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## WRITTEN SURVEY ON "STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS"

*The attached questionnaire is being sent to OECD Member countries in the context of the Public Management Committee's work on Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections.*

*The completed questionnaire should be returned to Christian Vergez and Daniel Blume at the Public Management Service by 15 September, 1999.*

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Any enquiries regarding this questionnaire should be addressed to Ms. Anne-Marie Leroy or Mr. Vergez or Mr. Blume.

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Mr. Vergez can be reached at (33-1) 45 24 90 44; E-mail: [christian.vergez@oecd.org](mailto:christian.vergez@oecd.org);

Mr. Blume can be reached at (33-1) 45 24 97 59; E-mail: [daniel.blume@oecd.org](mailto:daniel.blume@oecd.org).

Please insert the name and title of the person who completed the questionnaire:

Name.....  
Title.....  
Address.....  
.....  
Telephone.....  
Fax.....  
E-mail.....

## Introduction to the written survey on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections”

1. This questionnaire aims to support the development of a better understanding of the overall legal, policy and management frameworks in all OECD Member countries **for providing information for citizens, consulting with the public, and promoting active citizen participation** in the development of public policies and services. It also explores the range of methods and tools to achieve these aims, and approaches to evaluating their effectiveness. It should be seen as a **first, incremental step** in contributing to the activity’s overall objective: to support government efforts to strengthen public participation, transparency and democratic accountability, and ultimately, policy effectiveness, through development of comparative information, analysis and advice.

2. The questionnaire alone is not intended to address every aspect of the activity’s objectives. Case studies being undertaken in parallel and as a follow-up to this questionnaire will provide more concrete examples within specific policy sectors of how countries address these issues within their own national contexts. A separate questionnaire to support the development of indicators of government use of IT is planned later this year, along with related analysis regarding the role of IT as a tool for strengthening government-citizen connections. Information from all of these sources will contribute to comparative analysis, synthesis reports and conclusions regarding OECD Member country policies and practices in these areas.

3. This questionnaire was developed in close consultation with the working group on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections,” composed of representatives of 19 countries and the EU.<sup>1</sup> It was simplified in response to comments from the PUMA Committee in March, and then pilot-tested in six countries: Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Greece and the United Kingdom. Following discussion of “lessons learned” from the pilot experience, the working group on “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections” decided at its meeting of 17-18 June that, with a few additional clarifications, the questionnaire should now be sent to all Member countries. The following “**lessons learned**” are aimed at providing clearer direction for this round involving all Member countries:

- In some cases a comprehensive response will not be feasible. It will suffice in such cases to explain the context and provide one or more examples that respond to the question.
- Because of diverse country approaches and contexts, it is not possible to develop a “one-size-fits-all” questionnaire that is equally applicable to all countries. Countries therefore should not feel obliged to reply to questions that are not relevant to their situation. Rather, countries should be encouraged to respond flexibly to ensure their relevance, and to group questions together if necessary to avoid repetition.
- Countries stressed the necessity of sufficient time, in the range of two months, to respond adequately.
- Countries that had the most success in responding were able to persuade a range of contributors across the government of the **benefits** of participating and providing information. Benefits include the opportunity of the participating country to review and learn about different approaches across its own government, as well as to learn from other countries’ approaches across a common, comparative framework. Responses to the questionnaire will be

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1. Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and the European Union.

made available to others through the PUMA Web site (subject to the agreement of the participating country).

- Given that the questionnaire is **aimed primarily at understanding government-citizen relations in the policy development process**, it appeared that some pilot country responses over-emphasised service delivery. While responsive service delivery is an important aspect of government-citizen relations, **the focus of this questionnaire has been consciously restricted** to address information, consultation and active citizen participation as it relates to the development of policies, rather than the delivery of services *per se*. This does not exclude consideration of **policies** regarding service delivery, but such consideration should address decisions regarding what types of benefits and services should be provided, rather than investigations into the management and quality of an existing service.<sup>2</sup> This separation is being made to avoid duplicating the large body of existing PUMA work regarding the management of public services, including a 1994 Symposium on service quality, a 1996 publication on “Responsive Government” and ongoing work on human resource and performance management issues.
- Many of the questions raised in this survey are dealt with most actively at a regional or municipal level of government, rather than at the national level. Countries therefore should feel free to cite examples related to experience at sub-national levels. However, the main focus of this questionnaire is on the **national** (central) level, in part because it is a more manageable starting point for developing comparative information across OECD countries. Comparisons across local levels of government can be more difficult, given differences in how countries divide responsibilities between national and local levels, and the much larger volume of data to consider. On the other hand, in some countries the degree of decentralisation is such, and local practice is so closely integrated with national policy, that restricting their responses to the national level would make the questionnaire irrelevant for them. In those cases, it is entirely acceptable that the countries provide answers taking fully into account their own institutional arrangements. This will provide valuable information on how in those countries government-citizen connections necessarily take place at the local level, and on how in those cases the information-consultation-participation policies are implemented.
- Pilot countries’ responses can support country understanding of how to respond to the questionnaire, and will be provided as they become available on the PUMA web site at <http://www.oecd.org/puma/gvrnance/citizen>.

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2. If you wish to cite information, for example, regarding a welfare agency, we would be interested in how this agency informs, consults with and involves its users as well as the general public on policy questions such as what benefits should be provided, what criteria for eligibility should be applied, how welfare services may be linked up with other services such as training, employment assistance and child care, or choices of types of services to be offered and where they can be found. The questionnaire is *not* intended to address questions about, for example, users’ level of satisfaction regarding waiting times, responsiveness of employees, or “user-friendliness.”

**QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN SURVEY ON  
“STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT-CITIZEN CONNECTIONS”**

To promote common understanding of terms and concepts used in this questionnaire and to facilitate responses, **a brief glossary of main terms is provided.**

**Definition of terms used in this study**

**“Citizen”** is used in its larger sense to refer to an individual or group of individuals (non-governmental organisations, unions, pressure groups, etc.), regardless of nationality, who may become involved in or be impacted by public policies and programmes.

**“Government”** (*administration* in French) signifies the central administration, including its functions that are administered at the local level. As participants in the working group stressed the difficulty that many countries would have in obtaining comprehensive information from the local level, the questionnaire addresses as a priority information at the “higher” central level. Nevertheless, information regarding the situation at the local level will also be welcome.

**“Connections”** or “relations” refers to the continuum of citizen involvement in the development of government policies and services. This continuum ranges from 1) government provision of information to the citizen; to 2) government consultation with citizens, which at its least intensive can consist of a simple, one-off request for citizen views; to 3) more active citizen participation, or even partnership, in the development of public policies and services.

**“IT”** refers in this context to new information technologies -- computers, other screen terminals such as kiosks or television, and the associated networks and technologies that connect them to information databases (the Internet, intranets, microchips, CD-ROMS, “smart cards”, etc.). The telephone and fax are **not** considered new technologies in this context.

*Text in italics provides background explanation regarding the purposes and types of information being sought.*

**Section 1. General context for strengthening government-citizen connections**

*The purpose of this section is to obtain an understanding of the overall context – the key issues and problems – that the government is dealing with as it considers the strengthening of government-citizen relations in decision-making and policy implementation. Responses should outline the main priorities and objectives, and take into account the culture and traditions of government-citizen relations in your country, as well as any emerging problems or constraints (e.g. lack of time, skills, or resources). A description of the overall context should explain what are considered the most important factors motivating government action to strengthen government-citizen relations, for example:*

- *To respond to citizens' demands that their views be better taken into account;*
- *To reinforce the legitimacy of decisions and strengthen political support in order to facilitate their implementation (for example, policies to meet long-term objectives, or the privatisation of certain State activities);*
- *To lead or follow a more general trend among OECD Member countries in support of stronger government-citizen relations;*
- *To pursue or reinforce a pre-existing tradition of consultation with citizens; or*
- *To reduce government budgetary expenditures.*

1. Can you briefly explain the overall context – the key problems or issues to address -- in your country in order to “Strengthen Government-Citizen Connections”? (Objectives, priorities . . .)

## Section 2. Legal and policy framework

*It is recognised that different countries give different emphasis to legal and regulatory vs. less formal mechanisms for rapidly advancing policies or innovations to improve government-citizen relations. The purpose of this section is to obtain an overall understanding of the legal and policy framework, as well as its relative importance within each country's overall approach to providing information to and interacting with citizens.*

- 2.** What laws and policies have been adopted (or are in the process of being adopted), and what are their key points, in the areas listed below?

*Under each sub-question, a brief summary is requested of the key points of relevant texts (laws, policy decrees, regulations, directives, circulars, guidelines or other) in place or in the process of being adopted or developed. Recent developments and, if applicable, the improvements they may have brought, are of particular interest.*

- 2.1** To better understand and respond to citizen demands?
- 2.2** To ensure citizen access to information and to promote its dissemination?
- The European Commission has developed a document, COM(1998)585, entitled, "Public sector information: a key resource for Europe," including some elements in Annex 1 summarising Member State laws that may be useful in supporting a response to this sub- question. It may be consulted at <http://www.echo.lu/info2000/en/publicsector/gp-index.html>.*
- 2.3** To promote consultation and active citizen participation in government decision-making processes?
- 2.4** To support the use of new information technologies to strengthen government-citizen relations?
- 2.5** For members of the European Union, what is the relationship between these texts and the texts of the European Community?

*Please attach relevant texts to your response. If available, English or French texts will be appreciated.*

- 3.** What government information, if any, is not made accessible to the public? Please describe those categories of information concerned for which:
- The government administration does not have the authority to make this information public (e.g. because of laws protecting individual privacy);
  - The government has the discretion to keep certain information "secret" or for internal use only (e.g. secrets that could compromise national defence, certain international treaty negotiations, or certain internal policy deliberations).

*In relation to the question below, a country may consider that certain policy domains should be treated differently than others in order to have better information dissemination, consultation or fostering of citizen participation. Examples are sought here in order to understand whether particular aspects of public policy present special challenges or are given higher priority for involving citizens than others.*

- 4.** Can you provide examples of policy **sectors** where special laws or policies are in place that:
  - 4.1** Emphasise access to information (e.g. information to promote public health, information to protect consumers, etc.)?
  - 4.2** Promote citizen consultation and active participation in decision-making (e.g. referenda or public consultation processes on regional development plans, development of public facilities, or environmental impacts of a project)?



### Section 3. Implementation tools and practices

*This section seeks to obtain an overview of how a country ensures that its laws and policies, as discussed in section 2, are implemented effectively. It is recognised that information and communication tools, management techniques and practices may vary depending on the policy objective, and that comprehensive information may not be possible in all cases. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the respondent can provide an indication of overall emphases and recent trends. Concrete examples are encouraged where aggregate information may be unavailable or inappropriate.*

**5.** What is being done to promote or ensure that these laws and policies are actually implemented, i.e.:

**5.1** What kinds of institutions (e.g. special department or agency, commission, task force, ombudsman, institutions for preventing or resolving disputes, etc) are in place?

*The response should address any recent efforts to create new institutions, or initiatives to renew or strengthen existing ones with responsibilities in these areas.*

**5.2** What co-ordination, if any, is undertaken through these institutions between the central and local levels of government?

**6.** What kinds of tools\* are being predominantly used, and how are they being used:

**6.1** to better understand and respond to citizen demands?

**6.2** to inform citizens?

**6.3** to consult with them?

**6.4** to encourage their active participation?

**6.5** to customise service and interactions?

**6.6** Are new tools being added to complement the old, or are they replacing the old tools?

*\*Responses should support an understanding of the range of tools being used and how they are being used by your government to strengthen relations with citizens. These tools can include traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) or more direct instruments such as mail, the telephone, Internet, and public information kiosks.*

**7.** What actions have been taken to facilitate and increase **citizen use** of new information technologies in their relations with the government (for example, subsidies for computers, training, publicity, etc.)?

**Section 4. Evaluating results**

*This section aims to evaluate the impact of laws, policies and approaches to implementation described in the previous sections of this questionnaire. Laws and policies are addressed in question 8 separately from tools and approaches to implementation in Question 9 to ensure that both aspects are addressed. However, responses to these two questions can be combined if evaluations that have been carried out on these issues were addressed in an integrated fashion. Question 10 addresses the impact and cost-effectiveness of IT separately because it is considered to have had an especially large impact in some countries. Examples of promising as well as less successful practices in Questions 11 and 12 will allow for concrete discussion of what has worked or not worked and why.*

- 8.** How does the government evaluate the impacts of its **laws and policies** concerning information, citizen consultation and active participation? What were the principal conclusions of these evaluations?
- 9.** How does the administration evaluate the impacts of its use of different **tools** in strengthening government-citizen connections? What were the principal conclusions?
- 10.** Have new technologies affected the relationship between the government and the citizen? (Please provide examples, including the aspect of cost-effectiveness.)
- 11.** Can you describe examples of “promising practices,”\*\* including key factors or conditions contributing to their success, addressing:
  - 11.1** information for citizens?
  - 11.2** citizen consultation/active participation, either directly with individuals, and/or through intermediaries representing the public (e.g. NGOs, social partners)?

*\*\* Criteria to take into account in selecting promising practices include the extent to which the practice contributed to a better informed and more involved public; effectiveness; the capacity to sustain the practice over time; a good balance between cost and quality; generation of savings; and the potential for broader application.*
- 12.** In considering examples of practices that worked less well, what were the main factors impeding their success? How can such difficulties be overcome?