Improving public services through innovation

By making use of ideas put forward by public servants
Public servants working in the field are the first people able to identify where things are going wrong and what improvements could be made to the service because they are in direct contact with users and understand their expectations. Under the Innovating and streamlining with civil servants programme ("ISAP"), every government employee is invited to submit an idea, a suggestion or a comment on the innover.modernisation.gouv.fr website in order to:
→ provide a better service;
→ improve the internal organisation of government departments and agencies;
→ streamline the regulations.
The most useful results of this consultation will be implemented by the government departments and agencies concerned.

By encouraging innovation within ministries
The innovation awards, which are genuine ‘suggestions boxes’ for the public authorities, reward innovative initiatives on the part of public servants. The SGMAP assists ministries in setting up systems enabling them to tap into ideas from the grassroots and promotes the advantages of such systems: they encourage cooperation between public servants and help different departments and agencies to work together, as well as publicising and focussing attention on innovative projects and valuing innovators.

Within the Ministry of the Interior, the ‘online appointment’ system, which received an award in 2012, for example enables foreign nationals to make an appointment with the Prefecture via its website.
Within the Ministry of Justice, this system has made it possible to develop access to the Maisons de la Justice et du Droit (Law and Justice Centres) via videoconferencing. This procedure enables isolated populations to gain access to information and services. Lastly, the SGMAP is a stakeholder in the creation by the OECD of an Observatory of Public Sector Innovations for the purpose of monitoring innovations within European and international administrations.

Improving interaction with users through listening and innovation in public services
Towards simple, efficient and fair public administration

The missions of the Secretariat-General for Government Modernisation (SGMAP) include improving services for users and making government simpler, more efficient and fairer. And one of its strategies of choice is to listen to users and staff in order to gather ideas and suggestions for improvements, through the use of various tools such as the participatory government websites – ensemble-simplifions.fr or innover.modernisation.gouv.fr –, a representative group of users and/or quantitative or qualitative surveys concerning users’ principal life events.

From listening to building together

This systematic and professional listening provides a better picture of how public services work in order to make them reactive, dynamic and accessible. Contributions from all those involved, both users and staff, makes it possible to launch modernisation programmes which have been developed jointly by those who use the services and those who provide them on a daily basis. The quality of the services provided concerns everyone and everyone must have an opportunity to contribute towards it.

Listening in order to improve public services

An example – setting up a business

By listening, we can gain a better understanding of the specific problems encountered by users.

If proof is needed, consider what happens if someone wants to set up a business. In France, as far as government departments are concerned, setting up a business is a simple process. However, before they do anything, the future businessman or woman has to decide on the legal form for their company and the appropriate tax and social security regimes, procedures which all take time.

They also have to submit a complete file, together with a K-bis, the official document confirming the existence of a commercial company. The business man or woman is then faced with the problem of what to do to obtain a lease on business premises, which requires them to have a K-bis, whereas they have to submit a lease in order to get a K-bis...

The SGMAP’s role is to take account of the user’s point of view and to develop ways of improving services designed to make life easier for business people (for example a one-stop shop for setting up a business).

By taking account of users’ suggestions

Through ensemble-simplifions.fr, the leading government participatory website, users suggest ways of improving services. For example, any user may contribute by:

→ suggesting a way of making things simpler;
→ commenting on a suggestion posted by another contributor;
→ voting for a suggested streamlining measure.

Since 2010, the website has received over 2,000 contributions, some of which have resulted in streamlining measures: it is now possible to register on the electoral roll online or pay your hospital expenses online.

By extending the strategy of listening to users

The SGMAP has set up a representative group of French citizens. Today the panel has 5,000 members, grouped according to socio-demographic and geographical criteria and also their most recent life events. Users can be approached both on an ad hoc basis in order to respond to surveys and also on a more ongoing basis in order to share their experience and their suggestions for improvements to services. The panel, which can be consulted fairly rapidly at any time, ensures that consultations produce worthwhile results, especially where it is desired to put questions to specific target groups.