

Making government work better by...

Coordinating ACROSS BORDERS

On New Year's Day 2007, two more countries joined the European Union (EU). But the preparations for Bulgaria and Romania's accession started many months before this.

The Cabinet Office has played a leading role in coordinating the preparations for the accession. This was an issue that affected the public, the UK economy and involved a wide range of government departments, as well as generating a great deal of media interest.

Issues that needed to be considered included evaluating the impact on the UK labour market; working closely with other EU member states to pursue our common interests and manage international relations; preparing enforcement agencies, stakeholders and employers for accession; and coordinating the Government's communications effort.

The Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat and European Secretariat worked hand in hand with other

departments, No.10 and the Strategy Unit to coordinate the various strands of work across Whitehall. The aim was to ensure that ministers were equipped with the right information and analysis to base their decisions upon, and to promote a joined-up approach to the UK's preparations.

Coordinated communications in the run up to accession meant that the press coverage presented both sides of the argument, and it is testament to the hard work of all the officials working across government that we were fully prepared for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU on 1 January 2007.

There are four main Secretariats that provide support to Cabinet and its Committees:

- The **Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat** deals with all domestic issues and manages the legislative programme.
- The **European Secretariat** coordinates EU policy across departments and drives forward the Prime Minister's EU priorities.
- The **Defence and Overseas Secretariat** is responsible for coordinating a wide range of defence, security and foreign policy issues.
- The **Civil Contingencies Secretariat** is responsible for improving the UK's resilience to disruptive challenges.

Deciding government policy

The Cabinet Secretariats help the Government take timely, well-informed decisions. Decisions on government policy are taken collectively by the Cabinet. Given the wide range of issues to be covered, their business is managed through a series of Cabinet Committees. The Secretariats coordinate Cabinet Committees and provide advice to the Prime Minister and other Committee Chairs.