POLICY COHERENCE: THE KEY ROLE OF THE CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT

POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN A POST-2015 ERA
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OECD’s CoG Network
Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government

- Composed of Heads of Government Offices, Prime Minister’s Offices or equivalent – one of the most senior OECD committees
- A well established policy network – 32nd annual meeting held in Santiago, Chile, October 2013
- Agenda usually divided between policy reflection and practice: (i) perspectives on topical policy challenges and (ii) how the centre meets these challenges
2013 CoG held in Santiago
Key theme: Trust in government

- Historical low point – uncharted waters
- Low levels of trust hamper policy action in many ways (reduced support for reform, resistance to change, lower acceptance of regulations, taxation...)
- Question for CoG officials: how can the Centre help rebuild trust?

The crucial role of the Centre in policy coherence and multi-sectoral delivery

Key challenges are difficult to assign to specific ministry

- maintaining competitiveness, inclusive growth, open government, risk management, ageing, climate change, etc.

Danger that these become the task of everyone and no one

No real alternative to the Centre

BUT tough questions about the capacity of the Centre to deliver effective coordination.
The crisis was a wake up call for an under-resourced Centre

Keywords for improving the Centre:

1. flexibility/adaptability
2. leadership
3. focus
4. strategic thinking
5. real coordination

1. Flexibility

- Acceptance that Centre needed to respond
- Divergent paths to similar goal:
  - strengthen the centre by adding resources, or
  - strengthen by outplacing non-core CoG activities

Findings from a preliminary survey of CoG members
2. Leadership

- Does the Centre have the right tools and enough influence for the job?
- Is the Centre too political or not political enough? *Political influence vs. Continuity*

3. Focus on key tasks

Core tasks of the CoG are now more important than ever:
1. Quality decision making – transparent, inclusive
2. Leadership and co-ordination
3. Effective implementation
4. Strategic thinking

- Is a <10-year time horizon enough?
- If the Centre is not looking farther ahead, who is?

5. Coordination

- Is the Centre able to exert real control or is it an illusion?
- A culture of cooperation is required. Do departments buy in to the Centre’s coordinator role?
In conclusion

- Recognition that an effective Centre is a prerequisite for effective and well-coordinated policymaking today;
- Huge interest in strengthening the Centre in OECD countries since the crisis – also highly visible in non-member countries;
- No “model” of a perfect Centre, but shared challenges suggest similar responses (despite diverse political systems);
- Exchange of experience via the OECD CoG network is particularly valuable because the Centre is a relatively new area for governance analysis.

Thank you!