levels of steering. *Central steering* decides priorities, provides an interface to the budget and European integration

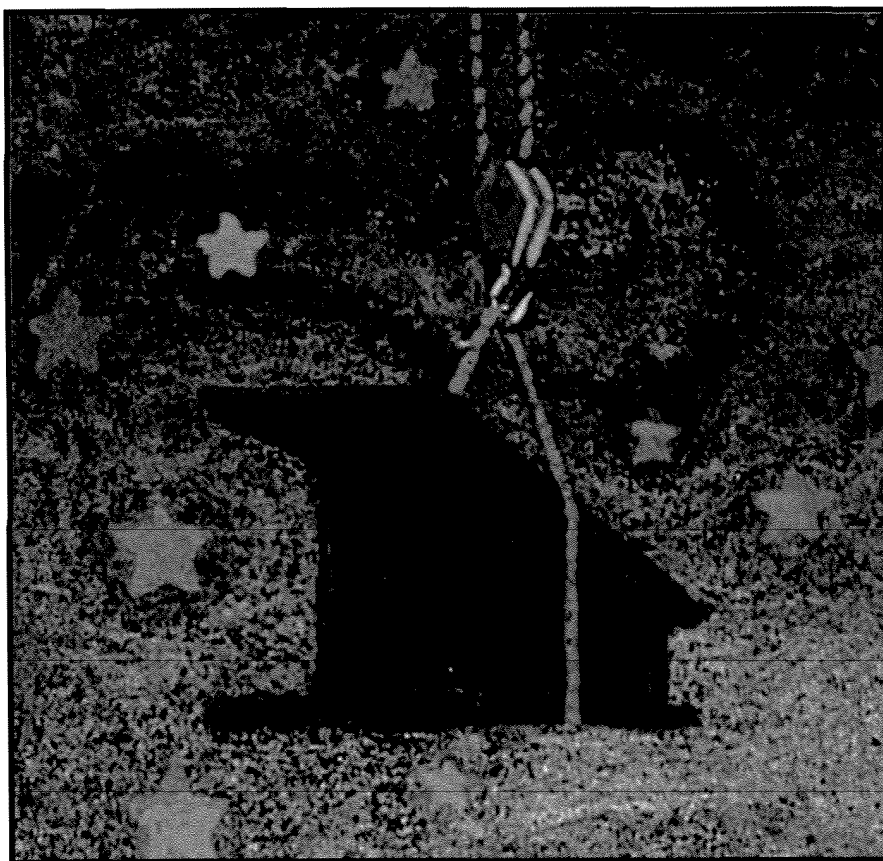


Image: Bank/Greg Couch

departments, co-ordinates across ministries, ensures balances between sectoral and general management functions, and manages communications to maintain support from administration and voters. *Ministerial-level steering* allocates responsibilities inside the ministry to component organisations and appropriate territorial levels, and co-ordinates with the central level. *Project-level steering* is where application of individual functions takes place, and where organisations are designed, built or reinforced.

A major issue is where to locate central steering responsibility for institution building. Most Candidate Countries have offices for European integration, which are responsible for the NPAA, and some sort of public administration reform unit. It would be unwise to create yet another body, and in any case institution building must be co-ordinated closely with both functions. Wherever the institution building steering function is placed, it must be closely linked to the ministry of finance to monitor medium and long-term budget pressure.

While institution building needs to be steered, it also must be decentralised. This gives rise to certain risks, such as fragmentation of administration, uncontrolled pressure on the budget, and burdens placed on the private sector. These risks may be reduced by using general management powers of government which should enable a government to find the appropriate balance between rigidity and flexibility. These powers relate to factors such as ministerial organisational structures; the legal form of agencies; the balance between the central government and local government; policy formulation and co-ordination; personnel systems; financial management; procurement; control systems; and the relationship between citizens and the administration.

Investing in Institutions and Personnel

State spending on administrative institution building will be large, as governments create bodies which will be viable for the life cycle of the policy. For example, the issue is not simply creating

an environmental protection agency, but rather ensuring that environmental inspections are carried out for as long as environmental legislation is in force. To finance the start-up and operating costs of institution building, governments will have to plan for higher expenditures, and develop innovative approaches to delivery with low budget impacts. These may include user charging, credit instruments, tax expenditures, regulation, and off-budget agencies.

Throughout the public service, people will need to learn new skills and behaviours for implementing EU policies. The nature and intensity of the interaction between the administration and the public will change. To nurture the needed public service qualities, governments will have to radically reform public service management. Legislation will have to be translated into operating manuals, forms and design of tasks for efficiency and control. Skills to manage change of administrative organisations will have to be widely diffused into implementing units.

Building institutions is a long-term process requiring continuous support from the highest political levels. European aspirations and the pressure of membership negotiations can provide leverage, but governments will need to make efforts to maintain popular support for membership, and harness other interests -- especially economic -- to support the drive for administrative modernisation. ♦

This article is an abridged version of a presentation made by the SIGMA Secretariat to the Ninth SIGMA Liaison Group meeting, held 11-12 June 1998 in Paris. See the related article on page 9. The presentation will serve as the basis of a special series of pages to be created on institution building in the coming months within the SIGMA Internet site: <http://www.oecd.org/pumalsigmaweb>. Copies of these pages will be made available to interested readers who do not have access to the Internet (contact address on page 2 for details).

Increased International Action Against Corruption

by Herman F. Woltring and Ugljesa Zvekic

The past few years have witnessed a flurry of activity to curb corruption in the public sector. To better inform readers of steps being taken both to combat graft and other inappropriate behaviour in the administration, and to encourage high ethical standards for public officials, PMF is launching a new feature entitled, Ethics in the Public Service. We inaugurate this section of the newsletter with an overview of international actions against corruption.

In the past, corruption was regarded as such only if it involved "public officials" such as members of the government, public administration or courts. In more recent times, it has also been viewed in the context of the private sector. The link between corruption and organised crime, and connections between the two in the public works sector and the privatisation process, have contributed to an increased focus on corruption. At the international level, there is a great deal of activity seeking to find solutions.

Work of the United Nations

The United Nations has taken a number of recent actions against corruption, including:

- a special session on corruption at the Ninth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Cairo, Egypt, 1995;
- adoption by the General Assembly in December 1996 of the "UN Declaration on Corruption and Bribery in Transnational Commercial Activities";
- adoption by the General Assembly on 12 December 1996 of an International Code of Conduct for Public Officials;
- a series of regional meetings on organised crime, including corruption, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March 1997; Dakar, Senegal, in July 1997; and Manila, Philippines, in March 1998,
- two seminars on anti-corruption strategies

for central and eastern European countries, held in April 1997 and May 1998 in Budapest; and

- the ongoing preparation of the Model Law on Corruption.

In addition, the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program (CPCJP) is developing a new project entitled "Corruption and Anti-Corruption Strategies Around the World." The project will be carried out jointly by the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the UN's Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP), although it is possible that other CPCJP institutes or international partners may contribute at various phases of the project.

The project will focus on corruption related to organised crime and aims to: (1) compile and analyse the phenomenology and dynamics of corruption patterns and trends, as well as existing anti-corruption legislation and strategies in all regions of the world; (2) develop the procedure and methodology for follow-up mechanisms to review the development of national anti-corruption strategies; and (3) formulate strategies for countermeasures to corruption.

A number of country-specific activities will accompany the project's research component.

International Organisations Target Corruption

A number of other international organisations also have initiated anti-corruption work. For example, in 1996, the Council of Europe created a "Programme of Action Against Corruption," implemented by the Council's Multidisciplinary Group on Corruption. This action includes developing a detailed convention against corruption, initiating training and exchange programmes, and drafting a European Code of Conduct for Public Officials. In November 1997, OECD

Members and five non-OECD countries approved a convention which sets an agreed standard for effective national laws to criminalise bribery of foreign officials in international business transactions, ensure strong penalties against such bribery and provide a basis for effective international judicial co-operation. In April 1998, OECD ministers adopted a recommendation based on a set of 12 principles for managing ethics in the public service (see *PMF* Vol.IV, No.3, 1998, page 3). These principles, agreed in the OECD Public Management Committee, aim to help countries review their ethics management systems.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund, too, have been giving more attention to the prevention of corruption. The Bank, for example, is strengthening its procurement procedures, which are based on open competitive bidding, by banning firms that offer bribes from future Bank-financed procurement world-wide, and by cancelling loans to government whose officials solicited bribes. The Bank also is modifying its procedures to accommodate countries which seek to include a "no bribery pledge" in major international public procurement projects financed by the Bank.

Many of the actions being undertaken by national governments and international bodies are taking place in the areas of administrative law and regulatory mechanisms, and through the establishment of special procedures to prevent corruption. These are described in greater depth below. Other trends include criminalising the theft of state property; and the confiscation and forfeiture of criminally obtained assets.

Administrative Law and Regulatory Mechanisms

It is clear that more than criminal laws are needed to deter corruption. If the level of



Image Bank/Purified Collection

integrity and probity is to be improved, it will be by managerial, administrative, regulatory and reporting mechanisms designed to engender an anti-corruption culture.

The laws of many countries deal with "conflict of interest" situations, where there may be a conflict between private self-interest and the duties to be performed. Some countries have gone further, and require public officials to divert themselves from any interests or relationships which could give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest.

Codes of conduct have been developed at both the national and international levels as a preventive tool leading to a cultural change where corruption becomes unacceptable and to assist employees in avoiding conflict of interest situations.

More countries are imposing financial disclosure requirements, particularly on public officials. Frequently these laws also require a

periodic update of such reports or require disclosure of a "reportable event" such as extra income or the sale or acquisition of assets exceeding a certain value. A failure to comply with these standards could expose the person to criminal sanctions. Similarly, in many countries, internal and external audit procedures are used to check systems and procedures both for vulnerability to corruption as well as for actual corruption.

Another prominent measure used is disqualification. Where a person has been found guilty of a corruption offence, the person would be disqualified from holding a particular office for a given period. For example, a person could be precluded from a public office or from a position such as director or manager of a company for a specific period.

Procedures to Prevent Corruption

Many countries have established specialised bodies with the specific task of investigating

and preventing corruption, which has a naturally clandestine and covert nature. For example, Hong Kong established in 1974 the Independent Commission against Corruption, a single purpose anti-corruption entity independent of any other authority save for judicial review of its actions and decisions.

Other countries have created offices, such as that of the ombudsman, which can deal with complaints against public officials generally, including complaints about corruption. Some countries have appointed specific senior officers within government departments and corporations to whom confidential reports of suspected corrupt activities may be made.

Reasons for not reporting corruption could range from a misplaced feeling of loyalty to a fellow officer or employee to a well-founded fear of victimisation or discrimination. It is for this reason that, in some countries, specialised bodies and officers are designated to receive complaints on a confidential basis. Certain countries have gone further and introduced -- either by law or regulation -- "whistleblower" protection which safeguards the person making the complaint, as well as family members, from any discriminatory action. Persons who do discriminate contrary to these provisions could be subject to dismissal or other criminal or administrative sanctions.

Many nations have also instituted public awareness programmes conducive to reporting of corruption. This may include creating a telephone "hot line" in a government agency or private organisation which anyone can call to report suspected improper behaviour. ♦

This article is adapted from a paper presented at the "Second Seminar on Anti-Corruption Strategies for Central and Eastern European Countries," organised by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in Budapest, 25-28 May 1998. Herman E Woltring is former Director of UNICRI; Ugljesa Zuekcic is the organisation's current Deputy Director. For more information about UNICRI work in the corruption area, contact Angela Patrignani in Rome at tel: (39.6) 687.74.37; fax: (39.6) 689.26.38.

Practitioners Deliberate Administrative Needs for EU Accession

On 11-12 June 1998 SIGMA held its Ninth Liaison Group meeting in Paris. The Liaison Group, comprising representatives of SIGMA's sponsors, bilateral donors, and beneficiary countries, meets annually to consider and approve SIGMA's work plans, and to discuss major governance themes affecting central and eastern European governments. At this year's meeting, participants deliberated the topic of building institutions for EU membership, a subject addressed on the next page and elsewhere in this issue of *PMF*. They agreed that Candidate Countries face a complex and urgent task in preparing the public administration to apply the *acquis communautaire* while operating within tight budget constraints.

Participants also used the occasion of the meeting, and after-hours discussion, to compare experience, discuss strategies and express views on a range of topics connected with their work. *PMF* was there to photograph such exchanges for this edition of *Forum Focus*. Participants are identified from left to right beneath each photo. ♦



Photo/OECD: Sylvain Baratin

Agris Varpins, Latvian State Chancellery; Tamás Földeák, Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and István Balázs, Hungary's Prime Minister's Office.



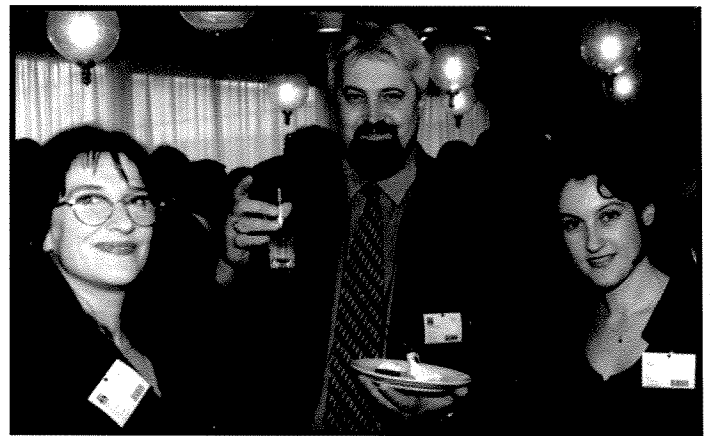
Photo/OECD: Sylvain Baratin

Members of the Polish delegation: Anna Portalska, Chancellery of the Prime Minister; Wladyslaw Majka, Office of the Committee for European Integration; and Tomasz Szuba, Ministry of Finance.



Photo/OECD: Sylvain Baratin

János Demeter, Deputy General Secretary of the Romanian Government, and Dorin Curechian, Romanian Council for Reform.



Photo/OECD: Sylvain Baratin

Zlatina Nikolova, Bulgarian Chancellery; Mario Tagarinski, Minister of State Administration; and Albena Azmanova, European Commission Unit 1A/B/4.



Photo: OECD, Sylvain Bardein

Maria Kompisova, Phare Multi-Country Co-ordination Office, and Jan Jursa, Embassy of Slovakia in France.

Managing Assistance to Institution Building

As central and eastern European countries continue to modernise their public administrations, they will have much to learn from each other, and from EU Member States, eg through twinning arrangements. Outside support for such exchanges can contribute to valuable contacts amongst Candidate Countries, as well as with European states which have not applied for EU membership.

A decade of experience has enriched the debate about the management of aid to public administration reform. The European Commission has taken important steps to improve delivery in recognition of the top priority now given to institution building. Among the lessons are that:

- public administration reform assistance programmes must be fully subject to national political authority and incorporated into national programmes of administrative modernisation;
- national programmes of administrative modernisation should be designed to be flexible and adapted to the administrative culture of the host country;
- external resource flows and procurement should be integrated into national financial management processes, and priority should be given to their upgrading;
- institutions should be designed to be sustainable from national resources;
- audit and control of assistance should, in the first instance, be undertaken by national authorities, and audit and control mechanisms should be strengthened (see page 12);
- project management skills (design, evaluation, monitoring) should be further developed; and
- effective learning comes from flexible processes of interchange amongst practitioners, and access to information which can be used by nationals.

Hungarian Regional Authorities Create Centre to Provide Easy

by Ferenc Balogh

The Hungarian County of Somogy has created a "one-stop" information centre providing information about public sector bodies at different levels of government. The initiative, supported by the World Bank and the EU's Phare Programme, could be a model for similar initiatives to improve the interface between citizens and their government.

Driven by the desire to create a new type of public administration in the European mode, Hungary has been transforming its public administration. A recent development in this ongoing process is the pilot Public Service Information Centre (*Közszolgáltató Információs Központ*). Building on the concept of a service-oriented public administration, the Centre aims to establish communication between state and regional administration, between county and town general assemblies, and between chambers of commerce and non-governmental organisations.

The Centre also seeks to aid citizens seeking government information by means of a novel (for Hungary) collective database system for public users. The unique facility has been in operation since March 1998 in Kaposvár, a city of 70,000 inhabitants and the seat of Somogy County.

Modern System of Communication

Jenő Németh, manager of the Somogy County Administration Office, says that national success in today's unifying Europe depends on a country's ability to assert its own interests. This depends, in part, on better organised and more efficient communications. He states that development of public administration is in the general public interest, since the whole of society is permeated by the demand for modern systems of communication. Those responsible for public administration reform

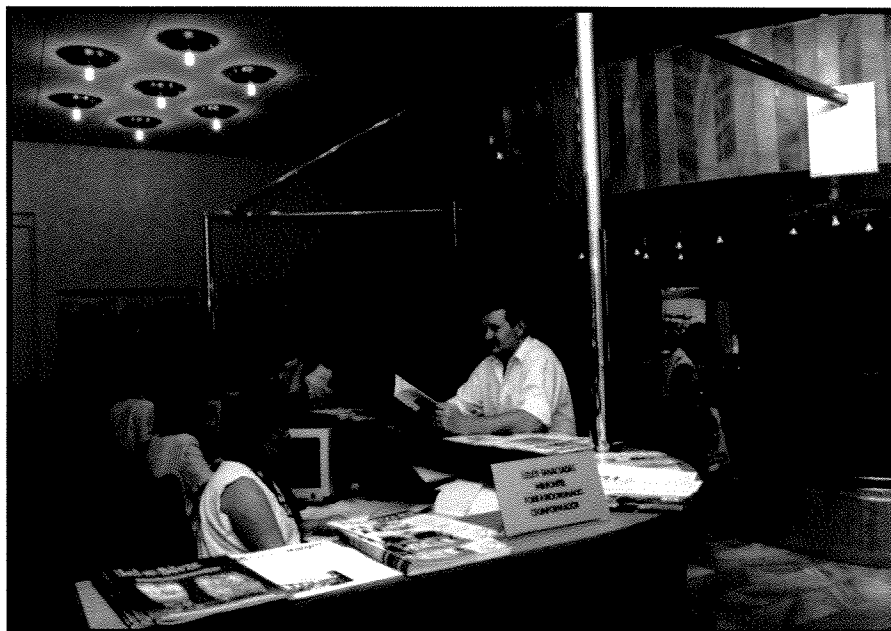


Photo: Robert Leng

in Hungary have financially supported efforts to develop central and local databases, create public information systems accessible to all, and harmonise information bases operated by administrative staff.

Somogy County's Public Service Information Centre fulfils all the above requirements, and, in Németh's opinion, will satisfy the information requirements of Hungarian citizens and institutions during the EU accession process. The centre links twenty bodies involved in regional administration, as well as various local governmental and non-governmental bodies, and organisations concerned with the representation of public interests.

The Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of the Interior, National Council for Regional Development, and World Bank also have contributed financially to the project. The Centre is the only entity of its kind bringing together, and making available to the public, information databases of administrative bodies. For this reason, the Centre's manager, Valéria Czanka-Nagy, believes that the establishment represents an experiment

in the process of modernising Hungary's public administration.

A Co-operative Venture

The Centre was established by the Somogy County Administration Office and the twenty regional public administration bodies, the County Authority, the County Council for Regional Development and the County Foundation for Enterprise Development. No moves were made to make it a legal entity; rather, it was instead established with the co-operative agreement of the owners of the respective "subsystems" described below.

While Németh oversees the Administration Office, Czanka-Nagy manages the Centre's day-to-day operations. She was appointed to the post by the governmental organisations participating in the project. The Centre's costs appear separately in the budget of the Administration Office, to which participating public sector bodies pay their respective share of the costs. Those working at the Centre remain in the employment of the participating organisations, who also pay their salaries.

Access to Government Information

Five Categories of Information

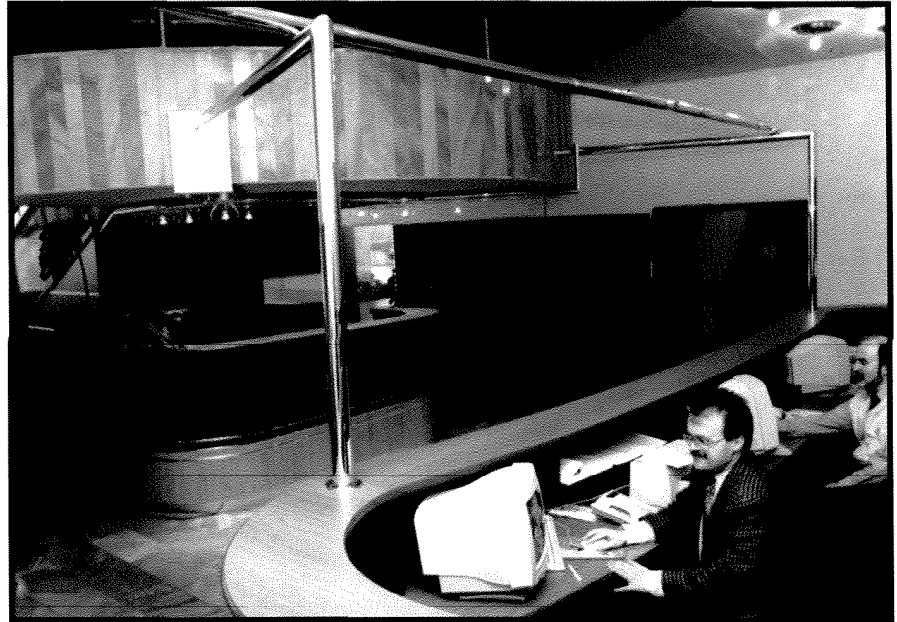
The Centre comprises five subsystems of information: regional public administration; the county authority; regional development; enterprise development; and the so-called open subsystem. The *regional public administration subsystem* provides access to state and regional administration records, and the databases of the twenty state administration bodies.

The *county authority subsystem* offers the databases of county-run establishments and county authority rulings. This subsystem also gives information relating to various foundations, co-operation links, service charges, counselling hours, elections, budgets, social institutions, and the system for referrals and counselling, and well as funding applications and professional/trade catalogues.

The *regional development subsystem* includes funding applications, information on programmes in progress, and the principal legislation governing regional development activity.

The *enterprise development subsystem* contains not only the general information necessary for the establishment of a new enterprise, but also guidance on loans available from the European Union's Phare programme, Hungarian systems of financial support, opportunities for international funding, and loans from other countries. In this subsystem, users can also learn about the conditions for participating in professional trade exhibitions, education programmes, and opportunities for investment from sources in Hungary and abroad.

Any organisation may place its databases on the open subsystem, which will eventually include reports of public organisations. At present, the Centre makes available to the



Photo/Robert Lang

public information on chambers of commerce and non-governmental organisations, the latter of which organise a "civic day" each Wednesday.

Visitors Welcome

The Centre is situated on the ground floor of the building which houses the county authority. A receptionist welcomes visitors and advises them on how to pursue their enquiry or obtain a service, such as having a passport issued or renewed, or obtaining details on how to secure a loan. Each subsystem is represented at its own information desk, but the five subsystems are unified in one user database. In the Centre's public service section, modern computer work stations equipped with an ISDN (Integrated Service Data Networks) line await clients. The Centre also maintains an Internet home page: <http://www.somogy.hu/kozighiv>.

Czanka-Nagy reports that the first few months of the Centre's operations has shown that the facility is not only helpful to citizens, but that it also facilitates co-operation

among governmental bodies. Since the databases appear in a common public user base, the owners of the respective systems pay more attention than before to the maintenance of their databases.

A further positive feature is that visitors are able to access information of every type at the Centre's public service section, without having to traverse the entire range of departments or other bodies involved with the subject in which they are interested.

Discussions on the further development of the Centre have already begun. For example, there are plans to introduce a service to disseminate basic information to the public on the European Union. Longer term objectives include incorporating central government ministries, and all of Somogy County's local authorities, and public interest bodies, into the system. ♦

Ferenc Balogh is Chief EU Communications Adviser at the Európa Intézet (Europe Institute) in Budapest. He can be reached at tel: (36 82) 31.10.15, e-mail: papiros@elender.hu. Jenő Németh, Head, Somogy County Administration Office, and Valéria Czanka-Nagy, Director, Public Service Information Centre, can be contacted in Kaposvár at tel: (36.82) 32.08.02, fax (36.82) 31.14.83.

ECA and Supreme Audit Institutions Forge Closer Ties

by Dirk Pauwels

On 26-27 March 1998, twelve supreme audit institutions (SAIs) from central and eastern European countries and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) met in Warsaw. The European Commission (DGIA and DGXX) and SIGMA also contributed to the meeting, which was hosted by the Polish Supreme Chamber of Control (NIK). At the invitation of the NIK, delegations from SAIs in Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova attended as observers.

The meeting was introduced by Janusz Wojciechowski, NIK President, and Bernhard Friedmann, ECA President, as well as by Bronislaw Geremek, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by Lubomir Volenik, President of EUROSAI and President of the Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic.

During an earlier meeting, held in October 1996, the presidents agreed that strengthening of the audit capacity of Candidate Countries is an important element in preparations for EU accession. They concurred that emphasis should be put on identifying areas for co-operation, which should first be defined at a technical level. Subsequent contacts took place during 1997 in a working group and at a meeting of liaison officers of SAIs. The results were presented during the meeting in Warsaw in the form of two themes: institutional preparation of an SAI for EU membership, and co-operation in auditing.

The presidents highlighted the importance of continuing co-operation with a view to the institutional preparation of SAIs for EU membership. They also proposed to develop and deepen mutual relations to support the active role an SAI can play in the process of applying the *acquis communautaire*.

They agreed to develop criteria and a framework to facilitate the central and eastern European SAIs during entry into the Union. The presidents stressed the importance of professional training activities, seen as a prerequisite for an effective integration process, and made concrete proposals to start several initiatives. Finally, they decided that the process of harmonisation of audit methodology could best be initiated by the exchange of experiences on this subject between the SAIs of EU Member States and those in Central and Eastern Europe.

The presidents also recognised the importance of closer co-operation in audit in light of the need for Candidate Countries to establish appropriate control to prepare for the greater role they will have in managing EC funds. This will in particular be the case when structural and agricultural funds become available after the year 2000. Further, management of EU affairs is being decentralised towards national authorities and in the process is shifting the centre of gravity of the ECA's audits towards EU Member States. Thus, co-operation between SAIs is becoming a necessity.

Meeting participants agreed on the need to define an organisation structure enabling joint activities to be co-ordinated and implemented. Whereas it is a natural vocation of the ECA to be active in the "European area" and to function as a catalyst, it is only one of Europe's SAIs. Thus, it is therefore proper for it to fulfil this role together with national SAIs. The involvement, through SIGMA, of EU Member State SAIs was thus welcomed by the presidents. ♦

For information, readers may reach Dirk Pauwels (ECA) at tel: (352.43) 98.45.229 or e-mail: dirk.pauwels@eca.eu.int; or Jacek Mazur (NIK) at tel: (48.22) 825.15.23 or e-mail: jamaz@nik.gov.pl.

► *continued from p.3*

For example, an up-to-date list of relevant sites and initiatives of interest can be found on the OECD's web site at <http://www.oecd.org/dsti/sti/it/index.htm>. Through development of a report and other actions, the OECD also is working to increase awareness and understanding of the issue, highlight vulnerabilities and needed actions, and contribute to high-level political support and pressure to address the problem.

The OECD report, slated for completion by October 1998, will report on the status of international and national public sector initiatives to deal with the Y2K problem, and will highlight effective practices, as well as gaps or inconsistencies in these efforts. The report will address the public management challenges associated with the "millennium bug", involving questions of how best to raise awareness, create incentives to act appropriately, and organise to ensure that the problem is adequately addressed. Review of existing work carried out in both public and private sectors concerning likely economic impacts and possible outcomes -- including the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises -- will be an important part of the study as well. Finally, the report will suggest further actions that are needed on this issue.

The most important message that emerges from all analyses is that the Year 2000 Problem is one that governments and businesses throughout the world need to take seriously and need to begin taking action immediately to address. ♦

Joanna Shelton is Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD. For more information on OECD work on the Year 2000 Problem, contact Daniel Blume, Administrator, Public Management Service at tel: (33.1) 45.24.97.59; fax: (33.1) 45.24.87.96; e-mail: daniel.blume@oecd.org.

New Journal Offers Global View of Governance

The World Bank's Economic and Development Institute (EDI) has revamped and renamed its periodic newsletter *Partnership*. Now published under the title *Governance*, the 60-page publication is a mini-journal, and sports an attractive black-on-white cover. The text is written clearly, and the format is inviting. EDI wants the publication to serve as "a global forum on governance and public sector management."

According to its editor-in-chief, Petter Langseth, *Governance* will regularly include "a compilation of papers selected for their depth of analysis, combined with articles which summarise important documents or highlight major events." Each issue will feature contributions from EDI staff and co-

operating organisations centred around a common theme.

The inaugural issue focuses on the building up of national integrity systems to check corruption. Mike Stevens, Principal Public Management Specialist at the World Bank, writes on the Bank's approach to corruption (an earlier article by Stevens on this topic appeared in *PMF* Vol. II, No. 5, 1996). Among the other nine articles in this issue is Jeremy Pope's "Harnessing Civil Society to Combat Corruption," and Geoff Dubrow's "Ukraine's 'Operation Clean Hands' Runs into Hot Water." Pope serves as Managing Director of Transparency International, while Dubrow is a specialist on Ukrainian politics and governance at Cornell University.

Given EDI's world-wide mandate, it is appropriate that articles in the launch edition of *Governance* address integrity systems in countries on several continents, including Asia (Hong Kong, India), Latin America (Nicaragua), and Africa (Uganda and others). Although the countries highlighted are for the most part distant not only geographically, but also culturally, from Central and Eastern Europe, readers from the latter region may find that many of the issues addressed, and strategies discussed, have relevance to their domestic situations. ♦

Governance, an occasional publication of the Regulatory Reform and Private Enterprise Division of the World Bank's Economic Development Institute is available by subscription free of charge. To order: Governance, c/o Fiona Simpkins, Room G2-158, The World Bank, 1818 H St., NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA. Tel: (1.202) 334.83.50; fax: (1.202) 676.98.74.

INBOX:



A COMPENDIUM OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES

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

PUBLICATIONS

BIRCH, Anthony H. *The British System of Government*, 1998, 288 pages. To order: Routledge, Cheriton House, North Way, Andover SP 10 5BE, England, UK. Tel: (44.1264) 342.926; (44.1264) 343.005.

LANE, Jan-Erik. *Public Sector Reform: Rationale, Trends and Problems*, December 1997, 320 pages. To order: SAGE Publications, 6 Bonhill St., London EC2A 4PU, England, UK. £17.99 (paperback).

MARGUC, Darinka. *New State, New Millennium, New Public Management*, 1997. To order: D. Marguc, School of Public Administration, Ljubljana. E-mail: darinka.marguc@uni-lj-si.

"New Challenges for Public Administration in the 21st Century: Efficient Civil Service and Decentralised Public Administration" (special issue with papers from Third International Conference of the Institute of

Administrative Sciences), *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 1998, 170 pages.

RAMA, Martin. *Efficient Public Sector Downsizing* (Working Paper 1840), November 1997, 64 pages. To order: S. Fallon, World Bank, 1818 H St., NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA. Tel: (1.202) 473.80.09; fax: (1.202) 522.11.53; e-mail: sfallon@worldbank.org. Free of charge.

SOVEROVSKI, Marie, ed. *Agenda 2000: An Appraisal of the Commission's Blueprint for Enlargement*, 1997, 142 pages. To order: EIPA, POB 1229, 6201 Maastricht, the Netherlands. Tel: (31.43) 329.63.22; fax: (31.43) 329.62.96.

TASCHEREAU, Suzanne et José Edgardo L. CAMPOS, eds. *Governance Innovations: Lessons from Experience - Building Government-Citizen-Business Partnerships*, 1992, 142 pages. To order: Institute of Governance, 122 Clarence St., Ottawa,

Ontario K1N 5P6, Canada; e-mail: info@igvn.ca.

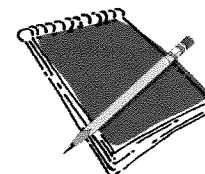
VANAGS, Edvins. *State Administration Reforms in Foreign Countries*, 1997, 36 pages. To order: E. Vanags, The Faculty of Management and Economic Informatics, Univ. of Latvia, Riga, Latvia. Tel: (371.7) 225.039; e-mail: lsi@acad.latnet.lv. In Latvian.

VASU, Michael L., Debra W. STEWART, and G. David GARSON. *Organizational Behavior and Public Management*, 1998, 403 pages. To order: Marcel Dekker, Hutgasse 4, Postfach 812, 4001 Basel, Switzerland. Fax: (44.61) 261.88.96.

VERDUSSEN, Marc. *La justice constitutionnelle en Europe centrale* (published by the Centre d'Etudes Constitutionnelles et Administratives), 1997, 206 pages. To order: Bruylant, avenue W. Churchill, 221, 1180 Bruxelles, Belgique. In French.

Polish Task Force Aims to Trim Government Red Tape

by Wanda Jelonkiewicz



In December 1997, Polish Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance, Leszek Balcerowicz created the "Team for the De-bureaucratisation of the Polish Economy" to reduce regulatory burdens on business. The Warsaw Voice recently reported on this group's progress to date.

The Team for the De-bureaucratisation of the Polish Economy is made up of 10 working groups, covering areas such as taxes, privatisation and construction. Members are law experts, economists and government representatives. Deputy Prime Minister Balcerowicz also invited well-known business people to help, hoping their experience in dealing with red tape on a daily basis would bring a real-life dimension to the team's work. So far, the team has brought to light absurd bureaucratic trappings which impede economic development.

More Freedom to Conduct Business

The team has already made significant propositions regarding taxes, the lifting of concessions, privatisation and changes in the labour law. The group in charge of simplifying the tax system hopes that by January 1999, companies will make quarterly income tax declarations to the tax office, instead of the monthly statements now required. They also hope to make the tax year coincide with the financial year.

The head of the privatisation group notes that the present law on commercialisation and privatisation impedes the process. Presently, there is a list of companies that have special significance to the state. Special permission must be obtained from the Council of Ministers in order to

privatise them. Therefore, they are protected from investors by their inaccessibility. The privatisation group recommends doing away with this list, and opening the door to new privatisations.

The group looking at concessions has prepared a new law to ease conditions for obtaining certain concessions and permits. Some concessions will be replaced by permits and licenses, which officials cannot refuse to issue if the applicant company fulfils all the conditions specified by law. Concessions and licenses will have a defined period of validity. A single official will make the decision on each application.

The group researching the labour market believes that the controversial labour regulations defining working hours must be changed. The employer should have more freedom in deciding which days are free or how many hours employees work.

Another direction of reform will involve improving the efficiency of the judiciary and the mortgage register. In Warsaw, property owners may have to wait as long as two years to have the change in ownership entered into the official register.

Input from Individuals and Firms

The plan to knock down bureaucratic barriers has excited great interest among Poles. By the end of April 1998, nearly 400 letters had flowed into the team's offices with suggestions and comments on changing existing laws. Seven hundred individuals and companies called in with their comments.

Slawomir Krzysztofowicz of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Industry and Trade likens the team's work to the never-ending labours of Hercules: "Changing one regulation requires changes to the next ones, and so on." Members of the foreign investors' chamber are worried that the final changes in laws will not be decided by Balcerowicz's appointees, but by officials at the ministries concerned.

"We are of the opinion that the position of the companies affected should be heard before making a final decision," states Ryszard Bankowicz, Director, Polish Business Round Table. "This is so the legislators understand the actual consequences of the changes. In some working groups, the government representatives try to convince everyone that this kind of dialogue is unnecessary."

Balcerowicz emphasises that it is necessary not only to analyse existing regulations, but also to prevent the regeneration of bureaucracy in the future. Officials have a tendency to create new, senseless regulations, but the average citizens who have made suggestions to the team are not totally guiltless. They often suggested that even more bureaucracy would be a good thing in some cases. ♦

This article is an abridged version of one which appeared in the 24 May 1998 issue of The Warsaw Voice. The weekly newspaper can be reached at: tel: (48.22) 37.51.38; fax: (48.22) 37.91.45; e-mail: voice@warsawvoice.com.pl. For more information on government regulation, see Administration as Service, The Public as Client; OECD, 1987; Bureaucratic Barriers to Entry: Foreign Investment in Central and Eastern Europe, OECD/SIGMA, 1994; and The OECD Report on Regulatory Reform, OECD, 1997. Documents available through SIGMA (address page 2).

Finland Supports its Neighbours in Transition

by Eija-Leena Linkola



Photo/OECD: Sylvain Bardin

Eija-Leena Linkola

Finland has actively supported economic and democratic transition in the Baltic states and the north-western regions of the Russian Federation. Both alone and in collaboration with international partners, Finland has financed several projects in these countries to support stability, welfare and security, and to lessen environmental risks.

The central and eastern European countries involved in the process of accession to the European Union have already found it to be a long and winding road. The process is also combined with their ongoing endeavour to transform their domestic political, economic and social order. It is in the interest of EU Member States to support these countries in their efforts to meet EU membership criteria. Best practices, benchmarking and twinning are valuable tools for structured co-operation to achieve this goal.

Finland still vividly recalls its preparations for EU membership. The country submitted its application for membership in 1992, and acceded to the Union in 1995. The negotiations were completed within a relatively short period and, due to this tight

time frame, the preparations had to be conducted in a very intensive and systematic way. Several factors contributed to carrying out these preparations in a successful manner, including: public administration reforms, co-operation within the European Economic Area, close collaboration with other EU applicant countries, efforts to increase competencies in EU issues, and a tradition of successful Nordic co-operation.

Co-operation on EU Integration

Since 1990, Finland has engaged in broad and diverse co-operation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, especially the north-western regions of the Russian Federation and the Baltic states. This area is very large and the challenges are considerable. The issues which need to be addressed include developing democracy, promoting the principles of constitutional government and equality, and increasing economic and political stability.

Joint action, especially with the Baltic states, is based on several common interests. The Baltic states' aim to join the EU has strengthened co-operation with Finland, and has led to a greater interest in these countries on the EU integration process, sovereignty, internal security, public administration and good governance.

Several Fields of Action

In the 1990s, Finland has channelled a total of Mk 5 billion (ECU 830 million) into support for the transition process in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Bilateral funding has been allocated to environmental investments, legislative reforms, energy efficiency, nuclear safety and the development of public administration. The main partner in the

Baltic states has been Estonia, although the allocations for Latvia and Lithuania have been increased.

Half of the funds are already being channelled into projects co-financed with the EBRD and other international partners. Finland is currently involved in more than 20 joint programmes accounting for over Mk 15 billion (ECU 2.5 billion) in international funding. Work in the environmental area has received special attention.

Co-operation with neighbouring countries is being stepped up, with bilateral and multilateral funding focused on larger projects and programmes with clear objectives and measurable outcomes. The aim is to achieve improved efficiency and more sustainable results. Partner countries are expected to show a strong commitment to projects and development programmes. Backing for work carried out by non-governmental organisations is one of the main strands of Finland's strategy for co-operation with neighbouring countries. NGOs working in the agricultural, social and educational sectors and trade union development seem to be especially effective.

Positive Impacts

Finland's support to its neighbours has yielded positive results: improvements in environmental safety and in social and economic stability have affected positively the lives of Finnish citizens, and have created improved opportunities for successful regional economic co-operation at the enterprise level. ♦

Eija-Leena Linkola is Counsellor in the Public Management Department of Finland's Ministry of Finance. She can be reached at tel: (358.9) 160.321.57; fax (358.9) 160.32.35; e-mail: eija-leena.linkola@vm.vn.fi. The Finnish Government also has contributed to the financing of the SIGMA Programme, and thus to the publication of this newsletter.

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 Non-members and the European Union Phare Programme. The initiative supports public administration reform efforts in thirteen countries in transition, and is principally 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: Public Administration Development Strategies; Policy-Making, Co-ordination and Regulation; Budgeting and Resource Allocation; Public Service Management; Administrative Oversight, Financial Control and Audit. In addition, an Information Services Unit disseminates published and on-line materials on public management topics.

ON THE AGENDA



Upcoming Programmes

20-26 September 1998, World Bank, Washington, DC, USA. "Privatization and Regulation of Transport Service," high-level course for transport policymakers and regulators. Contact: C. Giroday, EDI, World Bank, Washington, DC, USA. Fax: (1.202) 676.09.59; e-mail: cgiroday@worldbank.org. In English.

21-25 September 1998, Latvian School of Public Administration, Riga, Latvia. Conference on "Improving Public Sector Service Delivery." Contact: Gunta Veismane, Director, Latvian School of Public Administration, Raina Blv. 4, Riga 1050, Latvia. Tel: (371.7) 229.116; fax: (371.7) 821.277; e-mail: vas@sisenis.com.latnet.lv. In English, Russian.

27 September-2 October 1998, JFK School of Government, Cambridge, MA, USA. Executive Programme for Professional Development: "Regulatory Reform -- The Current Challenge." Contact: JFK School of Government, 79 JFK St., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. Tel: (1.617) 495.13.19; e-mail: KSG_ExecEd@Harvard.edu; WWW: <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu>. In English.

28 September-23 October 1998, IIPA, Paris, France. Seminar on "The Civil Service and the Protection of Human Rights." Contact: International Institute of Public Administration, 2 avenue de l'Observatoire, 75272 Paris Cedex 06. Tel: (33.1) 44.41.85.00; fax (33.1) 44.41.85.59. In French.

28 September-20 November 1998, JFK School of Government, Cambridge, MA, USA. Executive Programme for Professional Development: "Senior Executive Fellows." Contact: JFK School of Government, 79 JFK St., Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. Tel: (1.617) 495.13.19; e-mail: KSG_ExecEd@Harvard.edu; WWW: <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu>. 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, please send details to SIGMA (address on page 2). A more complete calendar of events may be found at: <http://www.oecd.org/pumalsigmaweb>.