The Senior Officials from Centres of Government

Draft Agenda: Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government (CoG)

28-30 October 2015
Helsinki, Finland
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A Welcome Reception will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2015, from 19:00-20:30

Thursday, October 29, 2015

9:00-9:30 1. Opening of the meeting

Opening remarks will be made by the Chair of the meeting, Ms. Paula Lehtomäki, State Secretary, Prime Minister’s Office, Finland, and by Ms. Mari Kiviniemi, Deputy Secretary General of the OECD

9:30-12:30 2. Session One: Inclusive growth: Identifying a common agenda

In many OECD and non-OECD countries, people have seen their real incomes stagnate, and the gap between rich and poor has widened. From citizens, governments and policy makers alike there are increasing calls for “win-win” policies, where prosperity and equity are treated as mutually reinforcing goals. Targeting inclusiveness is a major governance challenge requiring strategic thinking, leadership, cross-sectoral co-ordination and effective implementation, at the centre and all across government. This opening session will explore the role of the centre of government in helping to articulate and lead an ambitious inclusive growth policy. It will also look at how the centre can plan effective responses to similarly complex commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP21), including the centre’s role in communicating visions and engaging with citizens.

Questions for discussion:

• What contribution can the centre make to inclusive growth? What key agendas identified at the OECD Public Governance Ministerial could be best driven by the centre itself?
• How can the centre promote a whole-of-government approach to inclusive growth? What incentives are available to encourage participation by key departments and agencies? What good practices do we have in planning complex multidimensional strategies?
• How can the centre better communicate the stakes and objectives of global agendas such as inclusive growth, the SDGs and the COP21? What experience does the centre have of ensuring that citizen’s voices are heard in the design of complex policies?

12:45-14:00 Group photo and lunch

14:00-16:30 3. Session Two: Common knowledge: Building and sharing the evidence base for inclusive policies

Inclusive growth policies require an intelligent combination of budgeting, regulation and investment instruments. For each of these instruments, knowledge about policy impacts and distributional effects is crucial to effective policy-making; yet, OECD work on public governance suggests that robust impact assessment and knowledge-sharing across policy sectors are all too rare. This session will look at how systems can be promoted by the centre to generate “common knowledge” that uses the best forecasts and analysis from the centre, ministry of finance, line
departments and other key information sources such as audit offices to ensure quality decision making. The session will also look at how digital government could help to improve our understanding of citizens’ needs and preferences for better policy design, and how innovation and experimentation can provide new perspectives.

Questions for discussion:

• How can the centre design targets and objectives to drive an inclusive growth agenda that are suitably innovative and integrated yet still operational and realistic for the lead departments and agencies?

• Do we have the right evidence on inclusive growth to support quality decision-making throughout the policy cycle? Is analytical capacity at the centre up to this new task?

• What impact will the transition to a data-driven public sector have on decision-making? How can open government data support policy steering by the centre?

• How embedded is the use of innovation as a means to improve policy design?

If inclusive growth policies are to have an impact, centres of government need to play an active role in implementation and engage widely across government and with actors outside government. The recent OECD centres of government survey\(^1\) showed that the centre regularly leads complex policy agendas from a whole-of-government perspective, using a variety of tools to provide incentives for active participation, but that its ability to influence departments and agencies varies. In this session, the practical issue of how to deliver on challenging agendas such as inclusive growth will be discussed, drawing on the experience of countries with different approaches to delivery and implementation. This includes ways that the centre can “insulate” longer-term strategies from short-term pressures.

Questions for discussion:

• Could a broad agenda such as inclusive growth be successfully implemented without central management? What are the other options?

• How can the centre maintain the focus on the key goals of inclusive growth despite the “interference” of short-term emergencies, shifting political priorities and electoral discontinuities? What about even longer-term commitments such as the SDGs or COP21?

• How active should the centre be in delivery? Should it be a problem-solver of last resort or a more hands-on partner for departments and agencies? What are the risks?

1. Session Three: Promoting common action: How the centre can drive implementation

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2. Wrap up and closing remarks by the Chair and the OECD

Background documents

• Policy making and policy shaping: The governance of inclusive growth
• New Approaches to Economic Challenges – Final synthesis report
• Delivery from the centre of government