



*Présidence luxembourgeoise
du Conseil de l'Union européenne*

MID-TERM PROGRAMME 2006-2007 FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE DIRECTORS GENERAL RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

Original version

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Introduction

After the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy at the European Council in March 2005, it is more important than ever for cooperation between Directors General, called the European Public Administration Network (EPAN), to strive towards innovative, competitive and performance-oriented public administrations, which can substantially contribute towards fostering economic growth, job creation and social cohesion. This objective should guide all the activities within the informal cooperation framework of the Directors General.

Since the adoption of the last Mid-Term Programme in Rome in December 2003, the following important initiatives have been adopted by the Directors General:

Under the Irish Presidency, the Framework for Implementing the EPAN Evaluation and the Report of the Task Force on Enlargement has been adopted. This document puts

forward valuable suggestions for improving the functioning and operation of EPAN at network level. These suggestions are being implemented under the Irish, Dutch, Luxembourg and UK Presidencies. Furthermore, this Presidency took important steps towards obtaining the views of the different working groups on their work programme and taking their specific issues into account.

The most historic event during this first half of 2004 was the participation of the 10 new Member States as full members in the EPAN Network.

Then, under the following Dutch Presidency and within the context of the Lisbon Strategy, the important role of public administrations was further enhanced. In their memorandum of understanding of 4 November, the ministers responsible for public administration and e-Government from Ireland, Luxembourg, Italy, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and the Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Personnel and Administration stressed that more attention and effort was necessary from the Member States and European institutions in order to improve public administration, so that it becomes a key factor in achieving the Lisbon targets.

Furthermore, it was laid down in the Maastricht resolutions of 22 and 23 November 2004 that an ad-hoc Lisbon group should be set up with the aim of preparing an integrated plan of activities to be carried out by EPAN's working groups and to be integrated into the Mid-Term Programme.

As set out in the resolutions adopted under the Irish Presidency, the preparation of the Mid-Term Programme 2006-2007 has been delegated to the Luxembourg Presidency, which, in close cooperation with the Troika, has elaborated the activities and priorities of this programme on the basis of broad consultation with the EU Member States. In this respect, the Luxembourg Minister responsible for Public Administration has addressed a letter to his counterparts in the EU Member States asking them to inform him about their priorities with regard to the next Mid-Term Programme. Their answers are taken into account in the following document.

The meeting of Ministers responsible for Public Administration in Luxembourg on 8 June 2005 will provide an opportunity to renew the political backing of informal cooperation in public administration and to set a new Mid-Term Programme, taking into consideration the challenges of the Lisbon Strategy and the enlargement.

Future common challenges facing European public administrations

The content of the following Mid-Term Programme has, for the first time, been prepared and endorsed with 25 Member States. But this development is not the only new challenge. In accordance with the analysis of the Mid-Term Programme in Rome, the context and framework, in which the EPAN Network has been operating during recent

years, have changed considerably. On the one hand, the network is widening with the full participation of the 10 new Member States, while its activities have retained their ambition with, for instance, the new tasks within the context of achieving the Lisbon goals.

The national public administrations of the EU Member States share many common concerns, such as demographic changes and their consequences for the public sectors in terms of recruitment and provision of services, or in general in terms of strengthening the efficiency, performance and transparency of the public sector through eGovernment, administrative simplification, quality management as well as the enhancement of performance management in many of the national public sectors and they take into consideration that effective national implementation of Union Law by the Member States is a matter of interest to the network.

A common concern among the EU Member States is finding effective and efficient solutions to those common questions and exchanging experiences and best practices, while (wherever and whenever possible) focusing not only on successes, but also on less good experiences and their reasons. They should also try to find solutions to common problems in different contexts within a framework of governance aimed at restoring the trust of citizens in their governmental institutions (the Italian document entitled 'Human Governance' is one example of such a framework).

The agenda of the EPAN Network is characterized by a wide range of interlinked and overlapping topics in the field of eGovernment, human resource management, innovative public services and better regulation, while they are divided among different working groups.

Against this background, the EU Member States should strive towards fostering the efficiency and coherence of the EPAN Network by taking into account the following objectives:

- Improvement of coordination among the working groups through a review of their activities;
- Consolidation and optimization of the network on the basis of the framework document adopted under the Irish Presidency;
- Promotion of common projects and horizontal activities to be dealt with by different working groups (e.g. enhancement of quality and efficiency in the public administrations) aimed at a more in-depth study of the different topics and the creation of synergies. In this same context, efforts should also be made to address more strategic issues (and the tools connected with these strategies) concerning the modernization of the public administrations. To this end, the IPSPG has to share knowledge of how the Member States work with modernization and innovation – both strategically and in practice;

- Enhancement of coordination of EPAN activities with those of other international and European organizations is of particular importance, especially in view of the complementary character of EPAN activities with respect to the Community institutions. Duplication should be avoided (e.g. with regard to the directorate for public governance and territorial development (GOV) of the OECD). In this regard, the EPAN Network should stay in regular contact with its secretariat.

Challenges and opportunities provided by the Lisbon Strategy

The aim of the Lisbon Strategy, which was adopted under the Portuguese Presidency in 2000, is for Europe to become the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The successful implementation of this strategy depends to a large extent on a highly competent, professional and competitive public sector, characterized by effective governance structures, innovative and effective policy-making practices and a performance-oriented provision of services. In this regard, the national public sectors are to be regarded as key drivers in the bid to achieve the Lisbon targets.

Both the outcome of the Spring European Council, where the heads of state and Government reached the conclusion that *it is essential to relaunch the Lisbon Strategy without delay*, and the adoption of EPAN's new Mid-Term Programme, constitute a unique opportunity to more closely relate public administrations with the Lisbon Agenda, as well as to improve the network's coherence and efficiency by focusing all its activities on Lisbon-related issues.

Against this background, the Directors General at their extraordinary meeting in Luxembourg on 31 January 2005 set up the ad-hoc Lisbon Group with the mandate to identify what all the working groups comprising EPAN can do to enhance the policies set out in the Lisbon Process and to prepare an integrated plan of activities for the working groups.

According to the final report of the ad-hoc group, the overall guiding principles of the future EPAN Network should be as follows:

- Revalorization of the role of the public administrations in the Lisbon Process;
- Enhancement of the public administrations in order to better achieve the Lisbon goals of sustainable economic growth, job creation and social cohesion;
- Prioritization of Lisbon-related activities within the EPAN Network.

Strategy for further cooperation

In line with the final report of the ad-hoc Lisbon Group and with the overall priorities for the future cooperation of the EPAN Network as laid down in this MTP (improvement of coordination among the working groups, consolidation, promotion of common projects, avoidance of duplication, creation of synergies, pages 3-4), the activities of the network should be streamlined along the following four priority lines, called in this context ‘common coordinated action plans’, while cross-cutting activities should be promoted wherever possible:

1) How EU Member States work towards the Lisbon objectives

With EPAN’s work, the emphasis of the governance theme should be placed on interesting practices regarding *participatory policy-making* and *managerial capacity* and *efficiency* seeking to design, implement and monitor a coherent set of European and national policies.

Activities:

- Analysis of interesting practices and critical factors for successful formulation and implementation of ‘national Lisbon programmes’ (IPSG in close cooperation with HRWG, eGOV, DEBR);
- Analysis of practices and competences on strategic management and leadership (HRWG in close cooperation with IPSG, eGOV, DEBR);
- More intensive and integrated use of ICT for enabling efficient, effective and transparent horizontal policy-making;
- Tailor-made assessment and exploitation of the role of ICT in propelling change in policy-making (eGOV WG).

The Lisbon Strategy and high-quality governance should be included in the next Quality Conference on Sustainable Quality organized by Finland.

2) Reduction in administrative burdens by studying the Commission’s methodology for measuring administrative burdens, which should be agreed upon by the end of 2005

In its March 2005 meeting, the European Council requested ‘*the Commission and the Council to consider a common methodology for measuring administrative burdens with the aim of reaching an agreement by the end of 2005. That agreement should take advantage of the results of the Commission’s pilot projects which are due in the course of*

2005.’ On 16 March 2005, the Commission launched the pilot phase of an ‘EU net administrative cost’ approach with a view to testing its feasibility and added value as a common approach for EU institutions and Member States.

Activities:

- Exchange of experiences concerning the use of methodology (DEBR);
- Reduction of existing national regulations and quality of new national ‘Lisbon regulations’ (DEBR, subject to the outcome of the Commission’s work on the integrated guidelines for Lisbon National Action Plans);
- Training on the use of methodology (EIPA, DSIPA and HR WG, DEBR);
- Enhancement of the work on best multiple use of data and once-only data supply by citizens and enterprises (EGov WG, DEBR).

3) Efficiency of public administration

The degree to which outputs are achieved in terms of resources allocated is a key factor for a performance-oriented public administration that is able to achieve the Lisbon goals. Within this context, the study of factors such as indicators for measuring performance and productivity, HRM and ICT systems merit particular attention.

Activities:

- ICT licence for administrative staff (HR WG and DSIPA);
- Professionalization of ICT staff (eGov WG and DSIPA);
- Teleworking (HR WG and eGov WG);
- Impact of lifelong learning on training management (EIPA, DSIPA and HR WG).

Activities (HR WG):

- Impact of demographic change on recruitment (HR WG);
- Performance pay and other reward systems (HR WG);
- Gender employment (HR WG);
- Active ageing (HR WG).

Activities by different working groups (IPSG, HR WG, EGov WG):

- Establishment of efficiency reviews, indicators and targets;
- Streamlining of business processes;
- Outsourcing and consolidation of back-office functions.

4) Working towards European User Satisfaction Indices

The services provided by public administrations have to fulfil the needs of the users, citizens and enterprises.

In taking into account the reservations of some of the EU Member states and the European Commission with regard to the usefulness of this priority area under this chapter, it should only be considered as being of further relevance under this chapter, if a thorough evaluation of its options, feasibility and business costs shows its added value for the EPAN network with regard to reaching the Lisbon goals.

Activities (IPSG):

- Use of new methods and tools for ascertaining the needs of users, citizens and enterprises in order to identify and develop (high impact) services (IPSG);
- Use of new methods and tools for organizing successful take-up campaigns in the new services (IPSG);

Activities (EGov):

- Monitoring and evaluation of eGovernment benefits and performance through the sharing of best practices in order to improve customer services, save time, financial and human resources and to provide the services (EGov);
- Electronic identification and authentication, electronic signatures, electronic identity cards.(EGov);
- Management of language versions of national (and sub-national) government web sites and portals (EGov);
- Monitoring the development of the range of pan-European eGovernment services provided by national (and sub-national) institutions, aimed at citizens and enterprises in other Member States (EGov).

Under the UK Presidency, the working groups should further develop their working programmes (to be validated by the DGs) taking into account the abovementioned four priority areas. Activities, which are relevant for contributing to reaching the Lisbon goals or in other words to the four priority areas should be prioritized, while the activities and objectives of the present MTP could complement this new list of activities.

The working groups should at the same time consider whether all the current work performed by EPAN helps increase the capacity of public administrations to meet the Lisbon objectives. In order to facilitate this selection, the drawing up of a checklist of positive and negative priorities could be envisaged, while considering criteria such as the risk of duplication, etc.

The priority areas/common coordinated action plans should be carried out within a given time frame with a common progress report submitted by the involved working

groups to the DGs. (the time frame and interval of progress reports should be decided by the DGs).

After the UK Presidency, the redefined working programmes of the working groups, developed on the basis of the present MTP and validated by the DGs, are to be considered as a more detailed complement to the present MTP.

Also in accordance with the results of the ad-hoc Lisbon Group, efforts should be made within the network to strive towards a more '*goal oriented*' approach towards the organization, execution and communication of the activities carried out by its working groups, while referring back to instruments such as performance reporting.

Areas of cooperation

In accordance with the Mid-Term Programme in Rome, the cooperation programmes and activities for the public administrations are developed in the following areas:

- Innovative Public Services

Activities in this field aim at improving the quality of public services and at exchanging experiences, developing new tools and activities which support this goal.

- Human Resource Management

Activities in this field focus on all issues relating to human resources policies of public service and some general administrative matters concerning reform programmes.

- eGovernment

Activities in the field of eGovernment¹ aim at facilitating and undertaking the exchange of views, experiences and good practices in particular with regard to public administration aspects of eGovernment.

- Better Regulation

Activities in this field aim at stimulating strategic discussions on the EU better regulation agenda and at facilitating the exchange of good practices with volunteer Member States for instance in the field of regulatory impact assessment.

For both tasks, it is particularly important that the Directors and Experts of Better Regulation (DEBR) maintains its informal networking character.

¹ The eGovernment concept also includes government IT projects.

Although eGovernment remains a horizontal issue for innovation in public administration, in this programme it is regarded as an area in its own right. The extended Troika will consider issues and items for discussion at the meetings of Directors General and prepare the necessary information to further these issues.

Moreover, the Directors General, having received the mandate stated in the Ministerial Resolution approved in Rome on the issue of Social Dialogue, will examine ways to improve the activities in this field.

The constitution, in spring 2005, of a common and pluralist delegation of trade union organizations that are representative of public employees at European level, has enabled social dialogue to take a step forward.

The Ministers responsible for Public Administration, meeting in Luxembourg on 8 June 2005, give the Directors General the mission to examine how the social dialogue can be developed and improved, and how the employers and the employees can be consulted on issues and topics of their concern.

They will report to the Ministers at the next Ministers meeting.

Innovative Public Services

The improvement in the quality of public services provided for citizens and business, as the main activity of IPSG, is at the core of the reform of public administrations in the EU Member States.

During the last presidencies, major progress was made in benchmarking, in the dissemination of best practices as well as in promoting familiarity with the results of EPAN, etc. Furthermore, adjustments have been made to guarantee the full participation of the new Member States. As the preferences of the Member States as expressed in their answers to the ministerial letter show, efforts in this field should also be made in future and aimed at further stimulating mutual learning.

According to the preferences of the majority of Member States, the activities in this field should focus on the following working areas:

- Identification and dissemination of high-impact best practices, which are here defined as innovative or interesting, and which have been identified as contributing to improved performance in leading organizations. Although the sharing of experiences and best practices is also a concern of the other groups, it should be of particular concern to the Innovative Public Services Group.

- Improvement in the communication strategy inside and outside EPAN and the establishment of an effective knowledge-management system ensuring easy accessibility for the public;
- Effectiveness of Quality Conferences;
- Further dissemination of CAF.

Cooperation and coordination with the other working groups should be improved, such as with the e-Government Working Group (see Maastricht resolutions).

1. Benchmarking and Best Practice

Objectives:

- To make significant progress with the exchange of best practices and to implement the 2006-2007 Work Programme.
- To explore cooperation between EPAN working groups and the European Commission in the context of the EU eGovernment Best Practice Framework to support further possibilities of an extension of this Framework to meet the general purposes of good practices projects;
- To explore how to promote an efficient, smart and innovative public administration. This could be implemented by, for instance, examining of how the process of starting up a company looks like in different countries and whether there are different efficient solutions and how they could be improved for instance through benchmarking.

Activities:

- In a more general way to continue the work of exploring options and business cases for establishing a methodology for developing indicators and standards in the fields of 'good governance' and 'user satisfaction needs', while taking into account the cultural differences of Member States. In the field of 'user satisfaction needs', the indices should focus on a number of public services, while they should be made available for national use.
- To continue the work in the learning laboratories as well as the expert meetings on topics such as Good Administration and Process-Based Management on a voluntary basis. The participants should work out different solutions to the same problems in different contexts. The results of their work should be published on the EPAN website.

In general, the IPSG should avoid focusing its comparative analyses and evaluations on topics that are too specialized. In general, the group should deal with topics that are closely linked to the civil service and coordinate its efforts with the group on human resources and e-Government, for instance with regard to TICS, contractualization, reengineering of processes, production of administrative documents, etc.

2. CAF (Common Assessment Framework)

Objective:

- Quality management should also remain in future a concern within the IPSG group. A priority action in this field is aimed at further increasing the dissemination of CAF, as well as focusing on specific aspects such as the capability of using CAF and controlling its implementation.

Activities:

- Promotion of an exchange of ideas on issues/challenges faced by Member States that have already implemented CAF, with Member States that are working towards introducing CAF.
- Elaborating an improved version of CAF, which is to be unveiled during the 4QC in 2006
- Enhancement of collaboration between national and European levels through the building of partnerships among the Member States, the CAF Resource Centre and EFQM/Speyer.

In 2007, activities should also focus on a comparison of CAF with other quality management models to analyse and establish the:

- Impact and scope of use of different quality management tools (CAF, Balance Score Card, EFQM, Charters and Charter Mark);
- Further development of the use of models to achieve the Lisbon Strategy and 'Good Governance'.

3. Communication/Knowledge Sharing and Management

Objective:

- To improve the visibility of EPAN and the distribution of information towards the public (to all public administrations in all the EU Member States) and to better manage the storage, collection and dissemination of real best-practice cases and innovative projects.

Activities:

- To develop knowledge management and maximum access for the public to the activities of EPAN by coordinating the CAF database, e-newsletter, CIRCA site, 3QC site and the EPAN site. Continuous efforts should be made to establish the EPAN website as a regularly updated, user-oriented and topical knowledge management repository and portal;
- Furthermore, communication among the working groups should be improved through, for instance, the realization of common projects and efforts to present the content of their activities in a well-structured way to the public;
- To establish a comprehensive database with all best practices of EU Member States in the same language. In this regard, the possibility of extending the e-Government database to all areas in the field of administrative reform should be evaluated;
- In order to make better use of this knowledge database, the transfer of knowledge and the implementation of innovative projects through seminars and workshops should be fostered.

The Directors General should be informed on a regular basis about the maintenance of the EPAN site.

4. Quality Conferences

Objective:

- To increase the impact of Quality Conferences by better taking into account the perspective of the user of public services and by including non-European experiences and reviewing future options.

Activities:

With a view to improving the Quality Conferences' contribution towards achieving the Lisbon goals, the 4th Quality Conference has the potential to provide significant input into the issue of the role of the public administrations in promoting Lisbon

- Care should be taken to limit the discussions within QCs on some priority topics.

Concrete actions within this context involve:

- Ascertaining how governments and departments, also at regional and local level, can better take advantage of the experiences of QCs;
- Making sure that the results are promoted and disseminated to the relevant target group, while the experiences and learning lessons are highlighted;
- Refining the framework for selecting best practices for the QCs.
- In a more general way, to conduct open and honest appraisals for future consideration of the value of QCs and to recommend to DGs alternative or improved arrangements for the future.

Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management is a key factor for a professional, efficient, innovative and transparent public administration, based on the principles of legality, neutrality, transparency accountability and respect for the general interest. Furthermore, it is an essential factor for enhancing motivation and performance orientation among civil servants and public employees in general.

During the last presidencies, and as laid down in the Mid-Term Programme adopted in Rome on 1 December 2003, progress has been achieved in this field through studies and in-depth discussions in the areas of ethics and integrity, pensions, innovative and effective HRM systems (e.g. performance-related pay, flexible career systems, etc.) and HRM strategies to support organizational changes.

In accordance with the answers to the questionnaire on the future priority issues in the field of HR, which was sent out by the Dutch Presidency in 2004, and the answers to the ministerial letter, the future activities should concentrate on the following topics:

1. Strategic Human Resource Management in Public Administration; 2. Leadership Development and Succession Planning; 3. Modernization of public administration; 4. Ethics and Integrity; 5. Pensions in the public sector; 6. Training of civil servants.

In order to learn from each other's experiences and to contribute to a thorough understanding of the main elements of a professional HRM, exchanges among the EU Member States should at the same time be aimed at the success factors, positive and negative experiences as well as the critical evaluation of current procedures.

In order to better link the different topics and facilitate a more focused, efficient and in-depth discussion, the approach of team presidencies should be supported. This approach also has the advantage that larger topics that involve several presidencies might be tackled.

The Mid-Term Programme 2006-2007 will focus on the following topics.

1. Strategic Human Resource Management in Public Administration

Objective:

To contribute to a better forward planning of HRM in order to more effectively link HRM to achieving the core missions of the public administrations.

Activities:

- To analyse which factors EU Member States should take into account when recruiting for the future (including the demographic and other labour-force changes). The identification of best practices in this field should furthermore help the EU Member States to better match the selection and recruitment of staff with organizational needs. Future Presidencies should ensure that work in this area does not duplicate work undertaken in other areas of recruitment analysis (e.g. the European Personnel and Selection Office's network of recruitment experts);
- To identify which key competencies/skills are needed in the public administration of tomorrow. Within this context, various staff development systems used in the EU Member States could be compared, reflecting the differing needs of administrations;
- Member States have introduced different reward systems in order to motivate their staff to effectively fulfil their tasks. Against a background of budgetary cuts in the Member States, non-financial rewards are becoming more important. Discussions could focus on an exchange of best practices as regards the most effective motivation tools in the EU Member States. Consideration should be given to previous studies of motivational tools and remuneration schemes;
- Successful establishment of performance management aimed at increasing efficiency, productivity and motivation in national civil services.

2. Leadership Development and Succession Planning in Public Administration

Objective:

To identify key criteria for effective leadership as a prerequisite for a professional public administration, as well as a key factor for enabling organizational change.

Activities:

- Discussions should contribute towards improving the understanding of the key characteristics of good and effective leadership by comparing different concepts of leadership in the EU MS and by exchanging good practices in the following areas: recruitment, selection, competency and skills development, performance assessment, career development and succession planning of senior civil servants, etc. Such work should complement other themes discussed by the HR Working Group as specified in the MTP 2006-2007;
- To promote the exchange of senior civil servants between the administrations of the EU Member States. The HR Working Group should make clear reference to existing bilateral or multilateral exchange schemes between Senior Civil Servants. Such an initiative could contribute towards more diversified career development;
- The topic of leadership should also be discussed in connection with the other priority issues of the HRM Working Group (strategic HRM, modernization of public administration, ethics);
- Study of models/policies for developing leadership potential within organizations in order to support effective succession planning.

3. Modernization of Public Administration

Objective:

Study the impact of structural changes (fewer hierarchical levels, debureaucratization, e-communication and improvement of procedures) on human resource management.

Activities:

- Identify the major challenges such as the increasing need for internal communication and transparency, speeding up of evaluation and decision-

making, public relations, the transfer of staff between different parts of the public sector, re-training, cooperation with trade unions, etc.

4. Ethics and Integrity

Objective:

In this field, substantial work has already been done under the Irish and Dutch Presidencies, which can be further elaborated. All the more since ethics is a horizontal issue which is an indispensable element of effective leadership as well as of a forward looking HRM and a modern public administration.

Activities:

- To monitor change and make progress in the field of ethics by comparing actions at national level in this field and by complementing the work already done, while respecting differing national approaches and legal systems.

5. Pensions in the public sector

As laid down in the Maastricht resolutions of 22 and 23 November 2004, the HRM Group should continue to monitor the quantitative progress of pension reforms in the future.

6. Training of civil servants

Objective:

- Improvement in the knowledge, skills and competencies of civil servants of the Member States and acceding countries must be promoted through the effective deployment of existing knowledge and in view of the possibility of using modern training methods (e.g. e-learning);
- Better coordination of the activities of the meetings of directors of schools and training institutes for public administration with the agenda of the Human Resource Management Working Group. However, this should not change the informal character of the meetings of the Directors.

Activities:

- Development and implementation of common training programmes on topics relating to the formation and implementation of European policies and decisions,

with the aim of favouring the adoption by civil servants from member and accession countries with a comparable approach to European issues.

- Further elaboration of the Caserta Programme by the Directors of Schools and Institutes for Public Administration;
- Organization of open workshops and training seminars on issues of common interest linked to areas of cooperation between the Ministries responsible for public administration, also taking into account the specific needs of the new Member states. Workshops and seminars will be organized by the institutions and agencies having competence in each country. This activity follows the initiatives adopted by the Swedish Presidency in 2001 on public procurement and by the Italian Presidency on legal tools for eGovernment.

Training activities that involve accession and candidate countries will be carried out in close coordination with ongoing Phare support. The recommendations by the Task Force Enlargement will be taken into account. The activities planned within the parallel Network of Schools and Institutes for Public Administration in favour of accession and candidate countries will also be organized within a coherent global approach.

7. Free movement of civil servants

Activities involving the establishment of the free movement of civil servants within the European Union in accordance with the case law of the European Court of Justice, as well as the work carried out by the National Contact Points on Mobility, will be continued. In 2006, a progress report on legislative changes and implementation in practice in relation to the free movement of workers in the public sector should be drafted.

eGovernment

As laid down in the Mid-Term Programme under the Italian Presidency, the work in the field of eGovernment is taking place in the eGovernment Working Group, which is operating under the terms of reference provided by the Directors General at the Elsinore meeting and the resultant Work Programme. Under the Italian Presidency efforts were made to ensure coherence with the e-Europe Programme. Another central benchmark for the future of the work in this field is the declaration by the Ministers responsible for eGovernment issued after the Como meeting and the European Commission's subsequent communication on eGovernment.

Both documents call attention to the role of EPAN, also in relation to the Commission's work on eGovernment. The approach and activities recommended in the

Commission's communication have been endorsed most recently in the Conclusions of the Telecom Council.

As far as the aforementioned documents are concerned, and in accordance with the preferences expressed by the Member States, the issues of interest on which to focus the attention are:

1. Interoperability, inter- and intragovernmental collaboration and pan-European services;
2. Focus on users' needs;
3. Organizational changes, skills and the role of leadership required to attain the benefits that effective use of ICT can bring to public administrations. Ongoing work of the European Commission on the Economics of eGovernment and work done by the OECD on costs and benefits of eGovernment have to be closely observed whilst analysing the economic and social impact of eGovernment.

Furthermore, the Member States would like to pay sufficient attention to the impact of eGovernment.

In this respect, the Ministers responsible for Public Administration and eGovernment from Ireland, Luxembourg, Italy, the UK and the Netherlands also stressed in their memorandum of understanding of 4 November 2004 that more attention should be paid to the economic and social impact of eGovernment, that more arrangements be made (e.g. concerning training, expected reduction of administrative burdens) and that related indicators be developed. As regards the economic impact of e-Government, discussions should focus on methodologies to improve internal effectiveness by reducing costs, for instance.

Taking this guideline into consideration, a priority of the future work should be to improve the knowledge of the impact of eGovernment by, for instance, developing adequate methodologies, indicators, etc.

In view of the European Commission's extended work in the field of eGovernment, and as requested by a majority of Member States, efforts should focus on complementary tasks with an added value at national, regional and local level.

Continuing the work carried out hitherto, the activities should be aimed at:

- Exchanging experiences, discussing best practices while taking into account the different contexts;
- Learning from one another;
- Bringing about a degree of cooperation in policies and practices where deemed necessary;

- Contributing towards European policy objectives, e.g. to analyze and advise on how eGovernment can contribute to the Lisbon agenda.

Within this context, efforts should be made to monitor and appraise eGovernment performance and benefits within administrations.

1. Interoperability, inter- and intragovernmental collaboration and pan-European services

Objective:

- It is essential that the different public services continue to exchange their experiences in the field of interoperability in order to improve service provision, user satisfaction, e-democracy using better and more transparent communication between administration and citizens, more direct access to information and, in a more general way, the functioning of the public sector.
- Important aspects for making progress in this field include the analysis and comparison of different mechanisms of cooperation between the different state levels, such as cooperation between the administrations of the different EU Member States or issues relating to the relevant architecture. Within this context, it is also essential to raise the awareness of pan-European aspects and to speed up standardization at EU level.
- Activities in this field can be supported by taking into account the results of the study on cooperation at different governmental levels, which has been conducted by the Italian Presidency and which aims to bring about effective eGovernment.

Activities:

- To continue analysing different forms and models of cooperation at local level (with regard to service provision) by studying the contextual factors of best experiences at EU level, or between those that have managed to demonstrate improvements in terms of streamlining and accelerating procedures.
- To work out recommendations on open standards and a model for an architecture. It should be based on the work carried out by previous Presidencies. Close attention has to be paid to the work done in the field by the IDABC-Programme of DG-Enterprise of the EU in order to make use of the experiences gained there.
- To continue analysing implementation strategies for the main basic provisions, constituting the functional prerequisite for interoperability.

2. Focus on users' needs with regard to benefits for citizens and the impact of e-Government

Objective:

- A main goal of eGovernment services is to reduce administrative burdens for citizens and companies and to develop better and more efficient services. As the citizens and companies are to benefit from these services, more emphasis should be placed on satisfying their needs. The reduction in administrative burdens should be based on the work carried out by previous Presidencies.

In this respect, EU Member States should also take care to ensure a high degree of transparency for citizens and businesses with regard to the available of eGovernment services.

Activities:

Actions should concentrate mainly on:

- Developing methods and indicators for better identifying the needs and satisfaction level of users;
- Exchanging experiences of how to stimulate the use of eGovernment services by citizens and businesses;
- Discussing how to encourage cross-government collaboration and how to establish seamlessness and clusters across different sectors in order to develop the citizen-centric approach of eGovernment.

In a more general way, the group should also discuss the benefits in order to better realize the economic potential of eGovernment solutions offered to citizens and companies through electronic service provision.

3. Organizational changes, skills and the role of leadership required to achieve the benefits that effective use of ICT can bring to public administrations

Objective:

- Establishment of high-impact eGovernment services requires not only technical know-how, but also expertise in terms of introducing organizational change and a committed leadership, well-trained human resources and the political will to implement the whole programme.

Activities:

- To identify key factors in different contexts, which encourage the organizational changes required to implement eGovernment services quickly;
- To continue the discussion on the acquisition of the relevant skills and competencies as well as on the implications of e-Government on recruitment, training, functions and professional development of civil servants;
- To continue work on the requirements of modernized service provision processes regarding the sharing of data, business process redesign and human resources.

Better Regulation

Better regulation has gained a high position on the European agenda and is one of the priorities of the EU Member States.

In order to ensure future progress on better regulation issues and to better achieve the Lisbon goals, cooperation between the Member States should seek to continuously improve the quality of legislation/regulation at Community and national level in order to increase competitiveness and productivity as well as reduce costs and simplify procedures.

In future, work in the field of better regulation should continue in the field of Member states' implementation in the areas of impact assessment, simplification, access to regulation, consultation, transposition and effective structures, reduction of administrative burdens, while monitoring the state of play in relation to the implementation of the recommendations of the Mandelkern Report.

Whilst avoiding duplication with work undertaken and in the margins of Community institutions and whilst respecting the formal EU decision-making mechanisms, the work should be oriented towards the following activities to reach the abovementioned goals:

- Supplementing the work towards a common methodology for Impact Assessment as a possibility in the Inter-Institutional Agreement on better lawmaking; in this regard, the effects on competitiveness at European level should be taken into account;
- Promoting the application by Member states of a future common methodology.
- Continuing the discussions on the indicators of regulatory quality, benchmark projects on Impact Assessments and the increased use of alternative regulation possibilities;

- Facilitating wider training processes in regulatory affairs and building competencies in Impact Assessment, and discussing joint training initiatives with the Commission and the Member States in Impact Assessment. This would also complement existing efforts to promote use of the Commission's impact assessments by the Council and the move towards a possible common methodology under the Inter-institutional Agreement on better lawmaking. It would be important to ensure that the focus remained practical and demand-led responses to the real needs of Member States. Ireland has agreed to convene a sub-group of the DEBR Group to further these issues.

Furthermore, the Directors and Experts on Better Regulation should aim to:

- Support the Six Presidency Initiative on advancing Regulatory Reform in Europe by the Irish, Dutch, Luxembourg, UK, Austrian and Finland Finance Ministers from 7 December 2004 in so far it is not duplicating activities in the Community framework.

Organization of cooperation

Informal cooperation in public administration will continue to be organized at three levels: 1. Meeting of Ministers responsible for public administration and eGovernment; 2. Meeting of Directors General responsible for public administration; 3. Working Groups.

Furthermore, this cooperation framework comprises meetings of the Directors and Experts on Better Regulation and meetings of the Directors of Schools and Institutes for Public Administration.

An adequate exchange of information among these three levels should be assured, together with the necessary coordination among the activities of the working groups.

Taking into account the recommendations of the *Framework for implementing the EPAN evaluation and the report of the task force on enlargement* the Directors General should strive towards an efficient and coherent functioning of the network.

They should also implement measures and adopt solutions to facilitate:

1. Achievement of the objectives and the implementation of the initiatives set out in the Mid-Term Programme over a period of two years. Ministers will be informed on activities implemented and results obtained during the next informal meeting. Whenever there is no ministerial meeting, the Troika will inform the Directors General Meeting on the progress made in the implementation of the Mid-Term Programme;

2. Strengthen coordination and the steering role of the extended Troika, allowing, among other things:

- better planning and coordination of activities through different presidencies;
- more stable activities that support cooperation.

In view of the introduction of team presidencies, reflections on how this institutional change could help improve the EPAN cooperation network should begin.

In exceptional cases, it will be possible for Directors General to set up sub-groups composed of delegates of the countries most interested in the individual issues. These sub-groups will report to the correspondent working groups.