



## VI. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

13. Delegation in human resource management
14. Central government recruitment systems
15. Staff performance management
16. Senior civil service

*The ability of governments to recruit, train, promote and dismiss employees is a key determinant of their capacity to obtain staff with the skills needed to provide public services that meet client needs and to face current economic and governance challenges. Over the past 20 years, many governments have reformed their human resource management (HRM) practices with the goal of improving the skill level and efficiency of their workforce. The scope of reforms, however, has varied tremendously depending on the economic, social and cultural context. While there is evidence that HRM practices can improve performance, there is no agreement or evidence on how specific HRM features do so.*

*The composite indexes developed in this chapter focus on the most common features of HRM reforms, including: delegation of HRM policies and practices by central bodies to line managers, characteristics of recruitment systems, use of performance assessments and performance-related pay, and use of different HRM policies and practices for senior civil servants.*

*The indexes are designed to allow countries to compare the main characteristics of their HRM systems and the extent to which they have implemented reforms. Individual country scores should be interpreted with caution and only provide a general indication about where a country might stand relative to its peers. None of the indexes evaluate the performance of HRM policies, nor do they provide any information about the quality of the work performed by public servants.*

### 13. Delegation in human resource management

Public managers are expected to improve the performance of their organisations and the outcome of their activities. As such, they have to work with their staff to encourage, enable and support them in a continuous quest for improved quality and productivity while simultaneously upholding core public sector values. By delegating some authority for HRM to line ministries, departments and agencies, governments aim to increase the ability of public sector managers to adapt working conditions to the business needs of their organisation and to the merits of individual employees. As HRM responsibilities have been delegated to line ministries, the role of the central HRM body has begun to focus more on setting minimum standards and formulating policy rather than implementing them. However, delegation is not without risks, which can include an increased variability of conditions of employment across government organisations, decreased mobility of staff, and difficulties in maintaining shared government values and a whole-of-government perspective.

Most OECD member countries have increased the role of line ministries in HRM decision making. However, the extent of their involvement varies across OECD member countries, and sometimes even across government bodies within the same country. Thus, there is no single model or common standard. A few countries stand out as having granted line ministries a greater degree of authority: New Zealand, Sweden and Australia. In these systems, ministries have more flexibility to identify their staffing needs, recruit staff, and determine compensation levels and other conditions of employment. In comparison, Italy, Ireland, France and Turkey tend to have more centralised HRM models. The level of delegation does not indicate how well public service staff members are managed. However, it does indicate the level of flexibility that departments have in adjusting their HR policies to the specificities of the organisation, the job or the individual.

Compensation levels are a key factor in managers' ability to recruit, motivate and retain staff. Most OECD member countries have delegated managers some authority to determine compensation levels. Across OECD member countries, the basic level of pay is more likely to be determined by a centralised authority, while public sector managers have more authority to determine the variable portions of pay, such as benefits or performance-related increases.

#### Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2005 and were collected through the 2006 OECD Strategic Human Resource Management in Government Survey. Respondents were predominately senior officials in central government personnel departments. The survey was completed by all OECD member countries excluding Greece. Countries missing from the figures are those for which the OECD had incomplete or inconsistent data.

Data refer to HRM practices at the central level of government for the civil service. Definitions of the civil service, as well as sectors covered at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons.

This index is comprised of the following variables (weights in parentheses): existence of a central HRM body (16.7%) and the role of line ministries in determining: the number and types of posts needed in an organisation (16.7%); compensation levels (16.7%); position classification, recruitment and dismissals (16.7%); conditions of employment (16.7%); and the actual impact on conditions of employment (16.7%). The index ranges between 0 (no delegation) and 1 (high level of delegation). For a description of the methodology used to develop the composite index, please see Annex C. The variables comprising the indexes and their relative importance are based on expert judgements. They are presented with the purpose of furthering discussion, and consequently may evolve over time.

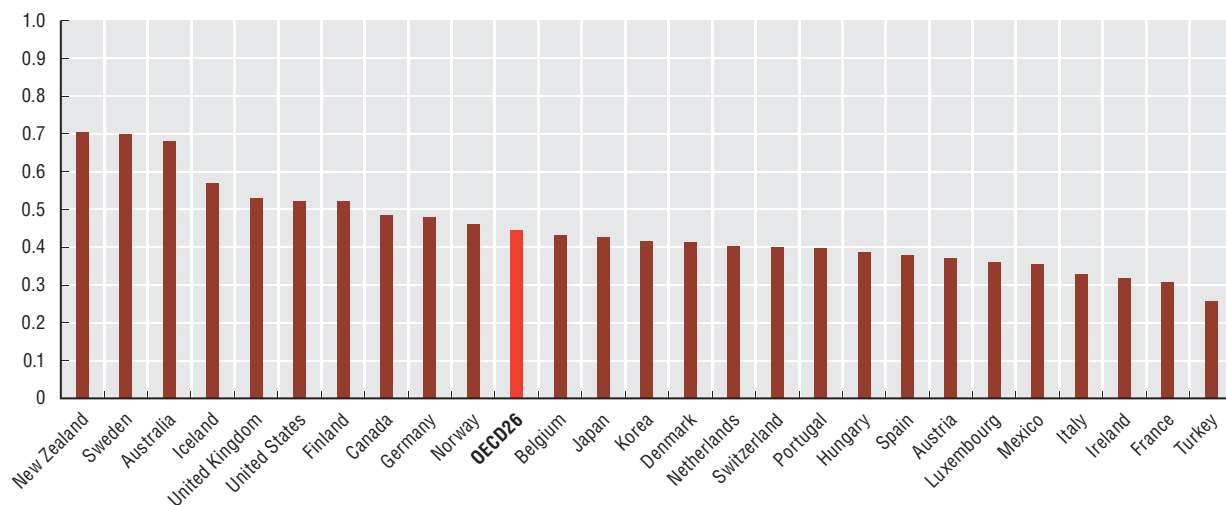
#### Further reading

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

#### Notes

- 13.1: Data are not available for the Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and the Slovak Republic.
- 13.2: Based on Q.36 "Do the levels of pay/terms and conditions of employment vary significantly across government organisations for the same level of posts?"

## 13.1 Extent of delegation of human resource management practices to line ministries in central government (2005)



Note: This index summarises the relative level of authority provided to line ministries to make HRM decisions. It does not evaluate how well line ministries are using this authority.

## 13.2 Authority of central government managers to determine compensation levels (2005)

Country	Basic pay	Other types of remuneration/social benefits
Australia	●	●
Austria	○	●
Belgium	●	●
Canada	n.a.	n.a.
Czech Republic	n.a.	n.a.
Denmark	●	●
Finland	●	●
France	○	●
Germany	○	○
Greece	n.a.	n.a.
Hungary	○	●
Iceland	●	●
Ireland	○	○
Italy	●	●
Japan	●	●
Korea	○	●
Luxembourg	○	○
Mexico	○	●
New Zealand	n.a.	n.a.
Netherlands	●	○
Norway	●	○
Poland	●	●
Portugal	○	●
Spain	○	●
Slovak Republic	●	○
Sweden	●	●
Switzerland	○	○
Turkey	○	●
United Kingdom	●	●
United States	●	●

● Managers have significant authority.

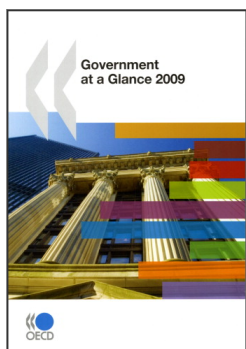
● Managers have some authority.

○ Managers have no authority.

n.a.: Data not available.

Source: OECD Strategic Human Resource Management in Government Survey (2006).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/723663744332>



**From:**  
**Government at a Glance 2009**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264075061-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2009), "Delegation in human resource management", in *Government at a Glance 2009*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264061651-17-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).