

### 31. Delegation in human resources management

Many OECD countries are moving towards a model of human resources management (HRM) whereby major decisions regarding employee selection, recruitment, remuneration, working conditions and dismissal are delegated from a centralised HRM body to line Ministries/Departments/Agencies. The key motive behind delegation is to empower and enable public managers to better direct their staff, allowing them to consider in their HRM decisions both the unique requirements of their own organisations and the merits of individual employees. As HRM authority is delegated, the role of the central HRM body is also changing to one of setting minimum standards and formulating HRM policies rather than implementing them.

There is no single model or common standard of delegation in HRM in the OECD, and the variance in the extent of delegation across member countries is considerable. In 2010 several OECD member countries demonstrated a high degree of delegation, with Sweden and Australia standing out as the most prominent examples. In these countries, Departments and line Ministries have greater flexibility to determine their staffing needs, recruit staff and set conditions of employment. In comparison, Turkey and Ireland display relatively lower levels of delegation, with central HRM bodies in these countries retaining greater responsibility over such decisions.

The majority of OECD member countries (18) have a central HRM body responsible for at least some key HRM functions. The exceptions are Germany and the Slovak Republic that do not have a centralised HRM body. In 13 OECD countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) a central HRM body exists but plays more of a co-ordinating role across line Ministries and is not formally responsible for HRM functions.

Today, many OECD countries have given a large amount of managerial room for manoeuvre to Ministries and Agencies, allowing them more flexibility regarding staffing levels, recruitment and some working conditions. Performance-related pay and performance appraisal systems also tend to be delegated to Ministries and Agencies, although the general management of the overall pay systems remains centralised in a majority of countries. The imperative of cost control and the institutional structure of collective bargaining in member countries may partly explain these trends.

#### **Methodology and definitions**

Data refer to 2010 and were collected through the 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management. Respondents were predominately senior officials in central government HRM departments, and data refer to HRM practices in central government. The survey was completed by all OECD member countries except Luxembourg. Definitions of the civil service as well as the organisations governed at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons. The terms public and civil service/servants are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

The index is composed of the following variables: the existence of a central HRM body, and the role of line Ministries in determining: the number and types posts within organisations; the allocation of the budget envelope between payroll and other expenses; staff compensation levels; position classification, recruitment and dismissals; and conditions of employment. The index ranges from 0 (no delegation) to 1 (high level of delegation). Missing data for countries were estimated by mean replacement.

See Annex E for further country-specific information as well as details on the methodology and factors used in constructing the index. The variables composing the index and their relative importance are based on expert judgements. They are presented with the purpose of furthering discussion, and consequently may evolve over time. Comparisons between the indexes from *Government at a Glance 2009* and 2011 should be made with caution, as weightings and the number of country responses vary between the two. Some questions taken into account in the composite index have changed as well.

#### **Further reading**

Ketelaar, A., N. Manning and E. Turkisch (2007), "Performance-Based Arrangements for Senior Civil Servants OECD and other Country Experiences", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 5, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2008), *The State of the Public Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

#### **Figure and table notes**

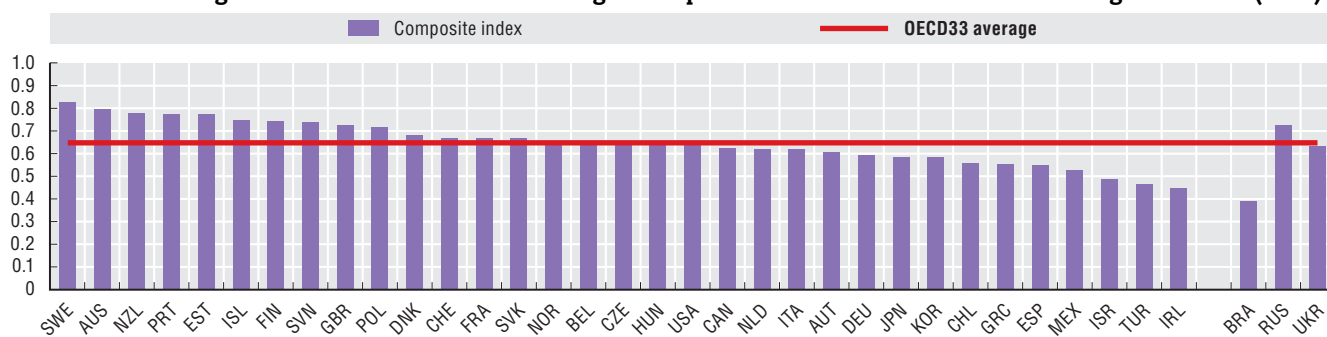
See Annex E for further country-specific information as well as details on the methodology and factors used in constructing the index.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

# VII. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

## 31. Delegation in human resources management

### 31.1 Extent of delegation of human resources management practices to line Ministries in central government (2010)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932390823>

### 31.2 Delegation of key HRM responsibilities to line Ministries in central government (2010)

	General management of pay systems (salary levels, progressions)	Flexibility of working conditions (number of hours, etc.)	Allocation of budget envelope between payroll and other expenses	Performance appraisal systems	Management of the variable portion of pay benefits; performance-related pay	Number and types of posts within organisations	Recruitment into the civil service
Australia	●	●	●	●	●○	●	●○
Austria	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Belgium	●	●	●	■	●●	●	●
Canada	●	■	●	●	●■	●	●
Chile	●	●	●	■	●	■	●
Czech Republic	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Denmark	■	●●	●	●○	●○	●	●○
Estonia	●	●○	●	●○	●	●	●
Finland	●	■●	■	●	●○	●	●
France	●	■●	●●	●	■●	●●	●
Germany	●	●●	●●	●	■	●	●
Greece	●	●	●	●	●	■	●
Hungary	●	●	●■●	●	●■●	●■●	●○
Iceland	●	●○	●	n.a.	■●	●	●○
Ireland	●	●	●	■	●■	●	●
Israel	●■	■	●	●	●■	●	■
Italy	●	■	●	●	●○	●	●
Japan	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Korea	●	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mexico	■	●■●	■	●	■	■	●■
Netherlands	●	●●	●	●●	○	●	●○
New Zealand	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Norway	●	●●	●	●	●	●	●○
Poland	●○	■●	■	●○	●○	●	■●
Portugal	●	●	●	n.a.	●	●	●
Slovak Republic	●■	■	●	■	n.a.	●	■
Slovenia	●	●	●	■	●	●	●
Spain	●	●	●	○	●	■	■●
Sweden	●	●○	●	●○	●○	●	●○
Switzerland	■	●●	■	●	●○	●	●○
Turkey	●	■	●	●	●	●	■
United Kingdom	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
United States	●	n.a.	●	●	●	●	●
Brazil	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Russian Federation	n.a.	●	n.a.	●	●	n.a.	●
Ukraine	●	●	●	●	●	●	●●
<b>Total OECD</b>							
●	20	12	11	8	7	6	2
■	6	11	7	7	11	7	8
●	9	19	19	16	21	23	26
○	1	3	0	5	8	0	8

- Central HRM body (which sets the rules and is closely involved in applying them) and/or Ministries of Finance.
- Central HRM body but with some latitude for Ministries/Departments/Agencies in applying the general principles.
- Ministries/Departments/Agencies within established legal and budgetary limits.
- Unit/team level
- n.a.: Not available.

Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392039>



**From:**  
**Government at a Glance 2011**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
[https://doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2011-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2011-en)

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2011), "Delegation in human resources management", in *Government at a Glance 2011*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2011-37-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2011-37-en)

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to [rights@oecd.org](mailto:rights@oecd.org). Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at [info@copyright.com](mailto:info@copyright.com) or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at [contact@cfcopies.com](mailto:contact@cfcopies.com).