



SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC FINANCES – EU PERSPECTIVES

An informal discussion series organised by ICAEW, with the support of PwC

“REGIONAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES”

Tuesday 23 April, 19.30 – 22.00

Sofitel Brussels Europe, Place Jourdan 1, 1040 Brussels

INTRODUCTION

The global financial and economic crisis is bringing about profound changes in international, financial and government institutions. In Europe, the crisis has also drawn particular attention to the poor quality of financial management, reporting and governance in the public sector, highlighting the need for greater action to address these interconnected shortcomings. At this critical stage in policy development, ICAEW is bringing together key decision-makers and experts with a wide range of perspectives to help advance discussion on how to promote better financial management, transparency and accountability in the public sector throughout Europe.

Over the course of 2013 four informal discussions are being organised by ICAEW, with support from PwC, focusing on the overarching theme of sustainable public finances in Europe. In order to provide fresh input into the debate, each individual discussion will explore a particular aspect in greater detail. A synopsis capturing the key points will be published after each discussion to develop specific ideas and encourage feedback from a wider group of stakeholders who have an interest in the theme and issues addressed.

The second informal discussion, taking place on 23 April 2013 and bringing together 20-25 high-level participants from varied backgrounds, will provide an opportunity to consider perspectives from different levels of government as well as from different types of public entities.

REGIONAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

Enhancing financial management, transparency and accountability in the public sector throughout Europe requires action to address shortcomings across multiple levels of government. In the EU, responsibility for public expenditure, services, related entities and initiatives is organised differently across central, regional and local authorities. While the role and financial position of central government generally attracts the greatest commentary, over the course of the crisis large liabilities and financial shortcomings have come to light in different tiers of government. In some specific cases, regional governments have had to request financial assistance from central governments at a time when the latter are also under pressure to consolidate their spending. In many other cases, however, it is not clear that the true extent of financial liabilities in different tiers of government and across different branches of public sector activity is well understood. Sustainable public finances, at national level and across the EU, necessarily require good financial management, transparency and accountability in all tiers of government, as well as in other types of public entities.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EU POLICY DEBATE

The discussion on 23 April 2013 will provide an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the inter-relationship between central, regional and local tiers of government in relation to financial management, accountability and transparency, focusing on the reasons why reform is critical to the EU's long-term future and how this reform can best be achieved. The debate takes place against broader developments in EU economic governance which provide an opportunity to remedy key shortcomings in financial management and accountability. Discussion will also address the anticipated Eurostat report which is likely to set out a roadmap to significantly improve public sector financial reporting through the introduction of accruals accounting and the potential use of IPSAS.

NEXT DINNERS

Democratic accountability and fiscal sustainability

June 2013

Views from international institutions

September 2013