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PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE  
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTRE OF  
GOVERNMENT**

*This questionnaire was sent to 42 countries in July and August 2013.*

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# Questionnaire

## Organisation and functions of the Centre of Government

OECD  
2013

### Purpose

Economic and social challenges are highlighting governments' need to strengthen capacity in areas such as long-term strategic planning, risk management and communication, cross-sectoral policy co-ordination and monitoring of progress with implementation. To address these rapidly evolving challenges and to ensure that the state can effectively act as steward of the public interest, governments are rethinking the role and resources of the centre of government. Countries are currently looking for ways to adapt the structures, capacities and priorities of their centres of government, despite limited budgets, in order to ensure that the centre provides clear, coherent and supportive leadership and steering for government policy.

OECD is tracking these changes by collecting and analysing information on the new roles and organisation of the administrative structure at the centre of government [referred to for convenience as the "Centre of Government (CoG)] that supports the collective work of the executive and the Prime Minister or President in OECD member and partner countries. The information collected will be used to support information exchange and policy dialogue among senior officials from the Centre of Government and will support OECD policy analysis of public governance including *Government at a Glance*.

The survey looks at two main issues:

- The leadership, structure, personnel, budget, and operational aspects of the Centre of Government. This includes, for example, information on human resources management, budget and internal processes.
- The functions, powers, responsibilities and priorities of the Centre of Government. This includes information on its role relative to strategic planning, policy development and decision making, and policy implementation, as well as the relative importance of these functions, the current top priorities of the CoG, and how these have changed over time, particularly in the context of the crisis.

In your responses to this survey, please provide information and data for 2012 unless otherwise specified.

## Glossary of terms used in this questionnaire

Serious difficulties arise in comparative work on public governance due to use of different terminology for similar organisations and activities, and to different political, administrative and legal systems. For the purpose of this questionnaire, we would like to use common terms, though we understand that the terms may appear artificial and not reflect the usual way of depicting the Centre of Government. The following terms are used in this questionnaire:

- **Agency:** Semi-autonomous public organisation that operates at arm's length from the government, usually reporting to a **ministry** and mandated to carry out public tasks (e.g. regulation, service delivery, policy implementation) in a relatively autonomous manner (i.e. with less hierarchy and political influence in daily operations and with more managerial freedom).
- **Cabinet:** This term is used to refer to the collective meeting of Ministers. In some countries it is called the Council of Ministers, in others Government, and there are a number of other less common names.
- **Centre of Government (CoG):** For the purpose of this survey, the term Centre of Government (CoG) refers to the administrative structure that serves the Executive (President or Prime Minister, and the Cabinet collectively). Therefore the survey is **not** concerned with other units, offices, and commissions (e.g. offices for sport or culture) that may report directly to the President or Prime Minister but are, effectively, carrying out line functions that might equally well be carried out by line ministries. The Centre of Government has a great variety of names across countries, such as General Secretariat, Cabinet Office, Chancellery, Office/Ministry of the Presidency, Council of Ministers Office, etc. In many countries the CoG is made up of more than one unit, fulfilling different functions. A unit that is shared by virtually all CoGs is the unit that serves specifically the head of the government, but not the CoG collectively. This too has a variety of names, such as the Cabinet of the Prime Minister or the Private Office.
- **Civil servant:** an employee of the state, either permanent or on a long-term contract, who would remain a state employee if the government changes.
- **Full-time equivalent (FTE):** A full-time equivalent, or FTE, is defined as total hours worked divided by average hours worked in full-time jobs.
- **Government:** Specific group of people who occupy the institutions of the **state** and create laws. "The government" is usually taken to define the individuals who exert political power over the state and its institutions at a given time (for example the prime minister, ministers and ministers without portfolio). The government is thus the particular group of people that controls the state apparatus at a given time, and is the means through which state power is employed (for example the adoption of laws). In a democracy, the state is served by a continuous succession of different governments. The number of governments is determined by the number of terms served by the head of the executive branch (where a term is defined by a change in the executive or an election that renewed support for the incumbent government. Government in this definition is not the same as the use of the term government in a statistical or expenditure context (as for example in "general government").

- **Government Programme:** The government programme is typically developed on the basis of an incoming government's policy manifesto (or in the case of coalition governments, the coalition manifesto). The programme covers policies and legislation that the government intends to implement during its period in office. It may be updated and refined on annual basis.
- **Head of Government (HG)** This term is used to refer to the Prime Minister or President – or both - depending on the political system of the country.
- **Implementation:** The processes and actions that need to be taken, once a new policy and/or law has been adopted, in order to ensure that the policy or law is given concrete effect. Can also be called operationalisation, reflecting the fact that policies have no effect unless and until they are made operational.
- **Minister:** Political head of a **ministry** (in certain countries, the head of a ministry may be called Secretary or Secretary of State, and minister may be more junior in rank). Ministers are generally in charge of one or more ministries, and have a portfolio of responsibilities derived from the areas of responsibility covered by the ministry or ministries. Some ministers do not head up a ministry, but are in charge of specific issues supported by an office ("minister without portfolio"). In most parliamentary systems, ministers are drawn from the legislature but keep their parliamentary seats. In most presidential systems, ministers are not elected officials and are appointed by the President.
- **Ministerial Committee:** Committees of ministers, usually set up to deal with specific sectors of government activity and policy such as economic affairs, social affairs, EU issues, in order to confirm a course of action and to resolve disagreements. They are usually chaired by a relevant senior minister. A key objective is to minimise the number of issues that need to be put to the Cabinet, and to identify the priority issues that merit Cabinet attention. Ministerial committees are often "shadowed" by committees of officials, with the equivalent aim of preparing the ministerial committees, identifying priority issues for ministerial attention, and resolving disagreements.
- **Ministry:** An organisation which forms part of the central core of the executive branch of government. A ministry is responsible for the design and implementation of an area or sector of **public policy** and administration (e.g. agriculture, education, economy, foreign affairs), in line with the government programme and strategy. A ministry is also responsible for the direction of **agencies** under its authority. In some countries, such as Australia, Norway, the United States and the United Kingdom, ministries are called "departments." Sub-national governments may also be organised into ministries. A ministry has a delegated budget to exercise its responsibilities, under the authority and direction of the finance ministry or equivalent organisation responsible for the budget in central government. The term line ministry designates the majority of ministries, which exercise delegated, sectoral powers. The finance ministry is not a line ministry.
- **Policy:** A term which does not exist in all languages and which in some languages may be synonymous with politics. A public policy defines a consistent course of action designed to meet a goal or objective, respond to an issue or problem identified by the government as requiring action or reform. It is implemented by a public body (ministry, agency, etc.), although elements may be delegated to other bodies. Examples include a public policy to tackle climate change, educational reform, support for entrepreneurship. A public policy is, or should be, linked to the **government programme** and its **strategic**

**planning.** It is often given a formal framework through legislation and/or secondary regulations, especially in countries with a system of civil law. It is given practical effect through a defined course of action, programmes and activities. It is, as necessary, funded from the state budget. A priority policy is a policy which matters more than others for the achievement of the government's strategic objectives. The responsibility for taking forward a public policy may rest with the relevant line ministry, or, in the case of policies that cut across ministerial boundaries, may be shared by relevant ministries.

- **Political adviser:** A member of staff who is not a civil servant, appointed by the President, Prime Minister or a Minister to assist them, and who would leave state employment if the government changes.
- **Private Office of the Prime Minister or President (PO):** Many countries have a unit which is part of the CoG (at least for administrative purposes) that serves specifically the head of the government. This, too, has a variety of names, such as the Prime Minister's Office or Office of the President.
- **Professional staff:** This category of staff is to be distinguished from clerical/secretarial staff and managers. They are usually required to have a university degree, and may have leadership responsibilities over a field of work or various projects. They develop and analyse policies guiding the design, implementation and modification of government operations and programmes; review existing policies and legislation in order to identify anomalies and put-of-day provisions; analyse and formulate policy options, prepare briefing papers and recommendations for policy changes. Moreover, they assess the impact, financial implications and political and administrative feasibility of public policies. Their areas of expertise may include law, economics, politics, public administration, international relations, engineering, environment, pedagogy, health economics, etc.
- **Risk anticipation and management:** In this context, refers to focused efforts at anticipating and identifying emerging risks (may also be referred to as horizon scanning, or strategic foresight) and taking actions to manage the identified risks. A more technical definition focuses on risk assessment, risk management and risk communication as part of a cycle. Risk assessment is about identifying and assessing the extent of a potential hazard and to estimate the probability and consequences of negative outcomes for humans, property or the environment. Risk management refers to the design and implementation of actions and remedies to address risks. Risk communication refers to the methods and practices for educating and informing the public about risks when making risk trade-offs.
- **State:** Set of enduring institutions, usually given legitimacy in a constitution and related legal forms, through which public power is distributed. In the social sciences, a sovereign state is a compulsory political organisation with a centralised **government** that maintains a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a defined territory (Weber), and is internationally recognised as such (through for example membership of the United Nations).
- **State Secretary:** Administrative head of a ministry, i.e. a civil servant; may also be known as Permanent Secretary, Chief Executive or (non-political) Deputy Minister. There is great variability in the roles, responsibilities, place in the hierarchy and mode of appointment of state secretaries. Note that in some countries the same term may be used for (political)

junior ministers, and a variant (Secretary of State) may be used to designate the senior minister in political charge of a ministry.

- **Strategic planning:** A tool for identifying short-, medium-, and long-term priorities and goals (e.g. “improve education” or “achieve energy security”) and laying out a set of present and future (collective) actions for achieving them.
- **Support and clerical staff:** These staff are generally not required to have a university degree although many do. They perform a wide range of clerical and administrative tasks in connection with money-handling operations, travel arrangements, requests for information, appointments and communications, including recording, preparing, sorting, classifying and filling in information; preparing reports and correspondence; recording issue of equipment to staff; responding to telephone or electronic enquiries or forwarding to appropriate person; checking figures, preparing invoices and recording details of financial transactions made; transcribing information onto computers; updating Internet pages; and proofreading, correcting and laying out copy. Some assist in the preparation of budgets, monitoring of expenditures, drafting of contracts and purchasing or acquisition orders. Senior staff who supervise the work of clerical support workers are excluded from this category.
- **Unit:** We use this generic term to refer to Departments, Directorates, Sections, or any other organizational segment that can be identified within the CoG.

**Please indicate your country:**

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**Please provide your name:**

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**Please state your job title:**

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**Please indicate the organisation you work for:**

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**Please provide your email address:**

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## 1. Structure and resources of the Centre of Government

Please indicate the Internet address (URL) of the organisation chart of your Centre of Government, as well as its mission statement, if these exist online:

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### 1.1 Definition of “centre of government”

1.1.1 Does the definition of the term “centre of government” used by this survey (see Glossary of terms on page 2) correspond to what is considered the “centre of government” in your country?

Yes  No

1.1.2 If your definition of the Centre of Government differs from the definition used in this survey, please explain the difference.

### 1.2 Resources of the Centre of Government

1.2.1 What is the annual budget of the Centre of Government, as defined in the Glossary (in 2012, in local currency)? \_\_\_\_\_

1.2.2 How many staff work exclusively for the CoG as defined in the Glossary (in full-time equivalents – FTEs)?

Professional staff \_\_\_\_\_

Support and clerical staff \_\_\_\_\_

Comments

1.2.3. Between 2008 and 2012, how has the Centre of Government changed in terms of:

- Size (staff numbers)     increased         decreased         remained the same
- Budget                     increased         decreased         remained the same

Please feel free to provide further details on changes in size and budget of the CoG from 2008-2012 (e.g. changes/reallocations within the CoG)

## 2. *Functions of the Centre of Government*

**2.1** Below are various areas of responsibility that may come under the Centre of Government. For each area, please indicate whether it comes under the responsibility of the CoG in your country, whether it comes under the responsibility of another part of government (e.g. Finance Ministry/Treasury, Justice Ministry, etc.), or whether it is a shared responsibility of CoG and another body.

Please also indicate which **4 areas** are considered the **most important areas of responsibility** of the CoG in your country.

	CoG has primary responsibility in this area	CoG shares this responsibility with another body (please specify)	This comes under the responsibility of another part of government (please specify)	(specify here what other body/part of government has or shares responsibility)	This is one of the four most important areas of CoG responsibility
Co-ordinating preparation of Cabinet meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating government messages to the public and to other parts of the public administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Human resources strategy for the public administration as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Designing and implementing reform of the public administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic planning for the whole of government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk anticipation and management/strategic foresight for the whole of government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation of the Government programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

	CoG has primary responsibility in this area	CoG shares this responsibility with another body (please specify)	This comes under the responsibility of another part of government (please specify)	(specify here what other body/part of government has or shares responsibility)	This is one of the four most important areas of CoG responsibility
Policy analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Policy co-ordination across government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Regulatory quality and coherence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring the implementation of government policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Relations with sub-national levels of government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Relations with Parliament / Legislature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
International Development and aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Supranational co-ordination/supranational policy issues (including relations with EU, G20, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>



**2.3 Staff profile of the Centre of Government (CoG)**

2.3.1 Are the professional staff of the CoG primarily civil servants or political appointees?

- Mostly civil servants       Mostly political appointees

2.3.2 Is the head of CoG a civil servant or political appointee?

- Civil servant       Political appointee

2.3.3 What is the rank of the Head of the CoG?

- Minister or equivalent       Highest civil service rank       Other (specify)

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2.3.4 Is the head of CoG normally replaced when there is a change in government?

- Yes, normally replaced       No, normally not       It depends (explain)

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2.3.5 On average, what proportion of the senior professional staff changes with a change in government?

- 0-25%       26-50%       More than 50%

2.3.6 Are the civil servants (professional staff) in the CoG normally seconded (detached) from other Ministries?

- No, they are employees of CoG       A small number are seconded  
 Most/all of them are seconded       Other (please specify)

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**2.4 Private Office (PO)**

A unit that is shared by virtually all CoGs is the unit, or Secretariat, that serves specifically the Head of the Government. This, too, has a variety of names, such as the Cabinet of the Prime Minister or the President's or Prime Minister's Office.

2.4.1 Please indicate the name of this unit in your country:

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2.4.2 Please indicate the number of professional staff in the Private Office (in FTEs)

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**3. A closer look at the responsibilities of the Centre of Government**

**3.1 The decision-making system**

3.1.1 What are the principal channels through which the Head of Government (HG) discusses policy issues?

- Direct bilateral contacts
  - Group of advisors
  - Cabinet meetings
  - Other (please describe)
- 
- 

Please feel free to provide information on how these channels work

3.1.2 Is the CoG responsible for co-ordinating discussion of agenda items prior to discussion by the Cabinet?

- Yes                       No

If yes, how does this co-ordination take place?

- Briefings
  - Ministerial committees
  - Other (please describe)
-

3.1.3 Is the CoG responsible for organising pre-Cabinet meetings of senior Ministry Officials (Permanent Secretaries, State Secretaries)?

Yes, before every meeting       Sometimes       No

3.1.4 Is the CoG responsible for reviewing items submitted to Cabinet?

Yes       No

3.1.5 How are items submitted to Cabinet reviewed?

Criterion	CoG reviews	CoG has authority to return items to Ministry for additional work if criterion is not satisfied	This is reviewed by another body	(please specify other reviewing body)
That procedures for preparation and presentation are respected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quality of legal drafting and legal conformity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
That a regulation meets regulatory quality standards (public/economic benefits, that benefits outweigh costs, that an impact analysis has been carried out, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
That the item is in line with the Government Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
That relevant ministries and other stakeholders have been consulted as required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
That adequate costing has been carried out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### 3.2 Social media

3.2.1 Does the CoG have a social media strategy?

Yes       No

○ If yes, please indicate the URL of the strategy

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- If yes, what are the top 3 goals of this strategy?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3.2.2 Do guidelines exist for the use of social media:

- For CoG staff?  Yes  No
- For all civil servants / officials in the public administration?  Yes  No

### 3.3 *Strategic planning for the whole of government*

3.3.1 Is there a document outlining a long-term strategic vision for the country?

- Yes  No

If yes:

- Who prepares it?
  - Civil servants in CoG
  - Civil servants in ministries
  - Ministers
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- How far in the future does it cover?
  - 1-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - 11-20 years
  - More than 20 years
- What institution monitors its implementation?

- 
- To whom is the strategic vision document made available?

- Ministers
- Parliament
- Civil Servants
- Public
- Internet (please indicate URL) \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.4 *Risk anticipation and management*

3.4.1 Is risk management treated as distinct from strategic planning at the Centre of Government?

- Yes  No, it is part of strategic planning

- If Yes, please indicate which activities come under this area:

Scenario planning based on identifying and analysing risks/ threats to the country as a whole

Co-ordination across different central ministries/agencies in the event of a crisis/disaster

Co-ordination across different levels of government in the event of a crisis/disaster

Identifying and analysing risks/ threats to the operations of government (internal system risks)

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.5 *Trust in public institutions*

3.5.1 Does the Centre of Government monitor or measure levels of citizens' trust in public institutions?

Yes it monitors trust

Yes it measures levels of trust

No, it neither measures nor monitors levels of trust

- If so, in what way does it monitor trust:
  - CoG looks at existing opinion polls
  - CoG commissions its own opinion polls
  - CoG commissions or reviews more in-depth studies of public trust by experts

3.5.2 Does CoG have a strategy or taken any actions directly aimed at improving or maintaining trust in public institutions?

Yes, we have a strategy (please describe)

Yes, we have taken actions (please describe)

No

### 3.6 ***Policy coordination across government***

3.6.1 Is the Centre responsible for organising cross-governmental policy co-ordination groups or committees?

Yes       No

• If yes

▪ at what level do these groups exist?

- Minister
- State secretary
- Director

Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3.6.2 What other mechanisms are used by the CoG to ensure policy co-ordination (if any)?

3.6.3 From 2008-2012, has the number of cross-ministerial policy initiatives

- increased
- decreased
- remained fairly stable

3.6.4 What is the role of the CoG in cross-ministerial initiatives?

- leadership
- facilitation / support
- none

Comments

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3.6.5 What incentives exist to promote co-ordination across ministries/agencies?

financial (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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individual or collective performance targets/evaluation (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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Other (explain)\_\_\_\_\_

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3.6.6 How much influence can the CoG exert over line ministries to encourage them to coordinate with each other?

High = can impose sanctions/consequences

Low = can only express views

High

Moderate

Low

None

**3.7 Monitoring implementation of government policies**

3.7.1 Through what mechanisms does the CoG ensure that government policies are implemented by line ministries?

Workplan for the implementation of the Government Programme that sets deadline for Ministries to prepare particular proposals?

Performance targets

Monitoring

Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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Comments

**3.8 How is the CoG involved in ensuring coherence in international development and aid?** (if box ticked in 2.1)

3.8.1 Is there a mechanism for cross-government co-ordination, coherence or discussion of international development and aid issues?

Yes  No

• if yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

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**3.9 What is the role of the Centre of Government in supranational coordination and policy issues?**

As a consequence of the interlocking of financial and economic interests across national borders, a wide range of policies (monetary, financial sector, exchange rate, tax, competition, environment, etc.) call for greater international co-ordination (e.g via the G20, the UN, the EU, etc.) to be truly effective.

3.9.1 Please indicate where the co-ordination of relations with each supra- or international body is located:

	In the Centre of Government	In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	In another ministry or agency (please specify)
United Nations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
APEC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NATO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OECD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

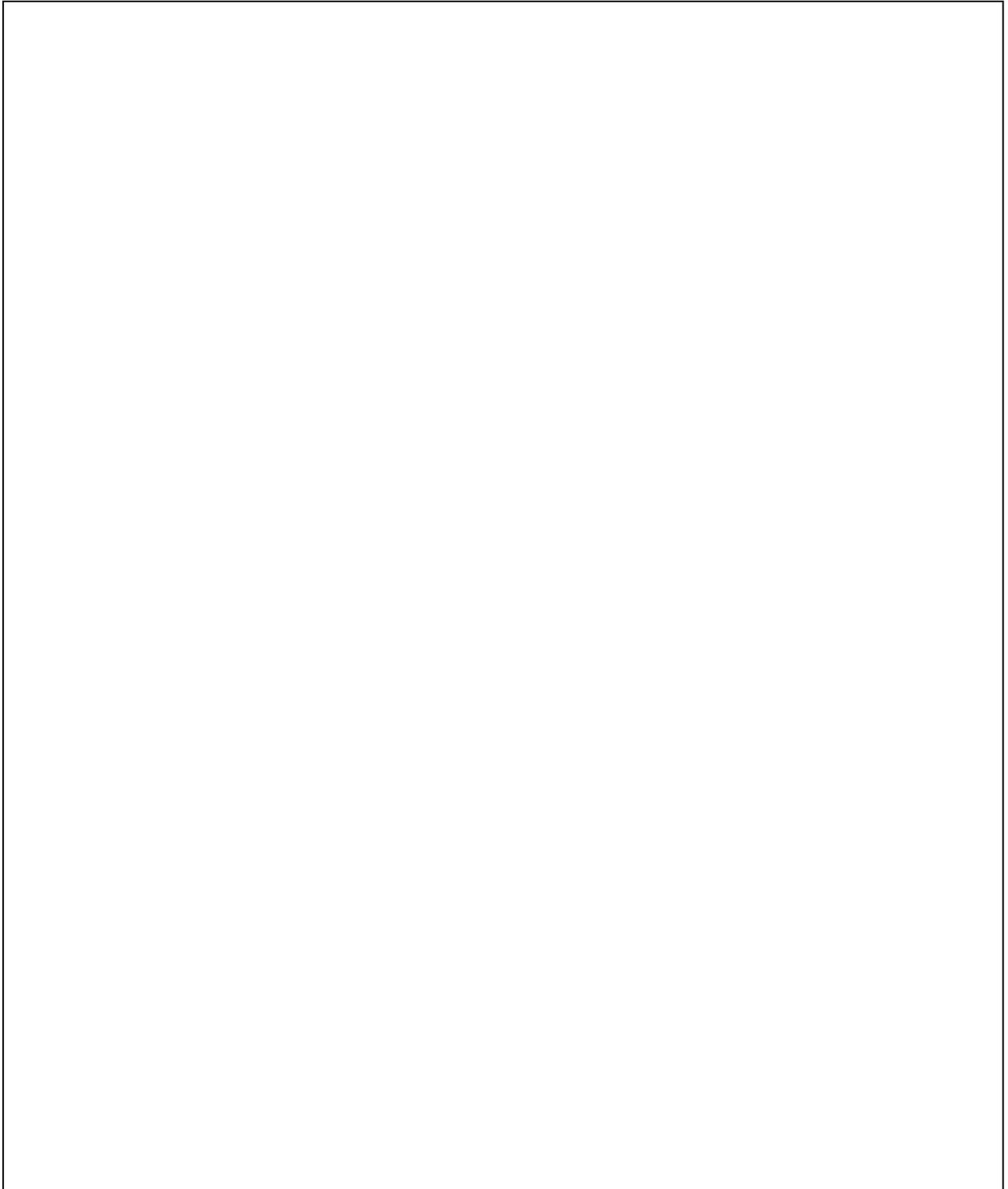
3.9.2 Does the Centre of government play a role in international co-operation on policies that require international coordination (e.g. monetary, financial sector, exchange rate, tax, competition, environment etc.)?

Yes       No

Please describe in more detail the CoG's role

**4. Additional Comments**

We would appreciate additional comments about the structure and activities of CoG in your country. In particular, it would be helpful if you can suggest aspects that work well, or specific problems encountered, in your CoG.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional comments on the structure and activities of the CoG in their country.