

## Introduction

The management of public servants is a highly sensitive issue in most OECD countries. Views about how public servants should be managed differ widely depending on the economic and social context, cultural values, and history. In general, however, governments tend to establish employment frameworks that are very ambitious. They would like systems that, on the one hand, guarantee attention to fundamental values such as fairness, equity, justice and social cohesion to maintain political confidence in the government system as a whole and, on the other hand, that ensure a focus on efficiency, productivity and effectiveness.

Over the past twenty years, the management of the public service has changed tremendously in most OECD countries. First, governments have tried to reduce the size of their public employment to decrease the costs of producing government services, either directly or indirectly by contracting out the production of services to the private sector under the assumption that it would be more efficient. Second, in many cases, governments have tried to apply general good management principles to the management of public employees and, as a consequence, many areas of public employment have lost their existing uniqueness and have become quite similar to the general employment system in the different countries. In addition, public services are under pressure from economic and societal changes that affect their management, such as, for example, the globalisation of labour markets, ageing societies, and the advent of knowledge economies.

This book takes stock of the main changes in the management of public services across OECD countries in order to respond to these new challenges and to a higher level of requirements from governments and citizens on the performance of public employees.

The book begins with a quantitative review of changes in the size of government workforces compared to changes in the use of the private sector for the delivery of government services. The next four chapters focus on the main trends in changes to the management of public services. The data gathered in the publication are put in the perspective of the lessons learned over the years in each area.



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