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**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29TH SESSION OF THE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

held on 15-16 April 2004, Paris, France

**30th Session of the Public Governance Committee
28-29 October 2004
Château de la Muette, Paris**

This draft summary record is presented to the Committee for approval at its 30th session.

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29TH SESSION OF THE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE¹

Introduction and objectives of the meeting

1. Seventy-six delegates from 27 member countries, as well as observers from Brazil, Chile and Slovenia, attended the 29th session of the Public Governance Committee (PGC) on 15-16 April 2004 (see Annex). The main objectives of the meeting were to:

- Discuss and approve a new Committee mandate for 2005-09, a Programme of Work for the biennium 2005/6, and a Programme of Work with non-members, and note the progress of outreach work over the last 12 months.
- Engage in in-depth, substantive discussion on the topic of evaluation and assessment in the context of the Committee's current work programme; provide guidance on future work in this area; and learn about country experiences through presentations by various countries on different aspects and areas of evaluation.

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

2. The Chair of the Public Governance Committee, Ms. Pia Marconi of Italy, opened the meeting. The agenda [GOV/PGC/A(2004)1] was adopted without modification.

Item 2 – Approval of the Summary Record of the 28th Session

3. The summary record of the 28th session of the Public Management Committee [GOV/PGC/M(2004)1] was adopted without amendment.

Item 3 – Opening remarks by the Chair

4. The Chair welcomed delegates and outlined the main items of the agenda. The Committee would discuss several important documents that would guide its work over the next several years: the new mandate for 2005-2009 and the 2005/6 programme of work. It would also discuss, for the first time, a programme of work with non-members.

5. For the substantive part of the meeting, delegates would address the topic of evaluation, both in general and in several specific policy areas. Following the success of the symposium-style meeting last November, the Bureau had worked with the Secretariat to continue to allow broader discussion of key issues and greater opportunities for interaction. This item would include a variety of country presentations, reflecting the important function of this Committee as a forum for exchange of experience and good practice.

6. The Chair called delegates' attention to the new mode of work the Committee was adopting. Procedural aspects of the Committee's work (comment on and approval of reports, for example) would increasingly be handled electronically, thus allowing more time at meetings for the discussion of substantive items. More documents would be presented for information and comment via electronic

1. The Public Governance Committee was formerly known as the Public Management Committee (PUMA); its name was changed in January 2004.

discussion groups or email, for example, and it was important to provide feedback to the Secretariat on documents not discussed in plenary session.

7. Finally, the Chair reported on the previous day's consultation between the Bureau and the Trade Union Advisory Council (TUAC). The meeting had been very positive, and TUAC had shown strong interest in the Committee's work on public sector modernisation, in particular modernising public employment.

Item 4 – Discussion of a new Committee mandate for 2005-2009

8. During this item delegates discussed the new mandate of the Committee, which will provide a framework for activities from 2005 to 2009. Several countries had provided written comments on an earlier draft, in line with the new method of work. The new mandate focuses on the crucial role of public governance in supporting economic and social development, and notes the importance of taking a country's specific context into account when designing and implementing reform. It also addresses the need for more comparative, evidence-based analysis of public management issues. The draft presented at the meeting received broad and strong support, and was approved. There was agreement on the strategic importance of outreach and horizontal work, although some countries expressed concern for the increasing attention paid to such work and the costs that this implied.

Item 5 – Discussion of the programme of work for 2005/6

9. The Committee had discussed a draft programme at its previous session in November, and since then the text had been revised, information on resources had been added, and countries had provided their priority ranking on the proposed activities. The Director of the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, Ms. Odile Sallard, introduced the draft programme and outlined the OECD's new budget process and move towards becoming a performance-based organisation. Deputy Secretary-General Richard Hecklinger provided further information on the OECD budget process, and encouraged the Committee in its work on evaluation, particularly the measurement of impacts or outcomes, noting that this subject is of great concern to the Organisation.

10. Countries supported efforts in the programme to strike a balance between building on proven capacity and moving into new areas, including work on data and indicators on public governance, and multilevel governance. Several delegates stressed the need to remain flexible in order to tackle emerging issues. The programme of work takes into account countries' priorities, the OECD's capacity to provide value-added and comparative advantage, and the overall strategic priorities of the OECD. It was agreed that the Secretariat and Bureau would present a final programme to the Committee, and that the budget reductions of -2% in 2005 and an additional -1% in 2006 would be applied to the activity which received lowest priority (Decision-making in Government).

Item 6 – Outreach: new programme of work process and update on work in progress

11. This was the first time that the Committee had discussed the programme of work for outreach, and some delegates were concerned about the gap between resources available and the voluntary contributions needed to carry out the programme. Overall, however, the discussion showed strong support for work with non-members. Public governance is increasingly recognized as a fundamental policy dimension in OECD outreach work and in development work in more generally. There has been strong demand for co-operation with the OECD in this field from non-member countries.

12. It was agreed that the Committee would provide further feedback, via written procedure, on country priorities concerning the substantive and regional approach of the work as well as possibilities to make voluntary contributions to the work.

Item 7 – The choice of tools for enhancing policy impact: evaluation and assessment – introduction and overview

13. The rest of the meeting was devoted to the main substantive theme of evaluation and assessment. The topic was introduced by Lars Dahlberg of the Swedish Agency for Public Management, who noted that evaluation can help support evidence-based policy-making. His presentation raised a broad spectrum of issues, including what, why and when to evaluate; the tradeoffs inherent in choosing who should carry out an evaluation; the increasing use of participative evaluation; and improving the quality of evaluation and its use in policymaking. Delegates then heard a presentation on the Programme Assessment Rating Tool in the United States. The US experience highlighted the importance of system design, having a key process owner, system maintenance and investment in training.

Item 8 – Ex-post evaluation of regulatory policy tools

14. Introductory presentations from Canada, Denmark and Professor George Yarrow from the Regulatory Policy Institute, Oxford (United Kingdom), formed the basis for discussions of member countries' experiences with ex-post evaluation of regulatory tools and institutions, guided by questions set out in the Secretariat's background note prepared for the session. Discussions brought out a number of "classic" dimensions and challenges of policy evaluation, e.g. what to evaluate, for whom and by whom. Country presentations illustrated the differences in approaches to regulatory quality, and the subsequent differences in evaluations of regulatory tools, institutions and policies. Discussions also focussed on the question of targeting regulatory policy evaluations according to criteria such as economic impacts and risks. To remain concentrated on areas where the PGC has its strongest insights, the Committee concluded that continued work on the evaluation of regulatory policies should take a whole-of-government approach (evaluation frameworks, tools, processes, etc.) rather than address the evaluation of regulatory practices and results in specific sectors.

Item 9 – Assessing measures for promoting integrity and preventing corruption

15. Discussion showed that there is a clear interest and a growing need in OECD countries for information on how to assess measures promoting integrity and preventing corruption in order to ensure citizens' trust in public institutions and assess the quality of governance at large. Key contributions to the debate included a presentation of Japan's experience in assessing the impact of the implementation of the Ethics Code on public trust and a review of France's methods and practical tools to prevent corruption. Some OECD countries mentioned that their approach to assessment increasingly combines external assessment processes with feedback mechanisms involving citizens. In addition, a few countries have shifted their assessment focus from the implementation of selected tools to a more holistic approach to examining key factors influencing the organisational culture. Participants highlighted the need to ensure the adequacy and timeliness of assessment methods, the credibility of the assessor and the integration of the assessment results in the policy-making process.

Item 10 - Finland: First steps in evaluation of civic participation in policy-making

16. A short presentation on Finland's initial experience in evaluating civic participation was followed by brief contributions from the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands. The ensuing discussion highlighted that while the search for practical and meaningful tools for the evaluation of government efforts to inform and consult their citizens during policy-making is only in its early stages, it is nonetheless gathering momentum in a number of OECD member countries. Evaluation is particularly important in the field of public participation in policy-making as it focuses attention on the objectives of public involvement from the very start; validates both the processes and outputs of public involvement so that decision-makers and participants can trust the results; anchors public involvement in government

decision-making and demonstrates that it is accountable, consultative and transparent; and indicates government commitment to continuously improve public involvement with regard to techniques, the issues to explore and whom to engage. It was noted that the degree to which evaluation of a policy is established is closely linked to the stage of development of the policy.

Item 11 - Discussion and conclusions

17. In the final session on evaluation, Knut Rexed, Vice-Chair of the Committee, drew some conclusions from the various presentations and discussions. He stressed that evaluation was essential for public governance – it is important to know what has been achieved through public policies. Evaluation is thus not a technical, but a cultural, issue, and should be part of a culture of continuous improvement. A feedback cycle for policy is also necessary both for correcting policies and for the exercise of accountability.

18. The concept of “evaluation architecture” was introduced. It was suggested that a common descriptive framework should be developed for the different types of assessment and evaluation activities. This framework could include a hierarchy of elements such as: basic output data; continuously measured indicators of outcomes achieved; standardised, routine assessment and feedback; evaluation integrated into a policy programme; and independent external, in-depth evaluation. Underlying these elements is the total mass of knowledge and assumptions about the relationship between cause and effect. The various elements are used in different situations and for different purposes, and require different levels of investment. The question is thus not whether to evaluate, but how to achieve the optimal design of a comprehensive evaluation architecture.

19. The challenges of evaluation include ensuring that it is effective, of good quality, timely, useable, and actually used, including by the political level. Also, public access to evaluation results is necessary for assessing the use of public money and holding elected public officials accountable for policies they enact.

Item 12 - Other business

20. Korea announced that it would be hosting an OECD government symposium for senior officials on “Making Change Happen” on 14-15 July 2004 in Seoul. This meeting will provide input to the OECD report on “E-Government for Seamless Services”. Korea would also hold an International Expo on Government Innovation during the same period.

Conclusions by the Chair

21. The Chair reminded delegates of the conclusions reached the previous day on the programme of work and mandate, and that they were expected to provide further feedback on country priorities for outreach activities in 2005-6. She also noted that there were several documents requiring comments from countries, including the outline of the report on e-government. This is an important aspect of the Committee’s new method of working, making more extensive use of electronic means for country feedback.

22. The Chair thanked the delegates and the Secretariat, and closed the meeting.

**Annex
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