Fostering Diversity in the Public Service

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Public Employment and Management Working Party

FOSTERING DIVERSITY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

This document takes into account the comments made at the Expert Meeting on Fostering Diversity, held at the OECD Conference Centre on 1st October 2009.

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FOREWORD

The Public Employment and Management working party (PEMWP) in its annual meeting in December 2008 requested the OECD secretariat to explore ways to build an appropriate public workforce. Hence, the Public Governance and Territorial Development (GOV) Directorate included as part of its programme of work for 2009 – 2010 the development of activities and studies on the *i*) size, *ii*) diversity, and *iii*) competencies of the public workforce under the umbrella title of "Building the adequate government workforce". The key question is how to build a public workforce that is of the adequate size to secure capacity, has the right competencies for the proper delivery of public services, and is representative of the population it serves. The issue of diversity focuses on the achievements and challenges OECD countries are facing to build a representative public service while at the same time guaranteeing a proper supply of skills and competencies required for service delivery.

The findings and conclusions presented in this report emerge from *i*) the information provided by 14 OECD member countries: Australia, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, and a non-member economy, Israel; *ii*) the research conducted by the Secretariat; and *iii*) the discussions held during the experts meeting on *Building a Stronger and Fairer Public Service by Fostering Diversity* on 1 October 2009 at the OECD headquarters.

This project was led by Oscar Huerta Melchor (OECD, Secretariat) and reviewed by Elsa Pilichowski (OECD, Secretariat) under the supervision of Barry Anderson (OECD, Secretariat). Pauline Greco, consultant contributed to the research conducted by the Secretariat. Emmanuelle Arnould (OECD, Secretariat) provided useful comments on the early version of this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For a number of OECD countries, diversity in the public service has become a top political priority as it may help to achieve political and social government objectives such as social mobility, equity, and quality in service delivery. Diversity can be described not only as the mixture of backgrounds and competences but also as valuing and using people's competences, experience, and perspectives to improve government efficiency and effectiveness, and to meet public servants' professional expectations.

There seems to be growing consensus among OECD countries that pursuing diversity may also help to preserve core public service values such as fairness, transparency, impartiality and representativeness. There is a growing tendency to see diversity as an asset rather than as a problem. Moreover, the search for efficiency gains is another driver for diversity in the public service, as one of the main expected benefits is an increase in innovation. In addition, diversity may contribute to raising the quality of public services by improving the understanding of community needs and ameliorating social dialogue and communication with the wider population. Even more, by being instrumental in enhancing public service quality and the employability of disadvantaged groups, diversity might contribute to social mobility. There is increasing awareness that diversity can help achieve important outcomes in major policy areas, by tackling challenges such as ageing populations. Diversity can also help advance the reform agenda and promote good governance practices by helping to improve the relations between the government and citizens, and by strengthening trust in government. Thus, diversity principles should be part of any public management reform, as diversity initiatives cannot succeed as an isolated strategy.

Implementing diversity policies can involve a number of problems, many of which relate to unclear or complex regulatory frameworks, a lack of financial resources, rigid human resource management systems, and cultural barriers. However, the main obstacle to achieving diversity objectives seems to be the lack of real or concrete evidence regarding the benefits it may bring to government performance. Thus, implementing diversity programmes demands a long process of confidence-building so as to obtain support from public managers, public servants, and citizens. Diversity may also trigger conflict due to cultural differences, communication problems, and a tense atmosphere in the workplace that may affect organisational performance.

The challenge of pursuing diversity is how to do it in a sustainable, responsive and professional manner. For a diversity policy to be successful, it should be coherent and intelligible to all stakeholders. In order to ensure cohesiveness, commitment and a whole-of-government approach, diversity policies can be formulated as a joint effort of government organisations. Diversity also demands a strong and committed leadership to motivate people, promote institutional adaptation, and maintain the impetus for reform through persuasion, negotiation and influencing people's values and culture. In that sense, a government-wide vision would help to link diversity initiatives with broader strategic reform objectives.

Achieving diversity is a long-term process that must be thought of as an integral part of strategic planning. Integrating equality and diversity into workforce planning helps to identify the diverse skills, knowledge, experience and different ways of thinking that are needed to drive government strategies forward.

Diversity policies are usually formulated under a top-down approach. The central HRM body acts as a focal point for promoting diversity policies, as it is responsible for developing the strategy, monitoring progress, promoting the benefits, linking diversity issues to strategic workforce planning, and providing guidance and support to line ministries and agencies for the implementation of their own diversity policies. A key element is to achieve the right balance between central government co-ordination and delegated implementation responsibility. It would seem that the creation of 'collaborative networks' can help foster dialogue among the key actors, promote the exchange of information, and allow feedback on the general guiding principles, including suggestions for improvement.

There is growing agreement among OECD countries about the need to address discriminatory practices that may permeate all stages of the HRM process. In particular, measures have been taken to make the recruitment process fairer, more transparent and more flexible to attract talented people with a mix of backgrounds, experience and perspectives. Improvements to the recruitment process refer to the instruments or mechanisms that aim to: *i*) diversify the communication channels to reach a wider audience; *ii*) motivate people to apply for vacancies in the public service; *iii*) relax the selection process and criteria to make them more inclusive but still focused on analysing skills, qualities and competencies required for the job; and *iv*) facilitate the integration and retention of new recruits to the workplace.

However, OECD countries face some difficulties in evaluating diversity policies and programmes due to unclear objectives, lack of strategic planning and vision, and poor quality data on workforce diversity. Good practice in OECD countries suggests that diversity policies and programmes should be evaluated on a regular basis under the umbrella of a long-term evaluation framework, clear conceptual foundations, and a methodology for data collection and analysis.

One of the biggest challenges of pursuing diversity is to make the reform sustainable, as the benefits are very likely to emerge slowly and be less apparent to the outside world. Thus leadership and commitment at all levels become indispensable. Furthermore, to maximise the potential benefits, it is necessary to push for a change of attitude towards diversity. OECD countries consider that if discrimination and intolerance are not properly treated, diversity will be harder to attain and the impact of any reform in this direction will be minimal.

OECD countries seem to be of the view that if the civil service is to be efficient and effective in delivering public services to a socially, ethnically, culturally and economically diverse society in a personalised way, it needs, among other things, to reflect society. For that purpose, a diverse workforce must be seen as an added value. Achieving diversity is a long-term, confidence-building process. However, diversity cannot be achieved without first dealing with discrimination, and enhancing equality in public employment, where merit should prevail.

In order for this to happen, there must be a common vision on the type of public service governments want or need for the future. Despite being a long-term project, diversity may produce some benefits for the short term. Fostering diversity could help to strengthen trust in government by portraying it as responsible, responsive, and legitimate; improve the capacity of government for strategic workforce planning; and ensure regular updating of the HRM system.

FOSTERING DIVERSITY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Introduction

This project takes as its basic premise that workforce diversity contributes to make a stronger and fairer in the public service that better understands and meets people's expectations. In the future, the public workplace will be characterised by increased mobility and by a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences and competences required to satisfy social needs. The design and adoption of more flexible and long-term employment policies will be a priority for OECD governments. By improving the representation in government of the different social groups, diversity plays a part in maintaining core public values, increasing managerial efficiency, improving policy effectiveness, raising the quality of public services, and enhancing social mobility.

However, to benefit from the advantages of a diverse workforce, governments need to see it as an asset through which the different experiences, knowledge and competencies of individuals play a part in improving governmental performance. It has been suggested in a number of academic studies and government reports that workforce diversity may bring about gains in efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the public sector, but there is still the need of real evidence.

Why is it relevant for governments today? OECD countries are aware that understanding the needs of different groups in society is linked to delivering better public services. In the large majority of OECD countries population is diverse in terms of gender, religion, age, disability or non-disability, sexuality, national or ethnic origin and all of them with different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Governments have a social responsibility towards every member of society to satisfy their needs and concerns which differ according to people's characteristics.

Moreover, the population in OECD countries is ageing rapidly. This phenomenon is creating pressures on government to provide public services as current public service delivery systems were designed to meet the demands of relatively young societies. Ageing refers not only to an increase in the population aged 65 and over but to a decline in the number of children, youth, and working-age population (people between 15 and 64 years old). Increases in life expectancy, low fertility rates and increasing death rates are factors that account for these changes. The old-age dependency ratio is expected to change dramatically over the coming decades as a consequence of population ageing.[1] In 2000, the old-age dependency ratio in the OECD area was 22.8 and is forecasted to change to 51.2 by 2050. Considering ageing as a backdrop, OECD countries need to design a service delivery system that is flexible and adaptable to operate in an environment of continuous change in people's demands at high levels of efficiency, accountability and equity. For the public service the situation is similar, a large proportion of public employees will retire over a relatively short period of time. Maintaining capacity of the public service to deliver the same level and quality of public services for all citizens is a complex management task considering that this has to be achieved in tandem with service delivery changes to meet demands from an ageing society. Thus, to replace retirees and attract competent staff, the public service has to be an attractive employer by providing each and every employee the opportunity to develop regardless of their gender, disability, ethnic origin, age, and educational and social background.
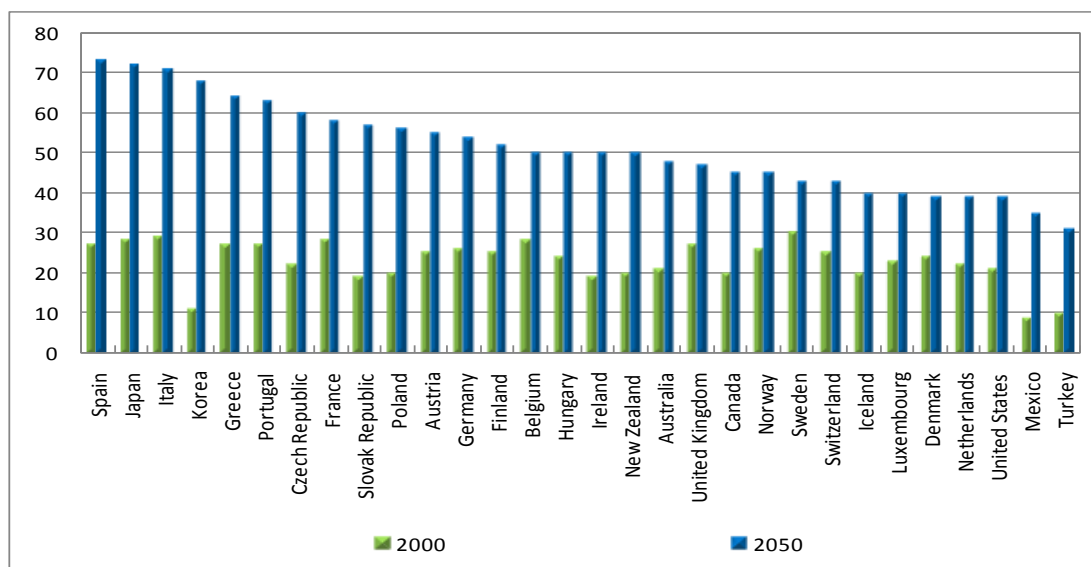
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[1]   The old-age dependency ratio is the number of working age persons (15-64 years old) per older person (65 years or older) that is used as an indicator of the dependency burden on potential workers.

Figure 1. Old-age dependency ratios in OECD countries

(2000-2050)

Source: OECD (2009a) *Ageing and changes in public service delivery - findings and conclusions*, GOV/PGC/PEM(2008)7/FINAL

Moreover, ageing is creating pressures for governments to maintain capacity as a huge cohort of civil servants is about to retire. However, departures of staff retiring from the public service provide a unique opportunity to reorganise the workforce in terms of staffing levels, distribution and competences. Governments will be in a position to hire new staff in sectors other than those which are losing them rather than having to engage in the somewhat more costly option of re-training staff before reallocating them to different sectors.[2] Countries will also face a tough search for new talent even despite the economic crisis. Specific measures to address the capacity needs at managerial level will be needed. For some countries the looming talent shortage will lead them to take all the talent available in the population for service delivery. OECD countries like Canada, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom, expect that diversity will help create a positive link in the civil service between workforce representation, service delivery and knowledge of customer population.

Thus, the aim of this project is to locate innovative practices in the pursuit and management of workforce diversity in the public sector and to suggest some practical guidelines to enhance and make the most of a diverse workforce in the public service. The identification of trade-offs generated by a diverse public workforce and the measures adopted to deal with them are core elements of this project.

This report is divided into five parts. The first part will provide a definition of diversity trying to widen its scope. The second part will present the expected gains from diversity policies and programmes. The third part will discuss the main obstacles to achieve diversity in the public sector. The fourth part will explore the strategies OECD countries are adopting for implementing diversity policies. Finally, this report will conclude with a brief discussion on the future challenges for achieving diversity and will propose a reference framework to foster diversity in the public service.

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[2]   For an in-depth discussion see OECD (2007b).

Defining "Diversity"

There are many definitions of diversity among OECD member countries. The differences are not just semantic but they reflect the priorities in government strategies. Definitions and terms adopted by individual countries have shifted, as priorities change and as progress is made towards particular objectives. This reflects that the topic of diversity is a dynamic one and therefore policies and definitions need to be changed or adjusted to specific contexts. The definitions of diversity found in OECD countries' policy reports and programmes fall into three main groups:

- *Diversity as equal opportunities*, which mainly refers to prevent discrimination in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, political views, disability, and physical appearance guaranteeing the neutrality of HRM processes and that of public employers.

- *Diversity as a resource*, which aims to understand, appreciate, and realise the benefits different life experiences, competencies, and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds may bring to public service performance regardless of their ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, disability or age, to increase the capacity of government and the satisfaction of people employed in the public service.

- *Diversity as inclusiveness*, which alludes to working in a strategic, long-term and joint manner to ensure changing structures and systems to make use of the relevant competencies people have.

These groups reflect the different approaches adopted by individual OECD countries in pursuing a better representation of the society in the public service. They also reflect different stages of development in the pursuit of diversity. OECD countries' policies and programmes recognise that fostering diversity in the public service is only possible when equal opportunities and affirmative action are more or less part of the organisational culture. There seems to be, however, growing awareness among OECD countries that equal opportunities and fairness do not necessarily mean that everyone must be treated in exactly the same way. Sometimes treating people differently is a way to ensure equal opportunities of employment in the public service.

In the context of the OECD Diversity Project, the term *diversity* should be understood in its widest sense. It describes not only a mixture of skills, competences, perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds, but valuing and using that diversity to improve government's efficiency and effectiveness and meet public servants professional expectations. Diversity entails valuing people in their own merit regardless of their ethnic origin, nationality, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, and religion or belief. Diversity should not be seen as an end in itself but as a mechanism to achieve broader social and economic policy goals.

The Case for Diversity in the Public Service

There are a number of reasons for OECD countries to embrace diversity policies in the public sector. However, most of them remain as expectations because, as it will be discussed in the third part of this report, one of the main problems for building the case for diversity is the weak empirical evidence.

Diversity may enhance core public service values. There seems to be growing consensus among OECD countries that pursuing diversity may enhance core public service values such as fairness, transparency, and impartiality. Hence, policies to improve the representation of women; remove the barriers for minorities and disabled people to access public employment; and avoid discrimination due to disability, age, religious belief, sexual orientation, political views or national or ethnic origin have been implemented in a number of OECD member and non-member countries.

Diversity may help to improve representativeness and equal opportunities. Guaranteeing equity in gender representation at all levels of the hierarchy and pay is still a major concern for OECD countries The representation of women differs widely across countries. For instance, the OECD 2006 survey on Strategic Human Resource Management found out that at national level of government women represent more than 50% of the public sector workforce in countries like Ireland, Portugal, and New Zealand, whereas in countries like Switzerland and Japan women represent less than 30% of the public workforce.

Figure 2. Percentage of central government employees who are female

(1995 and 2005)
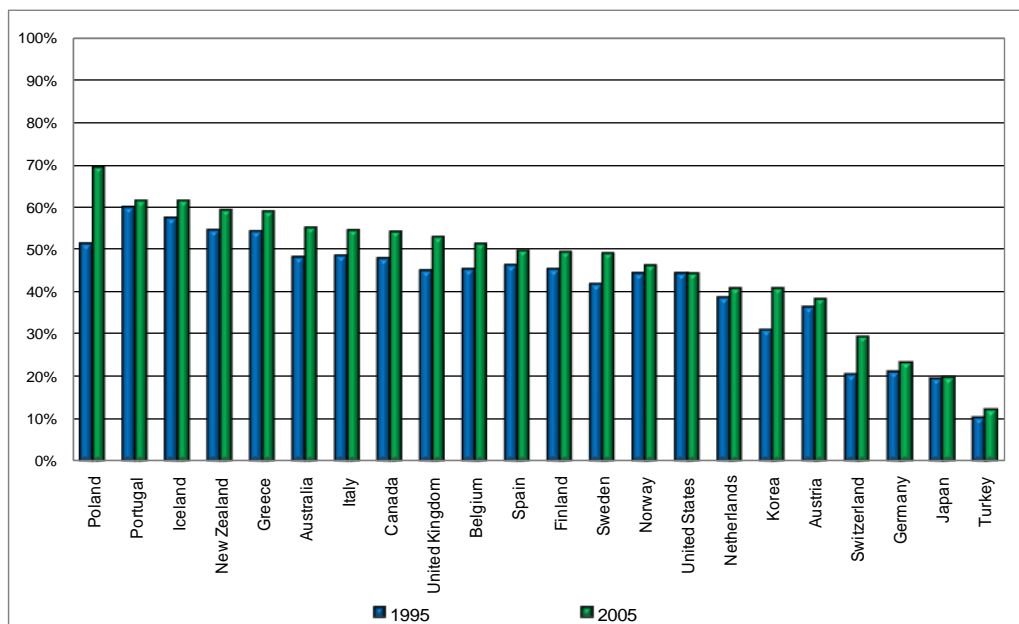
1. Data are not available for the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico and the Slovak Republic. Data for Greece are for 1996 and 2005. Data for the Netherlands are for 2000 and 2005. Data for Poland are for 1995 and 2004.

Source: Data provided by the Public Employment and Management working party of the OECD. Published in OECD (2009) Government at a Glance 2009, OECD Paris.

Moreover, the survey showed that the senior management level is dominated by men in most countries, although the share of women is increasing in all countries. Women are generally more represented at lower levels or in administrative posts (see Figures 3 and 4). In the United States, for instance, despite women representing 44.2% of the federal workforce, only 29% of executive positions are filled by women.[3] Germany has adopted a *Working Aid* methodology to facilitate identification of gender-specific impacts when drafting legislation in order to promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and eliminate disadvantages that currently exist. For German authorities, regulatory impact assessments and gender-sensitive budgeting are bound up together.

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[3] Information provided by the US delegates during the experts meeting on Building a Stronger and Fairer Public Service by Fostering Diversity on 1 October, 2009 at the OECD headquarters.

Figure 3. Percentage of senior positions in central government filled by women

(2005)

1.   Data are not available for the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Turkey. Data for Italy are for 2003. Data for Ireland are for 2001. Data for Austria are for 2006. Data for Spain refer to the number of women in 'alto cargo' positions (not including ministers and state secretaries) as well as career officials at levels 28-30.

Source: Data provided by the Public Employment and Management working party of the OECD. Published in OECD (2009), Government at a Glance 2009, OECD Paris.

Figure 4. Percentage of central government administrative positions filled by women

(2005)

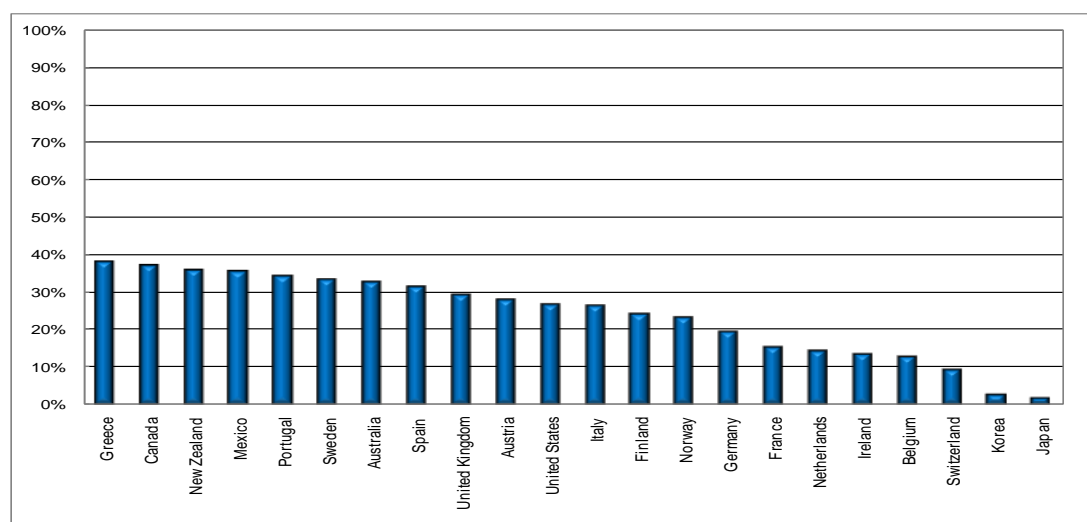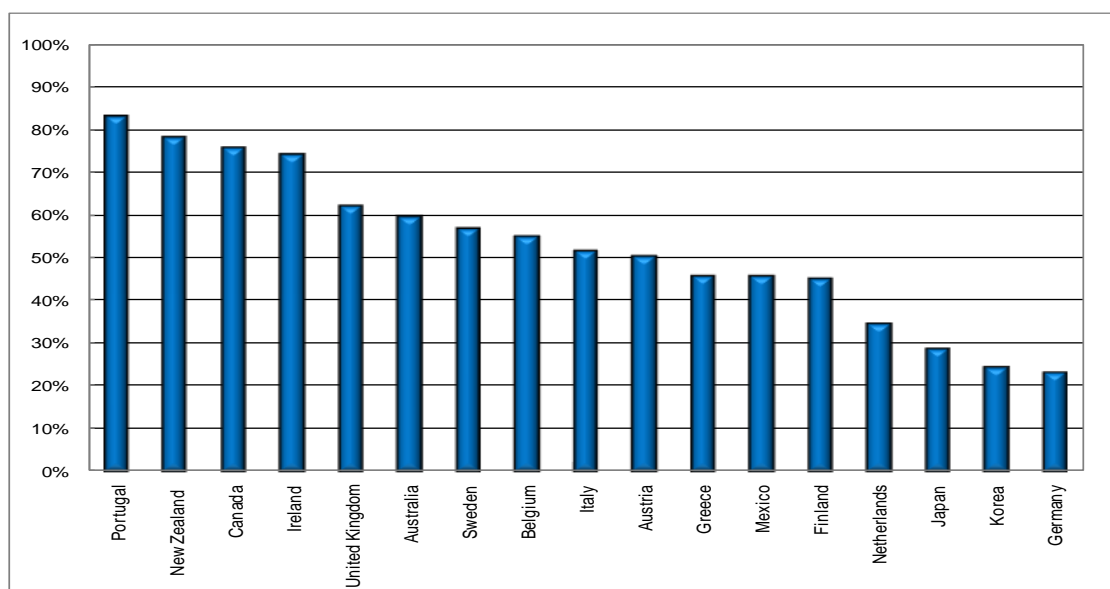1.   Data are not available for the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States. Data for Italy are for 2003. Data for Ireland are for 2001. Data for Canada refer to employees in the Administrative Services occupational group in the Core Public Administration.

Source: Data provided by the Public Employment and Management working party of the OECD. Published in OECD (2009) Government at a Glance 2009, OECD Paris.

Gender differences also apply to salaries. Salaries for the same post can sometimes be slightly lower for women than for men in countries that have a good representation of women in the civil service. In Finland, for instance, women's monthly earnings represent 80% of those of men. One of the reasons is the segregation in the labour market as the majority of women work in the fields of social care, health, education and culture, while the majority of men work in the fields of technology, agriculture and security.

Table 1.   Gender pay gap in the New Zealand public service

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Labour force (2008)
Gender pay gap (%)	15.8	17.0	16.4	16.1	16.0	15.4	14.9

Source: New Zealand Government (2008) Human Resource Capability Survey of Public Service Departments as at 30 June 2008, State Services Commission.

Other countries addressing this problem are Belgium which has implemented policies to promote the hiring of women to senior management positions; Finland that has put into operation legislation on equal pay; Japan that has implemented programmes to enhance and promote gender equality policies to build a gender-equal society and avoid gender-based discrimination in public employment, and Mexico that created an institute to promote equal opportunities for women and operate programmes to institutionalise a gender perspective within public administration. In the Netherlands, one of the main priorities for government is to increase the number of women in decision-making positions because, as Table 1 shows, the number of women in managerial positions is still rather low.

Table 2.   Percentage of women per level in the Dutch civil service

Level	Year	% of women
Junior administrative officers	2007 2008 2009	39.5% 39.4% 39.3%
Senior administrative officers	2007 2008 2009	48.1% 48.6% 49.0%
Junior policy officers	2007 2008 2009	35.6% 36.1% 36.5%
Senior policy officers	2007 2008 2009	21.6% 22.5% 22.9%
Senior civil servants (management)	2007 2008 2009	16.1% 18.2% 18.9%

Source: Presentation give by Bonita Kleefkens from the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations at the OECD MENA meeting on *Addressing gender in public management* on 2 October 2009.

Many OECD countries have launched specific programmes to foster the recruitment of minorities. For instance, Australia implemented traineeships in government at entry point for indigenous Australians to the public service; in Ireland the Traveller Internship Pilot Programme places people of the Traveller Community in clerical positions to develop the necessary skills to improve their employability, the Canadian Immigrant Internship Pilot Program aims to accelerate the integration of foreign professionals into the labour market; and in Norway authorities recommend companies providing goods and services to the government to better integrate minority groups. Nonetheless, in countries like Belgium and France the integration of minorities in the civil service is a political priority but differentiation according to ethnicity

is forbidden by law. In France, equality means being recognised as a person with civil rights rather than as a person with characteristics.

Box 1. Representativeness of US federal employees by ethnic background and disability

In the Unites States, minorities are represented in the federal workforce in numbers that exceed the civilian labour force. In 2008, the representation of minorities in the federal workforce was 33.4% compared to 29.3% in the civilian labour force. The representation of minorities at top General Schedule (GS) grade levels rose to 82 511 in 2008, from 80 927 in 2007.

Distribution of permanent federal employees as of 30 September 2008
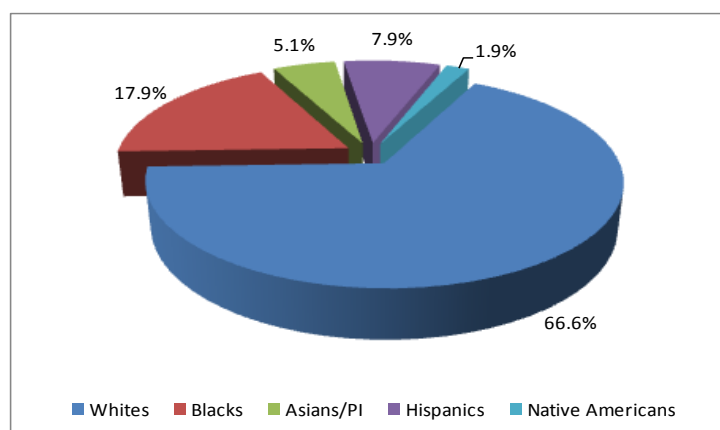
However, significant problems remain. Latinos are 13.2% of the civilian labour force, but under 8% of the federal workforce. African-Americans are well represented in the lower pay grades, but not in the higher pay grade and senior executive levels. Native Americans are under-represented at the senior levels, whereas the representation of Americans with disabilities at executive levels is very low and even the rates are falling.

Source: Presentation given by Elizabeth Montoya and Jennifer Mason from the US Office of Personnel Management at the experts meeting on Building a Stronger and Fairer Public Service by Fostering Diversity, 1 October, 2009

A number of policies aimed at ensuring a better integration of people with disabilities in the public service have been implemented across OECD countries. However, opening spaces in the public sector to people with disabilities is still a pending work for a number of OECD countries. As Figure 5 shows, for instance, in the US federal government the number of people with disabilities has not changed over the last 20 years and their proportion in relation to the total workforce remains rather low. Policies in this aspect can include the establishment of quotas, like in Korea and Portugal, or the use of targets like in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.[4] Policies can also include the opening of specific posts only for persons with disability like in Australia. Some other policies include adjustments to working conditions like in Ireland where job descriptions are framed on the basis of qualities and attributes required for effective performance and should not contain any requirement that directly or indirectly discriminate against individuals on the grounds of disability, ethnicity or gender.

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4   A discussion regarding the use of quotas and targets is presented later in this report.

Figure 5. Proportion of disabled people in the US federal government

Diversity may produce efficiency gains. The search for efficiency gains is a major driver of diversity in the public service. One of the main expected benefits of diversity is the innovation increase that may help fostering efficiency in the public service. Research indicates that organisations that have a pool of staff that are diverse in terms of background and ways of thinking, for example coming from contrasting disciplinary and professional perspectives, are more likely to be innovative (Maddock, 2009; and Meier and Hawes, 2006). Innovation demands a diversity of characteristics and opinions. Indeed, the incorporation of different views, opinions, perspectives derived from a diverse workforce may help improve decision-making and policy-making. The New Zealand government considers that equality and diversity help to improve services to the government and people, and to attract and retain talented staff. For the Dutch government teams with a diverse composition have a broader reference framework which enables them to examine issues from multiple perspectives and respond more adequately to the needs of society. For Australian authorities diversity in the public service ensures a mix of perspectives and ideas when developing and implementing public policy. For the Canadian government a diverse labour force enhances creativity and innovation, provides a broader range of skills and decisions that take into account varying perspectives. For Belgian authorities diversity may represent an opportunity to make a better use of resources and competences to increase personnel's satisfaction and effectiveness.

Additionally, the image of the public sector as an employer may improve. Attracting and retaining women, people from minorities, ethnic groups or with disabilities is one of the most pressing concerns for diversity programmes in OECD countries. To a large extent this is considered to be the result of rigid HRM processes that do not focus on the special requirements of these groups to attract them to the public sector. The Australian government, for instance, assesses employees' perceptions of the public agencies in relation to different attributes: job security, location, interest match job, important work, development opportunities, career opportunities, remuneration, good work practices, work on leading edge projects, gaining experience etc. This has been a useful practice to find out what are people's motivations to work for the public service and the reasons they have to quit their jobs.

Diversity may contribute to improve public service quality. One might think that the final aim of diversity policies is to foster the representation in government of the different groups that integrate society, but they also have an economic motivation. The improvement of government services is a common objective of equality and diversity programmes in countries like Australia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands,

New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The core element of these policies is the adoption of a customer-orientation with the specific objective of providing citizens and government with public services that truly reflect and satisfy their needs. As the Canadian government put it "[citizens] …expect that their needs, concerns and interests will be reflected in the services, programs and policies provided by the federal government. Meeting these expectations requires a public service that is competent, non-partisan and representative of the population it serves."[5] Indeed, diversity can contribute to raising the quality of public services by improving the understanding of the needs of the community and ameliorating social dialogue and communication with the wider population.

Diversity may help increase policy effectiveness. There is increasing awareness that diversity can lead to achieve important outcomes in major policy areas. The contribution of diversity to policy outcomes may take many forms, but a characteristic of effective initiatives is the use of the competencies, experiences and perspectives of a diverse workforce based on strategic workforce planning. For example, one of the current challenges OECD countries face is an ageing population and workforce (OECD, 2008b and 2008c). For a number of OECD countries like Canada, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, and Sweden this is a short-term priority as large numbers of people are expected to retire in the near future generating a gap in knowledge and experience but at the same time create the need for government to provide public services focused on an ageing population. Facing the ageing challenge requires making full use of talent and competences available in the labour market regardless of age, ethnicity, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation or political views. This may help to compensate for the lost labour force and acquire new competences and skills required for a changing environment. Moreover, another of the expected benefits of fostering diversity in the public sector is that it may help to promote diversity in the private sector. For that, it is important to demonstrate the advantages of diversity by taking the initiative. Government would lead the way in the respect and inclusion of citizens in working life and participation in society.

Diversity may enhance social mobility. By being instrumental in enhancing public services quality, and the employability of disadvantaged groups, diversity contributes to social mobility. Indeed, pursuing diversity objectives may help people, who normally would not qualified for employment in the public service, to have better job opportunities. Pursuing diversity in its wider sense broadens the employment options to persons and in this way contributing to human development. Diversity policies may contribute to human development by reducing the gender gap in economic and political participation and decision-making, and fostering equality in achievement between men and women.[6] The Korean *Balanced Personnel Policy*, for instance, includes as one of its building blocks assisting low-income individuals in entering the civil service by removing all barriers to equal opportunities and supporting the economic independence of low-income families. Moreover, people from disadvantaged groups generally depend on public services (health, education, transportation) to satisfy their daily needs; thus by improving the delivery of public services and making them better reflect society's needs, diversity may contribute to improve people's quality life.

Diversity may contribute to forward the reform agenda and make reform happen. Reform of the public administration to achieve a better government has been on the agendas of OECD countries for at least two decades. A government committed to diversity in the public sector ensures that civil servants are motivated and involved in the reform process, and have the competencies and experiences required for a

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[5] Public Service Commission of Canada, Guide to Implementing the Policy on Employment Equity in the Appointment Process, www.psc-cfp.gc.ca

[6] It should be noted that the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender empowerment Measure (GEM) are two of the indicators used by the United Nations Development Programme in its annual Human Development Report. The GDI focuses on the expansion of women's capabilities, whereas the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life. For further information see: http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/hdi/

new environment. Different opinions and perspectives derived from a mix of backgrounds may trigger a 'constructive conflict' from which innovative reform proposals may emerge. It should be noted that innovations are most of the time initiated by front line staff, middle managers and even users. There is consensus across OECD countries that if government employees are not on board or feel identified with the reform process, reforms will not happen. Diversity raises good governance issues by helping to improve the relations between government and citizens, and strengthen trust in government. By contributing to increase awareness and understanding of different cultures and perspectives, diversity can help to improve decision-making and design policies closer to citizens' expectations. This is fundamental to the achievement of good governance and in turn to fulfilling broader economic and social goals. Diversity is a mechanism that facilitates dialogue and understanding between government and citizens, but in particular between government and social groups considered to be in disadvantage.

Pursuing diversity in the public sector increases pressure for reform in HRM. Building a diverse workforce requires changes in HRM practices to offer every person employment and career opportunities linked to their competencies and aspirations and improve the employment experience. Thus, some OECD countries are already integrating diversity principles into the HRM system of the public sector; such is the case in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, and New Zealand.

Finally, diversity in the public service may also contribute to national cohesiveness. When all groups of society see themselves represented in government and that the reform policies and programmes are close to their needs and cultural identity, their commitment to the national project may be enhanced.

The Obstacles to Diversity

Implementing diversity policies can face a number of problems, many of which relate to unclear or complex regulatory frameworks, lack of enough financial resources, rigid human resource management frameworks, and cultural barriers. These limitations need to be addressed from a whole-of-government perspective to be overcome.

Different political and managerial timing. Balancing managerial and political time is an issue for evaluators and promoters. Politicians require quick results to communicate to people and managers need longer times to achieve results. This is an issue experience in most reform initiatives, but the case of diversity is particularly tricky as it is certainly a long-term project. Failing to provide quick positive results may jeopardise support for the policy, and trust in government may be compromised.

Lack of hard evidence. None of the OECD countries taking part in this review reported concrete cases in which improvements in government performance were due to diversity. Thus, it is not currently possible to link evidence of, for instance, efficiency gains to a diverse workforce. This lack of evidence could hamper the case for diversity as there is no real proof of the benefits it may eventually produce. Without evidence, diversity policies may need to be based on conventional wisdom or theory alone. The reason is that pursuing diversity is a long-term project and thus evidence-building takes time. Consequently, the case for diversity in the public service requires a continuous process of *confidence-building* in the initiative, policy-makers and decision-makers. However, diversity policies are not made in a vacuum. So far, the case for diversity is rooted in academic research and the experience of private organisations (Maddock, 2009; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino, 2007; Pitts and Jarry, 2007; Meier and Hawes, 2006, see also the Danish Equal Project – The Whole Family at Work www.helefamilienpaaarbejde.dk which promotes making diversity a tool based on the experience of private organisations). Indeed, this may not be enough but in policy-making it is not always possible to get sufficiently good evidence.

Good data is a pre-requisite to provide evidence for making the case for diversity programmes. Nonetheless, a major failing of OECD countries, in general, has been in *not generating the data needed to support the case for* and *evaluate diversity initiatives*. In particular, there has been a lack of effort to develop the baseline data essential for before-and-after comparisons. It has been acknowledged by diversity experts that data problems bedevil diversity reform agendas and that data deficiencies inhibit evidence-based analysis. The generation of data on ethnic or national background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability is sometimes constrained by regulatory barriers and the need to protect people's privacy as discussed below. Nonetheless, diversity experts agree that the generation of data may help governments to substantiate the need for diversity and build confidence in the reform initiatives. Clear regulatory frameworks on what ministries and agencies can do to collect and use data on ethnic origin or even record cases of discrimination may be needed.

Experts on diversity have recognised that one of the challenges for diversity policies is to convince public managers that a diverse workforce may have an additional value to improve government's performance. The lack of real evidence may difficult building the case for managers to pursue diversity objectives.

Regulatory barriers. A basic requirement for the implementation and success of diversity policies is ensuring a proper legal framework for their operation. The lack of coherent regulatory measures that binds organisations and public servants to pursue diversity in the workplace may minimise the impact of the policy outcomes. It seems that all OECD governments are aware of the need for a framework to provide guidance on what the objectives and priorities of government are in the search for diversity. All policies and programmes reviewed for this study are based on a clear legal framework that compels organisations and individuals to take action. However, complexity of regulations and requirements on ministries and agencies to achieve a diverse workforce may inhibit participation and a coherent response. Countries like New Zealand or the United Kingdom have issued revised versions of their regulatory frameworks making sure that they are short, simple and accessible.

Governments, through the diversity co-ordination authority, must assume the responsibility for making sure that every ministry and agency is clear about the legal dispositions on diversity. Clear rules and regulations on diversity can impose resource obligations on ministries and agencies to pursue equality and diversity objectives. The appointment and responsibilities of specific people to work on diversity, like the workplace diversity coordinator in Australia, and who is accountable for the results must be clear in the regulations.

The difficulty of protecting individual privacy can be an important barrier to diversity policies. In Australia, for instance, the provision of equal employment opportunity data by public employees to their agency is voluntary, with the exception of sex. In France, on the other hand, the Data Protection Authority forbids the collection of ethnic or religious information, but data on national origin and place of birth can be collected and used on the condition that the statistics include groups of more than ten people. Improvements in data quality suggests that people are feeling more comfortable in identifying their ethnic, disability status what means that better working environment are being built.

Budgetary constraints. It is worth noting that in the diversity policies and programmes consulted for this review there was little or no reference at all to neither the financial resources needed nor the way to obtain them to meet their objectives. Diversity policies are expected to contribute to improve the public services quality but they also incur in costs. The organisation of special recruitment process for ethnic minorities or disabled people, the payments for traineeships, the improvements to the infrastructure to accommodate disabled members of staff, the training courses for members of staff, the acquisition of special software for disable people, etc, may generate additional costs to the ministry or agency. The likely explanation is the difficulty of measuring costs compared to the potential benefits that diversity may bring

to the public sector, make it hard to develop funding cases in a budget-setting context. Most diversity proposals are being argued for in terms of the outcomes rather than in terms of advancing diversity *per se*. Thus, the level of resources devoted to diversity initiatives, it seems, is determined in the light of governments' priorities. Moreover, building a diverse workforce is a long-term project that requires governments to commit resources in a multi-year basis. Budgetary rigidities may prevent the use of resources as a sort of joint-funding that would allow using resources for one single purpose like diversity, to be spent in any part of the public service where they are most needed. After all, building a diverse workforce can be considered as a shared project in the public service.

Rigid HRM frameworks. The success of diversity policies largely depends on its integration into all stages of human resource management process from recruitment and training, to career development and retiring. HRM practices must be able to avoid or limit discrimination against any type of people securing equal opportunities and still based recruitment and promotion on merit. Several limitations may be encountered regarding the HRM system while implementing diversity policies.

The **type of HRM arrangements** may constraint or facilitate pursuing diversity objectives in the public service. Building a diverse public workforce entails acquiring new skills and competences that in the past may have not been considered as essential for public service work. Thus, some countries like Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom have adopted a more 'managerial' approach to workforce adjustments that seek to balance the need to achieve staffing targets with the need to ensure that organisations maintain the needed skills and capacities to carry out their work.

Moreover, the nature of the civil service system may also be an element that dictates the pace for achieving diversity objectives. Career-based systems are characterised by the limited possibilities for entering the civil service at mid-career and a strong emphasis on career development. Position-based systems allow a more open access, and lateral entry is relatively common. In contrast to career-based systems, for position-based systems technical considerations are likely to be more important. However, it is not to say that one system is better positioned to build a diverse workforce than the other, but to stress that each faces particular challenges to achieve diversity objectives. For instance, it may be argued that position-based systems are more able to deliver the specialised skills and competences of contemporary society based on the wider mixture of backgrounds and experiences of society members. However, position-based systems may create biases at entry when there is a lack of transparency in the recruitment process. Career-based systems while trying to ensure fairness at entry based on competitive examinations and diplomas may indirectly limit the possibilities for joining the civil service of people who never attended university training but whose experience in life and work may be of added value to the work of the public service. In case all applicants are treated under the same rules and conditions mechanically, career-based systems may constraint the possibilities of attracting a diverse mix of skills and competencies.

The **lack of strategic workforce planning** may prevent determining the diverse skills, competences, experiences and perspectives needed to drive broader governmental strategies. Building a representative workforce should be part of any workforce planning and management arrangement. Workforce planning can help to identify current staffing levels and competencies available and how future staffing and competencies requirements will be met. In addition, it must clarify the contribution of diversity policies to wider aims of the government. The fact that achieving diversity in the public service is a long-term process may, in turn, put at risk its **sustainability**. Indeed, OECD countries seem to recognise that there is no quick option to build a diverse public workforce as progress is slow and impact minimal as annual recruitment is marginal compared to the existing stock of employees. Thus, the problem is that policies have to be sustained over a long time as part of the strategic workforce planning of government.

One of the main obstacles to diversity is the **lack of flexible working conditions** that facilitates attracting applicants and retaining employees from disadvantaged groups. Having the possibility to

reconcile work life with family life is a major incentive for people to prefer working for the public sector. Some alternatives to improve working conditions in the light of diversity policies are the use of ICTs, part-time working schemes, and *tele*-work. For instance, Greece is in process of implementing more flexible employment practices for members of staff with children what would attract more women to the public sector and mainly to senior positions. Ireland has introduced some working programmes such as Flexi-Time, Job-Sharing, Career Breaks, the Term-Time scheme, and Work-sharing which provide significant opportunities for staff to balance work and life commitments.

The persistence of **discrimination in the recruitment and promotion** processes constitutes a barrier to diversity. If the recruitment and promotion practices are not revised to eliminate any element that may be the cause of discrimination, progress towards diversity may be jeopardised. Recruitment and selection criteria must be in line with workforce planning and the processes should be regularly audited to avoid unfairness. The experiences of Belgium, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden suggest that equality and diversity criteria should be integrated into the recruitment and promotion strategy to obtain the necessary variety of skills, knowledge and experiences to improve how work is done in the public service. In countries with large multi-cultural populations linguistic issues, if not addressed properly, can act in detriment of diversity, efficiency and service quality. These issues are complex and sensitive, particularly in countries with rivalry among ethnic groups.

Cultural and behavioural obstacles (attitudes). People's behaviour towards each other and how people feel about the public service constitute elements that condition or facilitate diversity in the public service. The prevalence of prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination, and/or harassment towards particular members of staff because of their ethnic origin, race, gender, gender identity, disability status, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or socio-economic and educational background can seriously damage the image of the public sector and compromise the achievement of diversity objectives. A culture of toleration and inclusiveness in the public service can largely contribute to attract and retain talented people into the public service from the widest possible pool. It is of crucial importance that people feel value for what they are and bring to the workplace. Some countries highlighted that political clientelism and personal loyalties may also constitute barriers to seek diversity in the public service when there are no solid mechanisms to ensure the adoption of the merit principle in the selection and promotion processes.

Possible side-effects. Pursuing diversity in the public service has its trade-offs. If on the one hand diversity has positive effects on service quality, efficiency, effectiveness and the promotion of core values, on the other it may trigger conflict due to cultural differences, communication problems, and a tense atmosphere in the workplace that may affect organisational performance (Pitts and Jarry, 2007). Recruiting unqualified people to the public service but who belong to any of the target groups of diversity policies may be contested for being against the principle of merit and fairness. Creating a work environment with people from different cultural backgrounds, perspectives might slow down decision-making or steer arguments in the organisation if there is no proper managerial leadership. Fostering diversity in the public service is not a magic wand. If governments just pretend to pursue diversity but without commitment, it is likely to be counterproductive as trust in the initiative and government may be compromised. However, the political and social costs and the risks of creating a culture of toleration and inclusiveness that values diversity are lower than not doing it.

Developing Diversity Policies

From the analysis of the different OECD initiatives on equality and diversity it is clear that the question for governments is not whether to pursue diversity. The question is how to do it in a sustainable, responsive and professional manner. Given the complexity of diversity policies, and that pursuing diversity does not differ from other major organisational change management efforts, this section discusses the development of diversity policies around three general areas: planning, implementation and evaluation.

Planning diversity policy

Building a strategic framework. For a diversity policy to be successful it should be coherent and intelligible to all stakeholders. Consistency reduces the probability of muddling situations, provides a sense of purpose, and increases the prospects for reform acceptance. In that sense a vision statement and plan can help senior managers in the different organisational units establish a plan of action, monitor progress, co-ordinate and orient individual initiatives, and make mid course corrections. Like in any policy reform initiative, a common vision is crucial to engage political leaders and public servants to impress upon them the importance of diversity. In OECD countries, the most advance diversity initiatives contain a vision statement linked to political commitment of government to pursue diversity as part of the government's political, social and economic agenda. A government-wide vision helps to tie diversity initiatives with broader strategic and reform objectives.

Box 2. Vision statements of diversity policies in OECD countries

Australia: The Australian *State of the Service Report 2007-2008* states that the public service is committed to ensuring a highly diverse workforce where employees have a range of gender, age, cultural background, disability status and Indigenous status. This is expected to ensure a mix of perspectives and ideas to be considered when developing and implementing public policy, and also support stronger citizen engagement.

Japan: The Guidelines for the Personnel Management of the National Government FY2009 state that government should facilitate the recruitment and appointment of women and people with disabilities.

New Zealand: The New Zealand *public service equal employment opportunities policy* states that equality and diversity in the public service workforce will enable the best service to the government of the day and to New Zealanders. Recognising the employment aspirations of Maori, ethnic and minority groups, women, and people with disabilities will ensure fairness in employment for all persons and groups of persons. It adds that the integration of equality and diversity throughout the public service is a key aspect of strategic planning and performance, and chief executives should provide the lead in working towards this.

Norway: Norwegian authorities expect to build a more robust and competent government sector able to understand and serve a more diverse society; utilising all the competences of the workforce. The Government sector is also expected to be more innovative and dynamic, since different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences probably will contribute to better decision-making processes. Through increasing the participation in working life and especially in the civil service, of disadvantaged groups, the civil service will hopefully be regarded as more legitimate and representative by the public. The *Inclusive Working Life Agreement* between the government and the parties of working life was established to reduce sick leave, include more disabled persons and raise the actual pension age and thus it is closely related to (civil service) diversity policies.

Sweden: The Swedish *strategy for diversity in the central government sector* considers that the workplace of the future will be characterised by increased mobility and by a mixture of background and competence that is of importance for work, quality and customer orientation. The need for change and an increased international exchange will demand flexibility and long-term planning. It states that favourable results require a good working environment, gender equality and a mixture of background and competence that is of importance for work, quality and customer orientation (diversity).

United Kingdom: The British *strategy for promoting equality and valuing diversity* establishes that: 'The Civil Service is committed to improving the delivery of public services for everyone in society. Through understanding the diversity of society, by better reflecting the aspirations, experiences and needs of the people we serve and by respecting and valuing differences, we can provide the policies and services that people want from us. To do this effectively, we need a workforce with the best possible mix of existing and future talent.'

Source: Country reports.

Strategic (workforce) planning. The vision statements of OECD countries' diversity policies reflect that for diversity goals to be achieved and purposeful, they need to be linked to strategic workforce planning. Achieving diversity is a long-term process that is necessary to be thought as an integral part of

strategic planning. That means that workforce planning should not only consider staffing levels, skills and competences but also a representative workforce. In fact, as the New Zealand Equality and Diversity strategy points out, integrating equality and diversity into workforce planning helps to identify the diverse skills, knowledge, experiences and different ways of thinking needed to drive strategies forward.

In building a strategic framework towards diversity is important to translate the vision into concrete outcomes. Indeed, diversity policies in OECD countries generally indicate broad goals or more specific targets. These goals are not only useful to give direction to individual initiatives but to establish priorities, monitor progress and evaluate outcomes.

Thinking strategically about building a diverse public workforce means: *i*) an in-depth analysis of the current demographic situation within the public service and compare it against the national demographic composition; *ii*) establishing objectives of what to achieve strengthening their contribution to wider aims of the government and the expected effects; *iii*) defining a target population to whom actions will be aimed at based on diverging characteristics such as linguistic, ethnic or groups distinguished by age, gender, educational background, etc., the important element is to be inclusive; *iv*) defining the tools or means to achieve the targets and realise the vision, many OECD countries tend to rely on flexible HRM practices and procedures; *v*) specifying how and by whom the policy is going to be coordinated, in OECD countries this is generally done by the central HRM body; *vi*) establishing the necessary resources needed to achieve the targets which could be financial and human capacity; and *vi*) defining a criteria for evaluating policy results, some strategies point out the necessity to revise the policy and programmes annually. As it will be mentioned later in this report, building a diverse or representative workforce is a long-term project and therefore one of the main challenges is to keep the momentum or make the project sustainable. Linking diversity to the strategic goals of government is a way to make diversity policies sustained over a long time, and pursued in a way that they permeate all public organisations and become an integral part of the core values of the public service.

In order to ensure cohesiveness, commitment and a whole-of-government approach, diversity policies can be formulated under a **joint approach** that reflects better government priorities and more realistic objectives and mechanisms for realising them. The central HRM body or authority in charge of the co-ordination of the diversity policy may act as an enabler of this joint exercise to define a common agenda towards fostering diversity and creating inclusive public workplaces.

Box 3. The Swedish "joint approach" to accomplish diversity

The Swedish diversity strategy was developed in broad co-operation for employer development together with members of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE). It is based on a joint approach for state employers and emphasises the importance of strategic, long-term development work to ensure a competence management adapted to each business through an inclusive approach. A joint approach that comprehensively indicates what managers of government agencies have decided shall apply helps to improve the image of state employers. Moreover, incorporating a joint approach into the individual operations of every organisation contributes to ensuring that government agencies achieve the shared employer policy objective of making diversity a part of operations.

The Swedish strategy states that government agencies shall act within the principle of legal security, be efficient, provide good service with high accessibility and be citizen-oriented with an inclusive approach. To achieve success in this regard, a strategic competence management is required that, in both the short term and the long term, makes use of different background and competence that are of importance for work, quality and customer orientation (diversity). A prerequisite for this is to use clear management and flexible agreements and solutions to create inclusive workplaces with working environments that are free of discrimination.

Source: Swedish Government (2008), *An Inclusive Approach: a strategy for diversity in the central government sector*, Swedish Agency for Government Employers SAGE.

Implementing diversity policies

Leadership. Most of the reform initiatives analysed in this review place considerable relevance to leadership in bringing diversity in the public sector about. Indeed, the OECD (2001: 18) study on Public Sector Leadership for the 21st Century concluded that 'Developing leaders is more important in a diversified society than in a homogenous society, because leaders are required to transmit new values, mediate differences, and create coalitions in support of reform.' However, leadership is not just about motivating people and generating new values. Leadership plays an important role in the implementation of public sector reform, particularly diversity-aimed reforms, because it involves change and people. Building a representative public workforce is to a large extent changing people's attitudes and behaviours, for what leadership is required. In sum, leadership is a critical element of equality and diversity policies in order to motivate, promote institutional adaptations in the public interest, and make reform happen.

Implementing diversity policies is particularly difficult and risky. The reason is that the impact and benefits will take long time to manifest. Thus, sustained leadership is necessary to maintain the impetus for reform through persuasion, negotiation and influencing people's values and culture. Leadership is a key factor to reduce resistance to change by explaining the potential benefits of the reform and obtaining people's commitment. Moreover, as the Belgian diversity strategy points out, the leadership team must realise and accept that in the public sector, despite all the efforts, there is still work to be done to ensure equal opportunities and fight direct and indirect discrimination. Leadership is required at all levels of the organisation to contribute to success because what is needed is a change of the way the organisation functions as a whole. Political leadership helps to shape and obtain support for diversity initiatives. Managerial leadership is crucial to get the necessary resources, to motivate staff, and to ensure cooperation across ministries and agencies.

Box 4. The leadership factor in equality and diversity strategies

Australia: The Australian workplace diversity strategy contemplates the appointment of a *workplace diversity coordinator* whose role and responsibilities vary depending on the nature, size and structure of the agency. Some agencies may even have a network of coordinators. The role of the coordinator is to: articulate how diversity can enhance the business performance of the agency; promote the benefits of diversity; help all staff to be aware of the workplace diversity issues; promote the integration of diversity issues in HRM policies and practices; develop, implement and monitor the workplace diversity programme, etc. However, since diversity is a mainstream responsibility, senior managers should also provide support.

Ireland: The Irish diversity strategy for diversity in the civil service establishes that departments have a duty of care towards their staff and are responsible in law for upholding equality legislation. The Department of Finance, in consultation with the Civil Service General Staff Panel, is responsible for developing and promoting best practice in equality of opportunity across the civil service. Responsibility for the implementation of equality of opportunity lies with the Head of Department or a person designated by the Head of Department.

Sweden: The Swedish strategy for diversity in central government puts special emphasis on the leadership of managers of government agencies in achieving diversity goals as they have ultimate responsibility for their accomplishment. In particular, the strategy considers that managers should be able to reposition themselves from focusing on anti-discrimination and activities and actions aimed at specific groups to focus on inclusion aimed at ensuring a competence management may require altered processes, procedures and follow-up systems within the management framework of the agency. It considers that agency managers should be able to create commitment and involvement among managers and employees by using their own motivation, knowledge and understanding of the joint employer-policy task to accomplish diversity. Organisations' behaviour should be guided through clear and consistent leadership.

United Kingdom: Leadership is a key element in the British strategy to promote equality and value diversity. Political leadership is placed on the Prime Minister, as Minister for the Civil Service, who is accountable for

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government commitments on management issues including equality and diversity. The Minister for the Cabinet Office has day-to-day responsibility for Civil Service management issues. The Permanent Secretary heads of department and their Chief Executive equivalents are accountable for delivering equality and diversity in their organisations, including all public equality duties. Permanent Secretaries and their Chief Executive equivalents are accountable for delivering all of their equality and diversity responsibilities and commitments, through their performance appraisal discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service.

Source: Country reports.

Leadership can also be considered as a tool for co-ordination. This is very important when initiatives have a whole-of-government approach and all ministries and agencies are taking part in the initiative. Moreover, some countries have created an individual figure in charge of the co-ordination of the diversity initiatives within the ministries, like in the case of Australian workplace diversity coordinator. This means that leadership in promoting diversity is not about centralising functions and responsibilities but rather delegate responsibilities. Creating local leaders is a way to promote a decentralised management and decision power over diversity issues in the workplace.

Government managers are growingly operating in a diverse world and an increasingly diverse society. In the United States, for instance, by the year 2050, just over 50% of the population will be Caucasian, compared with over 70% today. A similar pattern is expected in the US government workforce. Leadership of a diverse society and workforce requires a perspective and a set of skills that many government managers lack today. Managing diversity is not just a *nice* thing to do, but, as the Dutch and Swedish diversity strategies put it, it is a *business* necessity. In the large majority of OECD countries the training for leaders has focused on affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and valuing others. However, these elements are not enough in themselves, government leaders need to be able to create institutions, including systems, processes, and policies which support the development and contributions of all members of the workforce and society. Thus most OECD countries have integrated equality and diversity issues (managing diversity and diversity skills) into the training programmes for managers. This is in order to raise awareness about the policy and the advantages of focusing on diversity, and more importantly to get leaders' commitment to the initiative.

Central co-ordination and delegated implementation responsibility. One of the distinguished features of the OECD diversity initiatives analysed in this study is the central co-ordination of diversity policies and a delegated responsibility for implementation. In general, the central HRM body acts as a focal point for promoting diversity policies from a whole-of-government approach. In addition, the central co-ordination body is responsible for developing the diversity strategy, monitoring progress, promoting the benefits of the initiative, linking diversity issues to strategic workforce planning, and providing guidance and support to line ministries and agencies for the implementation of diversity policies. This reflects a top-down approach in the definition of the general principles, guidelines, policy orientation and priorities regarding equal opportunities and diversity initiatives.

Central co-ordination has created certain advantages for the promotion of diversity. It ensures coherence among the different individual organisational initiatives in the ministries and agencies through the publication of guidelines and the monitoring of progress. It also facilitates the dissemination of good practices and knowledge in the implementation of centrally defined guidelines and, in that way, it can also steer up innovation in diversity policy implementation.

OECD countries are aware of the need for managerial flexibility for the implementation of the diversity policies. Therefore, central co-ordination bodies define general principles and priorities, whereas every line ministry and agency is responsible for the implementation of the initiative. The experience of

OECD countries participating in this study suggests that a key element for the success of diversity policies is to get a right balance between central government co-ordination and delegated implementation responsibility. If central control is too strong, the implementation of the initiative may be overwhelmed by rules to be followed and affect the momentum for the initiative.

Box 5. Central co-ordination and delegated implementation of diversity policies

Australia: The Australian Public Service Commission is in charge of defining the general guidelines for agencies to implement their own diversity programmes. The Commission works with agencies to develop and implement their own employment strategies to meet their specific business needs.

Belgium: The Belgian diversity policy is promoted by the Cell Diversity of the Federal Public Service Personnel and Organisation (FPS P&O). Among other activities within the FPS P&O, 'diversity' initiatives involve the selection centre (SELOR) and the training centre (IFA). The Cell is also in charge of managing networks of people responsible for diversity, and support the implementation of diversity projects in the different federal public services. The members of this network have as duty to implement diversity within their organisation.

Canada: The Treasury Board and its administrative agency, the Canada Public Service Agency, are responsible for the overall Employment Equity Policy. The Employment Equity Division offers assistance to departments for the implementation of the employment equity policy in a consistent fashion and from a government-wide basis.

Ireland: The Department of Finance, in consultation with the Civil Service General Staff Panel, and through the Civil Service Equality Unit, is responsible for developing policy and promoting best practice in equality of opportunity across the civil service. Responsibility for the implementation of equality of opportunity lies with the Head of Department or a person designated by the Head of Department. Departments are advised and supported in promoting equal opportunities through guides and codes of practice developed by the Department of Finance.

Japan: The Personnel and Pension Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is in charge of developing and promoting diversity policy in the national public service. Every office and ministry is responsible for the implementation of the employment policy including diversity policies under the co-ordination of the Personnel and Pension Bureau.

Mexico: The Career Professional Service of the federal government is a mechanism to guarantee equal opportunities to access public employment. It is co-ordinated by the Ministry of the Public Function and operated by every line ministry and agency of the federal public administration.

Netherlands: The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is responsible for the civil service, the senior civil service and the police. It has direct influence on the implementation of agreements on workforce diversity, mainly with regards to frameworks, regulations and instruments. Most employers in the public sector operate independently and have set their own responsibilities (municipalities, provincial authorities, water boards, secondary and high education, and university hospitals). Responsibility for personnel policy lies with each individual organisation. The Ministry only acts as a coordinator but it is believed it should have a more direct control.

New Zealand: The State Services Commission (SSC) promotes, develops, and monitors equality and diversity policies and programmes for the Public Service, and reviews chief-executive-led progress in equality and diversity throughout the organisations. Public organizations are responsible for integrating equality and diversity into their organizational strategic planning. Each year, SSC's Deputy Commissioners discuss with chief executives the implications of the equality and diversity policy for their organizational strategies, service delivery, and the achievement of the State Services Development Goals.

Sweden: The Employer's Council of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE) defines the general guidelines and priorities for state employers. Every governmental agency and ministry is responsible for the implementation of the employment policy, and in particular the diversity policy, under the co-ordination and supervision of SAGE.

Source: Reports from OECD countries.

It seems, however, that one of the measures adopted by OECD countries to get the responsibility balance right is the establishment of a sort of 'collaborative networks'. They are generally integrated by senior managers responsible for the implementation of diversity policies in central government, but they can also include agents from the private and voluntary sectors. The aim of these networks is to foster dialogue among the key actors in the promotion of diversity, the exchange of information, and even make

suggestions to improve the general guiding principles. One of the additional advantages of the networks is that they ensure a whole-of-government approach and coherence in the pursuing of diversity, create ownership of the reform and constitute a forum where results can be discussed at executive inter-organisational level.

Box 6. Collaborative networks to pursue diversity in the public service

The **Japanese** government has set up a series of networks for the implementation and monitoring of the different areas of diversity policies. The annual assessment of the expansion of recruitment and appointment for female employees is implemented by the Personnel and Pension Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in cooperation with ministries and agencies as well as the National Personnel Authority according to the agreement at the Meeting of Directors in charge of personnel management at each ministry and agency. For policies regarding job opportunities for disabled people, Japanese authorities established the Team for the Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities in the Public Sector with the chairmanship of the Personnel and Pension Bureau.

Norway has based its strategy for a more inclusive working life on a formal co-operation between public and private organisations that include the government itself, employer organisations, professional associations and trade unions. The rational for the co-operation is to pursue the objectives of the *Inclusive Working Life Agreement* (IA Agreement), which is an instrument for achieving general objectives in employment, working environment and inclusion policy. It is expected that through this co-operation, the various parties will contribute to ensure that the individual workplace can take part in a binding effort to reach the common goals expressed in the IA Agreement. The basic objective of the Agreement is to help more people enter and stay within the workforce through appropriate organisation of the policy instruments and increased use of ordinary working life to provide training, experience and qualifications to fill the requirements of the labour market.

In the **United Kingdom** the Cabinet Office leads on strategic HR issues for the entire civil service but most of the day-to-day responsibility for HR issues is delegated to departments and agencies. In that sense, a network of senior – usually board-level – Diversity Champions from across the civil service was formed in 2005. This *Diversity Champions Network* (DCN) is chaired by the overall Civil Service Diversity Champion, and overseen by the Cabinet Office. DCN members have responsibility for leading on equality and diversity within their departments, including employment. The DCN has three key roles: i) to maximise the value of lessons learned in individual departments, by sharing good practice and ensuring it is implemented in the most effective ways; ii) to support individuals to provide effective leadership on diversity in their organisations by helping them to keep up with the latest thinking and to find support for other in similar roles; and iii) to help drive behavioural and cultural change and articulate the business case for diversity across the service. In short, the DCN is the senior strategic leadership group that develops, agrees, drives and manages the implementation of equality and diversity in employment in the civil service.

Source: Reports from OECD countries.

Integrating diversity principles into HRM processes. There is growing agreement among OECD countries that in order to build a diverse public workforce and ensure equal opportunities is necessary to address the direct and indirect discriminatory practices that may permeate all stages of the HRM process. This would also help dealing with two challenges currently faced by most OECD countries in pursuing diversity which are attracting and retaining employees from minority and ethnic groups or with disabilities but also people from different backgrounds. Thus, special emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the recruitment process is free from discriminatory elements; creating a favourable environment for career development; and creating a culture of inclusiveness and toleration as part of the core values of the public service. Paradoxically, ensuring equal opportunities requires treating certain groups differently to ensure they have the necessary tools to compete on their own merit to access the public service.

Improvements to the recruitment process need to be done in such a way that they ensure fairness and equal opportunities, and make it flexible enough to attract people that would not commonly see the public service as an employer. OECD countries have adopted a wide range of instruments that is possible to classify into three groups. The first group refers to the instruments or mechanisms aimed to diversify the communication channels to reach a wider audience so as to invite it to apply for vacancies in the public

service. Some countries like Australia, Belgium, Ireland, Japan and the Netherlands have established partnership networks with recruitment agencies, voluntary organisations (NGOs), and/or the private sector to reach a wider audience in advertising employment opportunities in the public service; especially those reserved for the target population. To incentivise the members from minorities, ethnic groups and disabled people to apply for vacancies, some countries like Ireland and the United Kingdom, and international organisations like the OECD and the World Bank, include pro-diversity statements in their job advertisements. In order to attract would-be public servants, it would be advisable for government to advertise vacancies without jargon or acronyms and make sure that all requirements for the job are fully explained.

Box 7. Examples of pro-diversity statements

- **Ireland:** *The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer. Recruitment to posts within the Service is on the basis of qualifications and the ability to carry out the responsibilities of the grade and posts.* (Source: Irish Government, Diversity in the Civil Service: a policy on equality of opportunity).

- **Mexico**: *In the Secretary of the Public Function we are committed to foment the integral development of every public servant following the model of gender equity, ethic values and equal opportunities regardless social, economic and disability condition, and preventing sexual harassment and discrimination.* (Source: www.funcionpublica.gob.mx)

- **United Kingdom:** *Please explain how you meet each point in the person specification. You may draw on knowledge, skills, abilities, experience gained from paid work, domestic responsibilities, education, leisure interests and voluntary activities. Please note selection for interview will largely be based on the information you provide in this section.* (Source: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs/careers-detail.aspx?JobId=6782)

- **OECD:** *We are an equal opportunity employer and we encourage all qualified candidates to apply.* (Source: www.oecd.org)

- **World Bank:** *The World Bank Group is committed to achieving diversity in terms of gender, nationality, culture, and educational background. Individuals with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated in the strictest of confidence.* (Source: www.worldbank.org/jobs)

Some countries have implemented initiatives to enhance equity at entry through education in order to ensure a fair recruitment process. The premise is that equal opportunities in employment cannot be guaranteed without having equal opportunity in education to open career opportunities. Some OECD countries like Australia, Japan, the Netherlands and New Zealand have implemented traineeships to provide young people from minorities, ethnic groups and disabled people with work experience to increase their employability in the labour market. This also serves to familiarise them with the working environment in the public service and create a pool of future candidates to join the public workforce. Other strategies include the financial assistance for study or scholarship schemes, or the establishment of special employment programmes that contains vacancies reserved for members of the target population.

Other countries have a more elaborated scheme. For instance, the British government has implemented the *Civil Service Fast Stream* programme to attract some of the country's most talented graduates for training to develop a career in the civil service. Fast Streamers are selected for their potential and not background to become the future members of the senior civil service. In France, students from a disadvantaged social background receive scholarships to support their preparation to the competitive exam to enter the National School of Public Administration. In order to eliminate possible biases in the competitive exam, French authorities removed the exam on general culture because in the past there was a tendency to select the same category of candidates. The Japanese government has established the

Challenge Employment Programme in each ministry and agency to provide casual employment opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities and mental disorders in order to give them working experience to obtain longer-term employment in either the public or private sector. The Korean government introduced the *Career Internship Program for Regional Talents* in order to ensure regional representativeness. Outstanding graduates are selected after verifying their abilities through recommendation by local colleges and their internship experience. The aim is to recruit local college graduates as local government officials. Israel implemented the *Public Management Cadet Programme* to cultivate leadership groups and professional management in public administration, rejuvenate the public service, and improve personnel quality. The programme aims at young people from the social and geographically vulnerable periphery of Israel. There is no affirmative action or quotas as all students must compete with all other candidates for the accessing the programme.

The second group relates to the instruments aimed to relax the selection process and criteria to make it more inclusive but still focused on analysing skills, qualities and competencies required for the job and not on the applicants cultural and socio-economic background or physical disabilities. For instance, Greece has abolished the maximum age limit for work to avoid discrimination in terms of age. Other initiatives include the adoption of non-discriminatory selection tests in order to guarantee equal opportunities for everyone and stimulate the participation of people from minority or ethnic groups. In Norway, public employers have the obligation to invite one qualified applicant with an immigrant background and a person with a disability to an interview.

Box 8. Diversity in recruitment - the French experience

French authorities have implemented a number of measures to foster diversity in the civil service and promote equal opportunities. These measures intend to address the problem of the over-qualified; deal with the excessive academic nature of some competitive examinations. It should be noted that the French civil service is a career –based system and access is through competitive examination.

The first area of action has to do with training prior to recruitment. In September 2005 the Defence 2nd chance scheme was launched by the Ministry of Defence to help young people between 18-21 years of age with difficulties to integrate socially and professionally, with no professional qualifications and in danger of being marginalised. The objective is to enable these young people to learn standards of behaviour and respect for others; supplement their education in terms of reading, writing and basic skills in arithmetic; and have the means to gain an apprenticeship in a trade or profession. Recruitment is based on a voluntary service with a six-month contract governed by public law and renewable up to three times (not an employment contract). Recruits receive a 300 EURs monthly allowance, social security and a medical insurance.

In February 2007 the French government launched the operation 'Sponsorship in the civil service' to: i) increase the information available to potential candidates on civil service examinations; ii) increase the availability of individual tuition provided by some of the members of the civil service college network (RESP) to help the most deserving candidates to prepare for the exams; and iii) provide financial support to the most deserving candidates to help them prepare for the exams. On this last point, the scheme consists on granting allocations to unemployed persons and graduates to enable them to pass a category A or B examination assisted by a tutor. Other actions include special classes to prepare for the competitive examination. The selection of the beneficiaries is made on academic level, socio-economic criteria and motivation. In 2008, 90% of the beneficiaries succeeded in the competitive examination to the civil service.

The second area of action refers to innovative measures in the field of recruitment:

- The *Recruitment without competitive examination* scheme was introduced in 2007 and allows entry to the category C at the first level of the civil service. The process is based on a dossier (application letter, *curriculum vitae*, and interview with a committee). In 2008, 32% of junior staff was recruited under this scheme.

- The *Cadets de la République* scheme was introduced in 2005 to enable young people without a *baccalauréat* to prepare for the police examinations.

- The *Pathway to civil service careers at national and regional level and hospitals* (PACTE) is a new way of recruitment in these three civil service sectors that aims to offer young people the opportunity to join the civil service as an established civil servant. This scheme is addressed to people between 16-25 years of age who left the educational system and do not have a diploma, professional qualification, nor vocational training leading to a specific occupation.

- The *RAEP – recognition of professional experience* is a specific scheme to the civil service that includes new selection procedures for recruitment and internal promotion. Instead of academic tests it gives more relevance to achievements from experience: all professional knowledge, skills and expertise acquired while working in the civil service or in salaried, unpaid or voluntary job and directly related to the professional experience required for the future work of the civil service. Examinations are more professional rather than academic focused, that means they include case studies, role plays etc. For internal promotions and upgrades, the professional qualifications and experience are more relevant.

Source: Presentation given by Véronique Poinssot during the experts meeting on Building a Fairer and Stronger Public Service by Fostering Diversity, 1 October 2009.

Moreover, other diversity programmes, like in Ireland, consider that job descriptions should be framed on the basis of the qualities and attributes required for an effective performance, and so eliminating requirements that discriminate directly or indirectly certain groups of people. Application forms are designed to elicit only information relevant to the requirement of the job.

Box 9. Job profiling as a tool for diversity

Job profiles say a great deal about the culture of an organisation –what sorts of people it wants to attract, what it expects of its staff and how much scope it gives them to exercise their initiative. In doing so, job profiles also play an important part in diversity – how the attributes needed for a job are described reflect whether an organisation wants to maintain the status quo or tap into a broadly diverse pool of potential recruits. For this purpose, it is necessary to ensure that the profile does not include criteria that could be discriminatory, to reduce the likelihood of bias (for example against people with disabilities) and to design the profile so that it helps to attract and recruit the best candidates from a broad and diverse pool. This requires careful consideration of what the essential requirements of the job really are.

A job profiling exercise may be an opportunity to reconsider some aspects of how a job is done, the work environment in which it is done and the tools at the employee's disposal. An equal opportunity or diversity adviser should be involved in job profiling. Well designed job profiles can be a valuable part of an organisation's equal opportunity and diversity policy, as well as enabling the organisation to compete more effectively for talent.

Source: OECD (2008) Note on Job Profiling, PEM working party, GOV/PGC/PEM(2008)5

Based on the fact that the public service is becoming a graduate workplace some countries, like Belgium and Mexico, certify competencies acquired through work experience so that people, who for any reasons had no opportunity to have formal graduate training, are able to participate in open competitions to join the public service. This opens the possibility of having people with different backgrounds and experiences in the public sector. In some countries like Norway there is even the possibility of choosing the second best candidate for the job if the applicant comes from an immigrant background. This possibility has been given within the framework of a two-year project in 12 government agencies and the effects of this possibility are evaluated closely. So as to ensure non-discriminatory judgements and have a deeper understanding of other cultural backgrounds, some countries like Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand train interview board members on diversity issues to be considered during the interview process and integrate the interview boards in such a way that they reflect diversity. This may sometimes be enhanced by appointing one member of the panel from minority, ethnic groups or disabled population.

In order to increase the number of public servants from minority groups, disabled people, or women in top positions some OECD countries use quotas like in Korea that has established a 2% quota of people with disabilities to work in the civil service, and Portugal where the Basic Law for Disabled People establishes that the public administration should contract a percentage equal or higher than 5% of public employees from people with disabilities. Some countries prefer the use of targets. This is the case of the Netherlands where the government has set targets for 2011 to improve the representation of women, minorities, older and younger generations and disabled groups in the public service. The United Kingdom has also established targets for the short and medium term regarding the percentage of public employees at senior positions to be disabled people.

Table 3.   Targets for 2011 regarding the representativeness in the Dutch public service

	2006	2007	2008	2011 target
Women as percentage of new employees	57	58	59	50
Women as percentage of new senior civil servants	31	31	41	30
Percentage of ethnic minorities	5.5	5.6	5.9	8.4
Percentage of employees aged over 50 (retiring)	4.4	3.8	Not available	5.0

Source: Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations.

It might be said that in OECD countries there is a growing tendency to prefer the use of targets rather than quotas. The reason is that targets constitute milestones to measure the achievement of goals creating pressure for organisations to act. Targets, moreover, may also be integrated into the performance management processes to facilitate ministerial steering mechanisms. In consequence, targets rather than quotas can serve to improve accountability by offering indicators against which to measure performance. Nonetheless, some other countries are moving away from the use of quotas and targets as their use is at odds with the promotion of diversity. Targets and quotas require the adoption of the affirmative action approach which is regarded as patronising by members of society and may open the possibility that people without the proper competences and skills are appointed to the public service. Diversity policies are more about clearing the way for every individual to have access to employment in the public sector and treating him/her as an equal. Thus, diversity policies indicate how flexible and inclusive the human resource management system is to attract and facilitate the integration of new talent into the public service.

Box 10. Vienna's integration and diversity policy

In 2003, the city of Vienna decided to develop its integration policy. The aim was to bring the topic of integration and diversity management into the city administration itself. Because a third of Vienna's 1.6 million inhabitants have a migration background, the city government felt the need to strengthen its administration system for the new requirements of a socially, culturally and ethnically diverse society. The integration of immigrants and diversity management are no longer seen as an issue for one department or a group of 'specialists' alone, but as a task for all the departments. Therefore, Vienna prevented a so-called parallel system of public administration, where immigrants are still seen outside the regular system. In the long term, diversity mainstreaming should be seen as an adequate management tool within a modern, customer-oriented administration. This also includes the workforce which should reflect the diversity in society.

In 2004, the city administration introduced diversity management to meet the needs of an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse society. One of three Viennese has a migration background, so this diversity should be reflected in the services provided by the city of Vienna and in the staff composition of the city administration. Thus, Vienna offers apprenticeships in 30 professions for about 800 students. To reach out students and their parents, information folders in German, Serbian, Bosnian/Croatian and Polish have been published by personnel department. The homepage openly advertises apprenticeships for students with a migration background. The city administration now wants to take advantage of the various language skills that apprentices have and gives extra points for tested language skills in the acceptance test. While all apprentices receive basic training course in intercultural management, students who are trained as office clerks can opt for a voluntary, weekly-one-hour intercultural competence course. The subjects are ethics, religious and cultural basics, stereotypes, intercultural communication and integration.

While Vienna is more and more aware of people's ethnic background, a quota system would not be appropriate as it is done under the affirmative action approach. To bring more people with a migration background into public administration complies the view that these people can contribute much to the success of the organisation through their particular skills, knowledge and experiences. The approach is therefore to find the most qualified ones to meet the needs and challenges in public administration over the next decades.

Source: Danish Ministry of Finance (2007) *Diversity through Equality in Public Administrations in Europe*, State Employer's Authority, Department of Gender Equality, Denmark.

Box 11. Norwegian diversity programme

In Norway, the total workforce is composed of 2.5 million people of which 10% have an immigrant background and 10% are disabled. The public workforce is composed of 138 000 employees of which 6.9% have an immigrant background and 8.5% are disabled. Diversity objectives should be reflected in civil service employer policy. The aim is to recruit competent staff among the whole population regardless of their background but the public workforce should also reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity and life experience of the population.

The Norwegian diversity initiative is linked to reform policies for government renewal, the fight against discrimination, the inclusion and integration of persons with an immigrant background, and also to policies for a more inclusive working life. Diversity programmes directed at persons with an immigrant background is based on different forms of positive discrimination. Government employers are also obliged to encourage potential applicants from disadvantaged groups to apply for vacant positions. Among the qualified applicants, employers are obliged to invite at least one applicant with an immigrant background and one applicant with a disability to an interview. On a permanent basis, employers have the possibility to recruit a qualified disabled applicant even if there are better qualified candidates. The applicant should, in this case, comply with the objective formal qualification requirements, but not necessarily at the same level as the best contender. This could be seen as a relatively substantial deviation from the qualification principle, which states that the applicant with the overall best qualifications should be recruited. However, this form of positive discrimination is still rarely used.

In a special project during 2008 and 2009 in 12 government agencies, the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform is assessing the effects of a special recruitment process directed at persons with a non-western immigrant background. In this project, the employer, in accordance with the anti-discrimination regulation among candidates with

approximately identical qualifications, can recruit an applicant with an immigrant background, even though the applicant would be ranged behind the best qualified applicant. This could be seen as a relatively moderate deviation from the qualification principle. Quotas have been rejected by some organisations representing the disabled people as they fear a B-team in working life.

Source: Norway country report.

An additional approach is provided by the Swedish *Women to Top Positions* programme. It is a three year long programme initiated to promote the career development of women in the central administration. It is expected to conclude in 2011. Three lessons that may be drawn from this programme are that to increase the number of women in top positions, top management needs to be involved to make gender equality part of the daily business; strategies, structures and work conditions must be developed to attract the right person for the job (merit); and the need to link gender equality to innovation and growth.

The third group covers the mechanisms designed to facilitate the integration and retention of new recruits in the workplace, particularly of those from the target population. This is of crucial importance so as to have a smooth transition to the public service working environment and facilitate adaptation. The use of mentoring schemes for junior staff seems to be a useful alternative for this purpose. The introduction of flexible working arrangements like part-time work, and *tele*-work have certainly proved useful in attracting people with different backgrounds and experiences. Diversity issues are also being incorporated into public sector training programmes for new staff, trainers and managers. This is in order to encourage the adhesion of civil service personnel to the values of equal opportunities and respect and for new recruits to get acquainted with the working environment. In addition, training sessions should have the purpose of making people, particularly from minority, ethnic groups, disable people and women to be aware of their own competencies and apply for promotions, even to managerial levels. Finland, for example, implemented a project called Female Managers Career Advancement in the State Administration (2008-2009) which considers the training of supervisors to recognise women's management ability and encourage women to participate in management training. Supervisors are encouraged to support the career planning of women by offering them more responsibility and diverse tasks to accumulate management experience.

Merit and equal opportunities should prevail in any recruitment and promotion process so as to value individuals on their own accomplishments and not as part of a disadvantaged group. The Australian and Swiss experiences suggest getting an understanding of the work styles, employment and professional interests of the different specific groups is a way to attract and retain staff from the target population. Australia and New Zealand, for instance, conduct periodic surveys to assess not only the progress made in the implementation of diversity policies, but also to know how well employees' expectations are being met and how the public service is being perceived by members of the target population. The Irish experience suggests that exit interviews are effective means of ascertaining the reasons why staff resign.

Box 12. The Swiss integral approach to equality in the federal administration

In 2004, the Swiss government adopted an integral approach for equality in the federal public administration. It published the guidelines for considering equality between women and men in the daily work as employees of the federal government. Swiss authorities consider that for the government the adoption of this approach implies examining and taking into consideration the eventual consequences of every action, project, measure taken by the administration for men and women. The aim is that all projects and measures take advantage in an equal way of men and women. The approach is based on the fact that gender has a key role in all domains and periods of life, that is why the approach focuses on both genders and the relationships between both sexes aimed at establishing in a general way the equality between both sexes. The people responsible for the elaboration and implementation of programmes are also responsible for incorporating the integral approach into the programme. This approach makes the equality between sexes a top political priority.

Source: Swiss Government (2004) *Approche intégrée de l'égalité dans l'administration fédérale*, Berne.

Some OECD countries with large multi-cultural populations have realised about the advantages of promoting the use of the different official languages in government. It has a positive impact in the cultural diversity and promotes mutual respect among members of the different linguistic groups. Moreover, it sends a positive message to society as it allows people from the different linguistic regions or communities to access public information in their own language.

Box 13. Language policies in OECD countries

Belgium has three official languages, Dutch, French and German. The use and status of these languages in the different governments are governed by a detailed and complex language law (*Loi sur l'emploi des langues en matière administrative* first adopted ion 18 July 1966). The Federal Government is bilingual not in a homogenous manner. The central administration is grouped in separate French and Dutch speaking divisions or directions. A federal employee is formally classified as either French or Dutch speaking. A person having another mother tongue, be it German or another foreign language has to choose between being classified as French or Dutch speaking. The proportion of French speakers to Dutch speakers in the Federal government is fixed by riyal decree, and regularly amended to reflect changes in the composition of the Belgian population. The Flemish Government, the French Community and the Walloon Region only use their own language, and thus require that all applicants can work in that language.

Canada has two official languages: English and French. The Canadian public service has designated some positions as bilingual so that the Canadian population can be served in their official language of choice, and that, in bilingual regions, the work environment is conducive to the use of both official languages. For this purpose, the Public Service Commission develops and oversees administration of tests to evaluate second language proficiency; the Canada Public Service Agency is in charge of developing policies that create and maintain a work environment conductive to the effective use of both official languages; and the Canada School of the Public Service provides second language training to persons employed in the public service.

Switzerland has issued some guidelines to promote plurilingualism in all administrative units of the federal government, and make possible for any public servant to work in any of the three official languages (French, German and Italian). This policy considers that the commitment of the senior management is crucial to produce a coherent policy and proposes delegating responsibility to an official in a strategic position to provide support to that policy. In addition, recruitment must guarantee an equitable representation of the different linguistic communities in the administrative units. The linguistic competences of the staff are developed through training and linguistic information provided by the federal administration. A central aspect of this policy is the practice of plurilingualism in the daily life. The organisation of work should facilitate communication in any of the official languages, for instance during work meetings where colleagues from other linguistic communities, participants must express themselves in their own official language to prevent the predominance of a unique language.

Source: OECD (2007) OECD reviews of human resource management in government: Belgium; Public Service Commission of Canada accessed at: www.psc-cfp.gc.ca; Swiss Government (2009) Guide pour la promotion du plurilinguism, Office fédéral du personnel.

One further aspect that may contribute to transform the workplace environment into a diversity-friendly one is, according to the Canadian and Irish experiences, offering applicants or public employees the possibility of denouncing unfair, discriminatory or hostile practices. Investigating cases of discrimination, inequality or intolerance during the recruitment process or in the workplace would send the message that those practices are not part of the core values of the public service. Sweden established the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination in charge of providing advice to individuals, authorities and social partners on issues related to fighting discrimination. The Ombudsman can penalise financially employers or education providers that do not implement measure to prevent and counteract discrimination. Even applicants can appeal the result of a recruitment process. In Israel, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission is responsible for fostering public awareness in equal opportunities, receiving and handling complaints, instructing employers to submit data through a legal order, and filing lawsuits in the Labour Courts on behalf of the complainer or the Commission.

Countries like the United Kingdom are analysing how activities such as public procurement could help deliver equality objectives through the incorporation of equality related contract conditions and the use of equality related award criteria. Seeking partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors are becoming increasingly important to obtain competences, knowledge and skills required to meet government goals. Managing networks will be an issue governments will have to master, as links with organisations working with minorities, ethnic population, disabled people, or promoting equal opportunities in the labour market will have a more active role in the pursue of diversity.

Box 14. Summary of practices to improving recruitment and induction

- Use all available mechanisms for job advertising and include pro-diversity statements in job advertisements.

- Enhance equity at entry through education through traineeships, scholarships etc.

- Move away from purely academic competitive examinations.

- Focus on job descriptions on skills, competencies and experience required for good performance.

- Interview and selection panels should reflect diversity.

- Design neutral recruitment exams eliminating elements that may be considered as the cause of discrimination.

- Adopt mechanisms to facilitate the transition to the working life in the public service (training, mentoring).

- Open the possibility to denounce cases of unfair and discriminatory practices.

Source : OECD (GOV)

Evaluating diversity policies

There are two main aspects to be considered in this section. The first one refers to how diversity policies are being evaluated and the mechanisms used by policy-makers to assess progress. The second has to do with the results achieved by the current policies and programmes in the area.

How to assess progress? OECD countries agree that evaluating the programme on a regular basis is critical to correct deviations, change aspects that are not working, argue the case for continuing the programme, allocate resources, and ensure the achievement of objectives. However, OECD countries initiatives reflect some difficulties in evaluating diversity policies and programmes. Some of them have to do with the lack of clarity of objectives, strategic planning and vision which makes hard to determine

whether progress has been made or not. Other difficulty is the lack of good quality data on workforce diversity as not all public organisations keep a record of the background of their staff. The argument is to preserve people's privacy but that complicates having reliable assessments and arguing the case for the reform. Probably the biggest difficulty is and will be how to assess the contribution of different backgrounds, competencies, perspectives and experiences to the improvement of government's operation. This assessment will largely rely on qualitative data with all the trade-offs that it implies.

According to the experience of Australia, Finland, Netherlands, Norway and New Zealand, it seems that surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are effective methods for obtaining and assessing data on diversity policies. Annual reports on the progress of diversity policies are commonly prepared by individual organisations and sent to the central co-ordination body, which in turn prepares an overall assessment of diversity in the public service. In countries like Australia and New Zealand, participation in surveys and the integration of equality and diversity issues into the strategic performance reporting is part of the responsibilities of the organisations. In Norway, as part of the evaluation process, the Ministry of Government Administration conducts fact-finding projects in several rounds directed at all government agencies to examine the activities and results. The use of benchmarks in Finland (Diversity Barometer) and the Netherlands (Diversity Index) have allowed authorities to examine attitudes towards diversity, and compare the workforce composition of the individual organisations with the average workforce in a particular sector, geographical area or national labour market. The UK diversity strategy defines a series of short, medium and long-term objectives and activities to track progress with key elements that indicate whether success has been achieved or not.

Box 15. Assessing diversity policies - the UK experience

The UK strategy for promoting equality and valuing diversity focuses on four key themes linked and designed to drive the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into every aspect of the civil service work. These themes constitute a framework for delivering equality and diversity in the civil service in the medium and long-term. The themes are: *i*) changing behaviour to create a civil service-wide inclusive culture; *ii*) strong leadership and clear, transparent accountability for delivering diversity; *iii*) talent management systems that enable everyone to realise their potential; and *iv*) a diverse workforce at all levels, measured against workforce targets to reach over the next few years.

Every theme states the outcome expected in the short, medium and long-term (2020), and a benchmark to determine when success has been achieved. For instance, on the representation theme the strategy states:

- *Outcome*: A civil service that is making good progress towards reflecting society by 2020, at all levels.

- **We will achieve this through**: Continuing to increase representation of women in the Senior Civil Service, women in top management posts and minority ethnic and disabled staff in the Senior Civil Service. We will aim to reach within five years: 34% of staff in top management posts to be women (26.6% at October 2007); 39% of the Senior Civil Service to be women (32.1% at October 2007); 5% of the Senior Civil Service to be people from minority ethnic backgrounds (3.4% at October 2007); 5% of the Senior Civil Service to be disabled people (3% at October 2007).

- **In the short term we will**: work in partnership with key stakeholders to review the quality, coverage and consistency of our data on disability and ethnicity; evaluate the pilot monitoring exercise to collect data on religion or belief and sexual orientation conducted under the diversity 10-point plan, by end 2008 … provide guidance to support departments and agencies to start collecting data.

- **In the medium term we will**: review progress against the overall Senior Civil Service targets and the departmental Senior Civil Service and feeder grade targets, to identify where we need to take further action, by end 2009; have built our data on religion or belief and sexual orientation at departmental level by end 2009.

- **In the longer term we will**: review progress against improving the quality, consistency and coverage of our data and put in place action to address any remaining barriers to declaration, all by end 2011; evaluate progress towards monitoring religion or belief and sexual orientation, and publish the findings, by end 2011.

- **We will know we have succeeded when**: our analysis shows that we are making good progress towards reflecting the society we serve at every level by 2020; the Civil Service is acknowledged as the employer that leads the way in valuing and promoting equality and diversity in its workplace, at all levels, and has a senior leadership that is both visibly and culturally diverse.

Source: UK Cabinet Office (2008) *Promoting Equality, Valuing Diversity: a strategy for the civil service*, Diversity Strategy Team. www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/diversity/index.asp

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Governments need to use the results of the evaluation so that the effort put in pursuing diversity makes sense. Evaluation results need to be communicated within and outside government through reports or reviews. Publishing results would contribute to transparency and accountability and, in turn, to generate evidence and build confidence in the reforms. After the evaluation, governments can draw lessons and modify their activities or policies. The experience of OECD countries shows that in order to evaluate a diversity policy data needs have to be defined beforehand and that investments in guidelines, benchmarks and training can help develop the practice of evaluation.

There are some common points across the different practices: i) diversity policies and programmes should be evaluated on a regular basis, annually seems to be the common practice; but ii) it is necessary to establish long-term evaluation frameworks; iii) that must be prepared from the outset clearly defining a vision and what will be considered as a success; iv) clear definitions of what diversity, disability, discrimination and other related concepts mean in terms of the project to facilitate evaluation; and v)

establish a methodology for data collection and analysis. The importance of conducting an evaluation is that it may contribute to provide the evidence that diversity policies are delivering the expected results.

What results so far? It is difficult to talk about results achieved by OECD countries on the search for diversity in the public service as the majority of the policies and programmes are ongoing. Moreover, the information provided largely shows expected results rather than concrete achievements. The information also uncovers a mix scenario in which a large majority of countries are focusing on dealing with discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities, whereas a smaller group has moved to see diversity as a resource to improve public governance.

One of the main achievements so far has been increasing consciousness regarding diversity and equal opportunities. Governments and public employees are growingly aware of the advantages of building a diverse public workforce. There is a positive change of perceptions and attitudes towards people with different backgrounds, experiences and competencies regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, political affiliation, disability, or physical appearance. In this regard, women in OECD countries are finding more favourable conditions for career development and job opportunities at different levels. Demographic changes together with diversity policies have contributed to increase the percentage of older people in the public workforce as some countries reported an increase in the retiring age. Progress regarding members of minority and ethnic groups seems to remain limited. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the introduction of the Equality Bill which intended to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations within the public sector has led to culture change, and raised the profile of the equality agenda.

Conclusions and the Way Forward

OECD countries seem to be of the view that if the civil service is to be efficient and effective in delivering public services to a socially, ethnically, culturally and economically diverse society in a personalised way, it needs, among other things, to reflect society. For that purpose, a diverse workforce must be seen as an added value. Achieving diversity is a long-term, confidence-building process. However, diversity cannot be achieved without first dealing with discrimination, and enhancing equality in public employment, where merit should prevail.

Challenges

Achieving diversity policy goals creates several challenges for governments, among them:

The issue of sustainability. The benefits from the implementation of diversity policies are very likely to emerge slowly and be less apparent to the outside world. This is why leadership at all levels and commitment from all stakeholders is indispensable. In the absence of hard evidence, pursuing diversity becomes into a confidence-building process whose success largely depends on how good governments or organisations are at collecting and analysing data on their progress and communicating the benefits diversity may potentially have or has had for government performance. Thus, periodic evaluations, the development of methodologies for data collection and analysis, and a communication strategy can enhance employers' confidence in diversity initiatives.

Tackling discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities. Many OECD countries have stated in their reform programmes that without dealing with discrimination and intolerance, diversity will be harder to attain and that the impact of any reform in this direction will be minimal. Although OECD countries have made some progress in dealing with discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities, there are issues still to be addressed like gender pay gap; and the access to managerial positions for women, disabled people, and members from minority groups. Dealing with discrimination on the basis of age, gender, sexuality,

disability, ethnicity or socio-economic background is still work in progress for a number of OECD countries. For this purpose, cultural or attitudinal change is essential.

Making the HRM system more flexible and inclusive. As it was already mentioned in this report, progress on diversity issues will be determined to a large extent by how flexible and inclusive the HRM system is. This means that governments will need to adopt dynamic employment policies. For that purpose, a focus on mobility, multi-disciplinary careers, leadership (negotiation), long-term planning, competences, delegation of HRM authority, and adjustable working conditions are likely to be in the agenda for civil service reform. For instance, managers and HR experts will need to design mechanisms to meet the demand for a long-term supply of competences; identify and understand the factors that may attract people from the different social groups and traditions to the public service; find the balance between assessing qualifications and the importance of a different background; and manage people's expectations regarding public employment. The financial crisis by itself is not likely to bring to government the required skills, governments will have to attract them through flexible, inclusive and merit-based HRM practices.

Diversity from a whole-of-government approach. Fostering diversity is a continuous process of government improvement. This is a long-term project that will need to be revised regularly, but it will require changes in other aspects of public management like human resources, budgeting, integrity and transparency. Diversity principles should then be part of any public management reform as diversity initiatives cannot succeed as isolated strategies.

In conclusion

In general, although progress has been made towards equal opportunities, there is still a long way to go to build a diverse public workforce in OECD countries. There seems to be, however, a growing tendency among OECD countries to see different backgrounds, experiences and competences as an opportunity to improve government performance. Governments seem to realise that increasing the share of people from disadvantaged groups to build a diverse public workforce is only seeing part of the solution. Pursuing diversity is focusing in all groups of society regardless of their characteristics and providing them with the same opportunities to obtain employment and develop their capacities in the public service. Measures that promote affirmative action may indirectly create room for discrimination towards certain groups and would be regarded as patronising by others. Experts on diversity seem to share the view that diversity policies are about designing mechanisms to empower particular social groups to compete for public employment on their own merit and facilitating the access of people with different backgrounds who may contribute to government goal achievement. It is true, however, that treating everyone in the same way and under the same rules would paradoxically exclude certain social groups from joining the workforce, thus the different initiatives to promote equality in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability, and national origin. So far, the major impact of equal opportunities and diversity policies has been reflected in the promotion of better governance practices: fairness, equality and tolerance.

This report identified some common elements in diversity policies which enable OECD to propose a reference framework for future work to advance equality and diversity policies. The framework does not pretend to cover all aspects of policy-making, but instead is a general framework which may be of relevance in pursuing diversity in different contexts. Its main strength is that it is based on the policies and practices which appear to be giving good results in OECD countries.

Box 16. Towards a general reference framework to foster diversity in the public service

Basic elements of equality and diversity policies

- **Define a vision of the type of public service required for the future.** A common vision is essential to co-ordinate works, to obtain political commitment to the initiative, and to help to stay the course over for the long-term. The vision must be based on a diagnostic of the current situation and the identification of areas of adjustment. The establishment of a clear conceptual framework is crucial.

- **Regard diversity as a resource and a priority.** Diversity is a pre-requisite for governmental efficiency and the promotion of good governance practices. Therefore, to attract, use and retain a mixture of backgrounds, competencies, and experiences of members of society is paramount to this purpose.

- **Integrate diversity principles into broader strategic policies.** Diversity is a means towards broader general governance purposes. Thus, diversity principles need to be integrated into broader policies of management reform and defined from a whole-of-government approach.

- **Define a strategy from a participative-joint approach.** To maximise the effectiveness of diversity policies, their goals should be based on the inputs from a wide variety of actors (agency managers, members of NGOs, trade unions, members of the target population). This contributes to ensure ownership, facilitate implementation and strengthen cohesiveness in the public service.

- **Counteract and prevent discrimination.** Fighting and preventing discrimination is considered as the basic underpinning of diversity. Thus, human resource management processes and instruments must be designed and used in a way to prevent a discriminatory, hostile or intimidatory working environment or harassment. Efforts should be made to build a culture of toleration and respect towards diversity in terms of gender, age, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, ethnic or foreign background, political views, or physical appearance. Provide applicants and employees with the possibility to make a formal complaint or ask for the revision of recruitment and promotion processes when discrimination it is believed to have occurred.

Management measures

- **Leadership and commitment** are required at political and managerial levels to ensure policy success. Working towards building a representative public workforce demands managing change and leaders are in a strategic position to keep the focus, correct deviations, motivate people, and seek further support and commitment for the initiative.

- **Central co-ordination.** Establishing a central co-ordination unit serves to have a focal point for promoting diversity, provide support and guidance to line ministries and agencies, monitor progress, share information, facilitate co-operation, and strengthen coherence. This implies that line ministries and agencies should have their own initiatives based on their own needs, priorities and strategic goals but based on central guidelines and vision.

- **Inter-organisational collaboration**. Enabling inter-organisational co-ordination and collaboration through networks is an effective way of working together towards a common goal and keeping a whole-of-government approach. Networks make possible sharing expertise, knowledge, save resources, renew organisational commitment to diversity, and maintain diversity.

- **Make diversity principles part of the HRM system.** Diversity principles should be regarded as integral part of the HRM system from strategic workforce planning to recruitment, training, promotion and evaluation. This is a visible part of the diversity strategy as it has to do with the daily business of personnel management within an organisation. The HRM processes and practices should enable attracting and retaining a representative workforce with the competencies, backgrounds and experiences that contribute to organisational and broader national goals.

Evaluation and accountability

- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Evaluating diversity programmes on a regular basis provides with the necessary information to determine progress, identify deviations and propose changes. Evaluation results may also be used to keep momentum to sustain reform.

- **Accountability.** The legal framework should clearly specify who the ultimate responsible for the initiative as a whole and within individual organisations is. It is crucial to establish what is expected from managers and public employees in pursuing diversity to then assess their contribution to the initiative.

Source: OECD (GOV).

This report has argued that there is a case for fostering diversity in the public service. Diversity is now a political priority for a number of OECD governments and action is needed so as not to lose momentum and allow reforms to mature. Perseverance will be required from leaders as the impact and benefits will most likely not be manifest in the short or medium term. So, what are the 'quick wins' that could support the initial stages of this long process? Based on the OECD countries experience, it is possible to identify political and managerial first impacts or 'quick wins'. From the political point of view, fostering diversity would send the right message regarding the promotion of good governance practices which may contribute to strengthen trust in government. It would help to portray government as *responsive* as it takes citizens' expectations and needs into account; *responsible* because of adopting fair and inclusive policies that look at the medium and long-term to ensure better conditions for current and future generations; and *legitimate* as it deserves the trust of citizens. From the managerial point of view, the search for diversity may help to uncover the capacity of government for strategic planning and help to correct or update any deficiency. At the same time, pursing diversity may contribute to improve the HRM system by updating recruitment, selection, promotion, training and evaluation processes on a regular basis. After all, as some OECD countries stated, diversity principles should be part of a modern HRM system.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PRESENTATIONS IN THE EXPERTS MEETING

Building a Stronger and Fairer Public Service by Fostering Diversity: innovative practices and future challenges
1 October 2009, OECD headquarters, Paris.

Belgium	**Mr Ben Smeets** Director of Organisational Development, Federal Civil Service Personnel and Organisation	Implementation Strategy: The Belgian diversity plan.
France	**Ms Véronique Poinssot** Equal Opportunity Officer, General Directorate for Public Administration and the Civil Service, Ministry of Finance	Diversity: innovative practices and future challenges.
Finland	**Mr Veikko Liuksia** Director of Personnel Policy, Ministry of Finance	The Finnish diversity policies: the challenges ahead.
Israel	**Ms Tziona Koenig-Yair** National Commissioner Equal Employment Opportunities Commission	Challenges for Equal Employment Opportunities in Israel.
Japan	**Ms Miwa Eto** Administrator, Personnel and Pension Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications	Diversity policy for public service in Japan.
Netherlands	**Ms Celik Saniye** Principal Administrator for the Diversity Project, Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations	Diversity in the Dutch Public Services.
Norway	**Mr Godtfred Boen** Advisor, Royal Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration and Reform	Norwegian Civil Service Diversity Policies: a brief overview and some central issues.
Sweden	**Ms Asa Krook** Senior Advisor Swedish Agency for Government Employers	An Inclusive Approach – a strategy for diversity management in the Swedish central government sector.
United Kingdom	**Mr Tony Strutt** Assistant Director Strategy Unit, Government Equalities Office, Cabinet Office	Fostering diversity in the public service.
United States	**Ms Elisabeth Montoya** Chief of Staff, US Office of Personnel Management **Ms Jennifer Mason** Deputy Chief of Staff, US Office of Personnel Management	Attracting, recruiting, and promoting diverse talent.

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