Centre Stage 2
The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries.
The ‘Centre of Government’ (CoG) is the body that provides direct support and advice to the Head of Government and the Council of Ministers. The CoG meetings began in the 1980s, and were consolidated into an annual event in the 1990s. CoG constitutes a forum for informal discussion and remain one of the OECD’s highest-level policy networks.

The meetings serve three main purposes:

- To review issues of how to make the centre of national government work more effectively;
- To achieve a more in-depth understanding of decision and policymaking systems in the host country;
- To work on broad governance issues fundamental to achieving economic and social public policy objectives.

The meetings are hosted each year by one of the members of the network.
Scope of the survey and this report

The centre of government is the body or group of bodies that provide direct support and advice to heads of government and the council of ministers, or cabinet. From their traditional role of serving the executive from an administrative perspective, centres of government are now playing a more active role in policy development. The centre in many countries now provides services that range from strategic planning to real-time policy advice and intelligence, and from leading major cross departmental policy initiatives to monitoring progress and outcomes. OECD work on centres of government explores how governments can adapt the institutions at the centre in order to play this expanded and more outward-looking role.

A survey on the organisation and functions of the centre of government was circulated to the OECD Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government (CoG) in July 2017. This draft report analyses the responses provided by 37 countries. Where appropriate, it compares the results with the 2013 benchmark Centre Stage survey and report, which covered 33 countries. Three countries who responded to the earlier survey did not respond to the 2017 survey, while a new group responded to the 2017 survey. This means that the analysis is based on a slightly different group than last time and comparisons should be seen in that context.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the OECD Secretariat and Ms. Sally Washington, consultant.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the centre of government, the support structure serving the highest level of the executive branch of government (presidents, prime ministers and their equivalents). The report is the second comprehensive attempt to describe the role and responsibilities of offices at the centre of government. It draws on a 2017 survey of senior officials working at the centre of government and how they describe their crucial role in public governance. Where appropriate, it compares 2017 results to those of the 2013 benchmark survey (OECD, 2015).

Despite differences among countries in terms of constitutional forms and administrative traditions – even the extent to which the centre is led and staffed by political appointees rather than career civil servants – there are strong similarities in the functions the centre performs. Supporting the head of government and ministers to make good decisions by ensuring they receive evidence-informed, co-ordinated and coherent advice is common to all, as is co-ordinating the various actors in the policy process, and ensuring the quality and capability of the policy system. The centre also typically acts as the guardian of overall strategic direction of government, translating political intent to line departments and ensuring that agreed policies and programmes are implemented. This requires a high level of expertise in facilitation, networking and influence across government.

As policy challenges become more cross-cutting, the centre is increasingly called on to lead policy processes. As such, the centre continues to transition towards a more pro-active, outward-facing and leadership role in the public administration and beyond.

Key findings from the survey are described below, followed by some ‘areas for attention’. These are areas where weaknesses have been identified or where some international exchange of experiences could help build capability and performance across centres of government in OECD and partner governments.

KEY FINDINGS

Despite different systems, the centre has similar functions everywhere...

Despite different constitutional and administrative systems, diverse organisational structures, and differences in size, most countries have similar expectations of offices at the centre of government. The top four priority tasks of the centre of government are:

- Supporting decision making by the head of government and the cabinet, which involves administrative tasks related to cabinet meetings, as well as the provision of policy advice (and if not political advice then policy advice that is politically savvy)
- Policy co-ordination across government, which increasingly involves leading cross-cutting policy priorities or initiatives
- Strategic planning for the whole of government
- Communicating government messages to the public and across the administration.

The survey results show a slight change in priorities from the last survey, where communications did not feature in the top 4 tasks but monitoring the implementation of government policy did. Strategic planning also seems relatively more important in the 2017 results.

While the centre works closely with line ministries, its co-ordination and coherence functions are most often shared with ministries of finance; they also have a whole-of-government focus and are often referred to as a ‘central agency’ in most countries.
The centre is constantly changing but there is some continuity…

Staff numbers and the budgets of centre of government offices grew in two-thirds (67%) of countries since the 2013 survey.

Many centres took on new functions, and the number and types of units at the centre changed significantly. Only one-third said the configuration of the centre remained stable in terms of numbers of units (31%) and types of units (33%).

There is an almost even split between countries as to whether the head of the centre of government is a political appointee (51%) or a career civil servant (49%). Accordingly, in just over half of countries the head of the centre of government steps down when there is a change of government. However, there is more stability in senior management overall; in three-quarters of countries less than a quarter of senior management at the centre changes following a change of government.

The vast majority of centre of government staff (92%) are career civil servants. In around two-thirds of countries some of these staff are seconded from other ministries; this helps to maintain a rolling stock of subject matter expertise, to strengthen relationships with line ministries, and enhance the co-ordination capacity of the centre.

The centre has significant influence over decision-making processes but might need new collaborative leadership strategies to maintain that influence…

The centre provides the key support to cabinet and cabinet committees, including to co-ordinate and resolve differences prior to cabinet meetings. More than three-quarters (78%) reported organising meetings of ministers, confirming close proximity to and involvement with the wider executive.

More than two-thirds (68%) of centres have a check and reject role, to test that items submitted to cabinet conform to legal, regulatory, and financial criteria, and that adequate consultation has occurred, and if not, the authority to return proposals to the generating ministry or department. However, on all criteria apart from legal conformity, the centre’s authority to reject items appears to have dropped since 2013.

Widespread requirements to provide regulatory impact statements with cabinet proposals might suggest the centre’s role is more to check that procedures have been followed rather than to test the quality of regulatory analysis itself. Some centres have their sights set further upstream, on improving the quality of policy advice that underpins proposals to ministers.

Only around a quarter (27%) of centres felt they had ‘high’ influence over other ministries (down from over a third, 34%, in 2013). Around three-quarters (73%) consider they only have ‘moderate’ influence. The ‘proximity to power’ authority of the centre, therefore, is important, but may not be sufficient to exert influence over other parts of the administration.

More collaborative strategies for achieving policy goals suggest a role for the centre that is less about being a watchdog or internal auditor and more about providing active facilitation, support and implementation advice to ministries or groups of ministries. This is especially the case for meeting cross-cutting policy goals.

The centre is taking on more direct leadership of substantive policy and reform areas…

Around half of respondents (51%) said the number of cross-ministerial initiatives had increased in their jurisdiction since the 2013 survey. The centre is taking the lead in a significant number and range of substantive policy initiatives.

The centre is also involved in leading public administration reform programmes, either in their entirety or certain aspects; in particular digital transformation, improving regulatory and policy quality and capability, and certain aspects of human resources strategies (leadership, policy skills). They also lead or co-ordinate some high-profile, thematic topics, including digital economy and gender equality.
Weaknesses remain in whole-of-government strategy, strategic planning, and in embedding futures thinking and risk management into planning and policy processes…

While more than three-quarters of centres (78%) reported having a document outlining a strategic vision for their country, over a third (35%) of those documents cover a short-term horizon of five years or less (consistent with an election cycle). However, this is an improvement on 2013 results, where almost two-thirds (63%) fell into this short-term category. More countries have documents covering an 11-20 year time frame (27% compared with 17% in 2013).

The 2013 survey noted that strategic planning at the centre was not well anchored in institutional terms and struggles to influence the direction of policy in practice. The 2017 results largely confirm this analysis although shows some improvements.

Just over half (54%) of respondents claimed they were involved in identifying and defining government priorities. However, digging into the centre’s role in priority setting and strategic alignment reveals more of a coordination and oversight role than one of helping to set a strategic policy agenda.

The most common risk management functions for the centre remain at the reactive end of the scale, focused on the management and co-ordination of government operations in the event of a crisis. Less than one-third have a role in scenario planning based on identifying and analysing potential future risks.

Governments in general do not appear to have developed the institutions, processes and practices to focus on the long term. Few centres have developed an effective role in public good stewardship. This will inevitably weaken their ability to identify challenges and risks, or to mitigate and manage those risks, let alone to contribute to strong and resilient future economies and societies.

The centre monitors implementation and performance but more activity than impact…

The vast majority of countries (84%, albeit slightly less than the 91% reported in 2013) have some form of policy implementation monitoring regime. However, in around half of countries this is limited to requiring line ministries to report against implementation workplans.

Monitoring seems largely focused on ‘doing things right’ (following procedures) rather than ‘doing the right things’. There was scant mention of any evaluation of the impact of policies on social and economic outcomes.

Centres are involved in digital transformation but there are unexploited opportunities to improve processes…

More than three-quarters (76%) of centres are involved in digital transformation strategies or initiatives. Early digital transformation efforts have focused on digital as a way of joining up government, driving efficiencies and improving interactions between government and business and citizens. There is significant scope to build on that infrastructure to think beyond digital transformation for enhancing service delivery to digital transformation to enhance upstream policy processes (data analytics, participatory processes).
Communications is becoming more of a priority for centres of government and open government principles are well established. But involving the public in policy is still patchy…

Communicating messages to the public and across the administration is now one of the top 4 functions for the centre of government. More than three-quarters (78%) of survey respondents said they had some responsibility for strategic whole-of-government communications.

Social media has also become more important. Some 70% of centres have a social media strategy, significantly up from 42% in 2013. Engagement with social media appears to be viewed as a positive opportunity rather than a risk to be managed. It offers channels to get messages out to citizens directly (by-passing other media and mitigating the possibility of information being distorted).

Well over half of countries surveyed (57%) have an official document promoting citizen participation in policy making; the vast majority of centres (81%) are also directly involved in open government initiatives. However, while most have institutionalised the open government principles of transparency and accountability, the participation part of the equation appears less well developed.

Areas for attention

Throughout the report there are suggestions for where the centre could focus some attention to enhance policy processes or overall governance. They may form the basis for future OECD discussions of senior officials from centres of government, and will be areas to test in any future OECD survey of the roles and functions of centres of government. They include:

- As part of its role in whole-of-government strategy, strategic planning and policy performance assurance, how the centre could enhance the institutional infrastructure for building future considerations into policy (policy frameworks, methodological tools and institutional capabilities) and how it might assume a longer-term stewardship role while at the same time respecting the strategic direction of elected governments.
- How to develop policy capability at the centre, including to manage growing pressure to lead cross-cutting or cross-ministerial initiatives, and how to facilitate and encourage improvements in policy capability (skills, methods, evidence base) generally across the whole of government.
- How to develop a more collaborative style of leadership, one that is less about command and control and monitoring performance, and more about providing active facilitation, support and advice to line ministries in order to collectively meet complex, cross-cutting and often intransigent policy challenges. This would include mechanisms to bring ministries together in the pursuit of common goals or outcomes, and performance management methods for incentivising, acknowledging and rewarding contributions to collective goals.
- How to build the participatory part of open government to improve policy quality and effectiveness. This would involve developing deliberate approaches to public participation, understanding and building capability in methodologies for incorporating user insights into policy, and shared understanding of when and for what types of policy public participation is most appropriate.
WHAT IS THE CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT?

Despite differences between countries in terms of constitutional forms and administrative traditions, there are strong similarities in the role and functions of organisations at the centre of government.

The vast majority (84%), of countries in this survey agree that their centre of government corresponds to the OECD definition, that is: “the administrative structure that serves the executive (president or prime minister, and the cabinet collectively)”. The centre therefore includes entities referred to in various countries as: the Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Privy Council Office, Office of the President, Executive Office, Casa Civil, Presidencia, etc.

The centre is closely linked to the executive branch, providing support to ensure elected politicians make decisions that are informed by evidence and expert analysis. The success of any government programme depends on the ability of the centre to oversee the quality of the policy process from policy analysis and development to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. It acts as a political-administrative bridge, facilitates co-ordination and coherence across government agencies and resolves conflicts and crises when they threaten to derail policies and programmes. The centre typically operates across government, acting as the eyes and ears of the head of government, including by maintaining relationships and relevant networks.

In some countries, a number of functions of the centre as defined by OECD are carried out by two or more entities; in others, the centre is defined as including bodies such as the ministry of finance. In many cases there is a separation between the staff providing political and strategic advice to the head of government - often referred to as the prime minister’s or president’s ‘private office’ - and staff who provide apolitical policy advice. The centre tends to be more complex in systems where there is both a prime minister and a president.

In several countries, the centre also includes units, sometimes with significant staff, whose functions lie outside the OECD definition, notably intelligence, counter espionage, and other national security-related functions.

WHAT THE CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT DOES – KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Figure 1. Key responsibilities of the centre of government

Co-ordinating preparation of Cabinet meetings 100%
Policy co-ordination across government 100%
Strategic planning for the whole of government 100%
Communicating govt messages to the public 100%
Monitoring the implementation of govt policy 100%
Preparation of the government programme 100%
Relations with Parliament / Legislature 100%
Designing & implementing reform of public admin 100%
International co-ordination / international policy 100%
HR strategy for the public admin as a whole 100%
Risk mgmt/strategic foresight for whole of govt 100%
Regulatory policy 100%
Policy formulation 100%
Relations with sub-national levels of government 100%
Transition plan b/w outgoing & incoming govt 100%
Policy analysis 100%


While the range of responsibilities carried out by centres of government varies across countries, some functions are common to most, in particular co-ordinating the preparation of cabinet meetings and policy co-ordination across government. The centre takes almost exclusive responsibility for those functions. Whole-of-government strategic planning and monitoring the implementation of government policy are also high on the agenda (see Figure 1).
Other key responsibilities (such as risk management and strategic foresight, communicating messages to the public and across the administration, and regulatory policy) are often shared between the centre and other ministries or government bodies (Figure 2). International co-ordination and international policy issues similarly are shared, with foreign ministries taking the lead. The same shared approach is often taken for designing and implementing public administration reform programmes and managing whole of government human resources strategies, where primary responsibility typically sits with ministries of finance, interior or public administration. However, where public management reform is a high priority on a government’s agenda, the centre is likely to be more involved, including in related strategic human resources reforms. A number of countries reported taking the lead in state sector reform programmes.

The 2017 survey results mirrored those of the previous survey, showing a strong commonality of core functions across centres of government and relative consensus on which were most important. Communicating government messages to the public and across the administration seems to have become slightly more of a priority relative to the 2013 results, although like other differences in results between the two surveys, this could be a reflection of the countries included in the survey rather than a trend.

Figure 2. The centre of government’s share of key responsibilities


Leadership and Staffing at the Centre of Government

Leadership of organisations at the centre of government requires individuals that can be trusted advisors and supporters of elected political leaders, while also being able to gain the requisite respect and ‘followership’ of leaders and organisations in the permanent civil service. Like in other sectors, modern leadership requires collaboration, networking and influencing skills rather than a traditional top-down, command and control approach (OECD, 2017e). Whether the head of the centre of government is a political appointee or a career civil servant the leadership role is a complex one.

There is an almost even split between countries in how the heads of centres are appointed: 51% are political appointees while 49% are career civil servants (Table 1). This is almost identical to 2013 results (52% political, 48% civil servant) despite the slightly different survey group.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. A political appointee provides a close link to politicians and, in theory, increases the centre’s ability to influence the political and policy agenda, especially where the head of the centre is also a ministerial post, which it is in just over a third (35%) countries in the survey. Political appointees are replaced when the government changes (unless they have some fixed-term contractual arrangement, which is not typical). Having a politically appointed leader implies a significant effort during a change of government: in just over half (51%) of countries surveyed, the head of the CoG steps down when there is a change in government. On the other hand, in three-quarters of countries in the survey less than a quarter of senior management in the CoG also changes with a change in government. This suggests that if the head goes, there is still significant senior management capability to keep the organisation and wider public administration running. In only 5 countries does more than half of the senior management change (Brazil, Chile, Greece, Hungary, Mexico).
Career civil servants are likely to have a superior knowledge of legislative and policy processes and can provide institutional knowledge and administrative continuity across time and governments. They are also likely to be able to navigate across the administration, including through valuable networks of civil service colleagues. Implementation of policy and programmes might be enhanced by this.

The leadership profile of the head of the centre of government appears to have an impact on the principal channels through which policy issues are discussed. Political appointees are less likely to discuss policy issues through a group of senior advisors than are career civil servants.

While governments are unlikely to change their approach to appointing leaders on the basis of what others do, it is worth considering how to learn from the benefits of alternative systems; in systems where leaders are political appointees, to have strategies for engaging with the civil service; and for systems where leaders are career civil servants, how to successfully engage in the political domain (while maintaining political neutrality).

Similar considerations and trade-offs are required for overall staffing of offices at the centre of government. The vast majority (92%) of staff working in the centre of government are career civil servants (Figure 3). In only 3 countries - Greece, Chile and Mexico - are a majority of staff political appointments (although as Mexico pointed out, this does not preclude them from having previous experience in the civil service).

**Table 1. Status of head of centre of government, by country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Servant</th>
<th>Political Appointee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Chile</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Israel</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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Career civil servants are likely to have a superior knowledge of legislative and policy processes and can provide institutional knowledge and administrative continuity across time and governments. They are also likely to be able to navigate across the administration, including through valuable networks of civil service colleagues. Implementation of policy and programmes might be enhanced by this.

The leadership profile of the head of the centre of government appears to have an impact on the principal channels through which policy issues are discussed. Political appointees are less likely to discuss policy issues through a group of senior advisors than are career civil servants.

While governments are unlikely to change their approach to appointing leaders on the basis of what others do, it is worth considering how to learn from the benefits of alternative systems; in systems where leaders are political appointees, to have strategies for engaging with the civil service; and for systems where leaders are career civil servants, how to successfully engage in the political domain (while maintaining political neutrality).

Similar considerations and trade-offs are required for overall staffing of offices at the centre of government. The vast majority (92%) of staff working in the centre of government are career civil servants (Figure 3). In only 3 countries - Greece, Chile and Mexico - are a majority of staff political appointments (although as Mexico pointed out, this does not preclude them from having previous experience in the civil service).

**Figure 3. Centre of government staff: civil servants and political appointees**

Responses to the question: Are the professional staff of the CoG primary civil servants or political appointees?

92% Civil servants

8% Political appointees

Staffing offices at the centre requires a balance between ensuring continuity of institutional knowledge – especially with constitutional and procedural conventions – and temporary or rolling expertise in policy areas that are current government priorities. Around two-thirds (62%) of countries surveyed have some staff seconded to the centre from line ministries. In 5 countries most staff are seconded (Brazil, Germany, Japan, Morocco, Spain). Secondments from ministries provide an opportunity to bring deep subject matter expertise into the centre. They can also help to strengthen relationships with line ministries and thereby enhance the co-ordination capacity of the centre of government. Denmark explained the staffing strategy for its Prime Minister’s Office (Box 1).

**Box 1. Denmark’s centre of government staffing strategy**

Most of the professional staff in the PMO is temporarily employed, typically on 2-3 year contracts. After their term in the PMO they normally continue their career in their native ministry. This recruitment strategy was established in the mid 1990’s. It was introduced to ensure a continuously dynamic and changing team of staff which possesses relevant expertise and analytical skills in different policy areas. In addition, having experts in the PMO with strong ties to the ministries and a thorough understanding of their areas enhances the centre of government co-ordination processes.

Organisations defined as the ‘centre of government’ for this survey vary in size from under 100 staff (7 countries fall into this category) to several thousands of staff. Regardless of the starting point, in most countries the centre of government increased in both size and budget since 2013 (see Figure 5), and many also changed configuration, usually as a result of taking on additional functions. The survey revealed that:

- Staff numbers increased in two-thirds (67%) of countries.
- Budgets also increased in two-thirds (67%) of countries. Only around one in five centres had no change in their budgets (19%) while only 14% experienced a budget decrease.

**Figure 4. Proportion of centre of government staff seconded (detached) from other ministries**

- 3% Other
- 13% Yes, most, all
- 35% No, (are CoG employees)
- 49%, Yes, a small number

*Source: Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government, OECD (2017).*

**SIZE AND STRUCTURE – THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE**

Organisations defined as the ‘centre of government’ for this survey vary in size from under 100 staff (7 countries fall into this category) to several thousands of staff. Regardless of the starting point, in most countries the centre of government increased in both size and budget since 2013 (see Figure 5), and many also changed configuration, usually as a result of taking on additional functions. The survey revealed that:
Changes in size reflect new responsibilities for the centre. For example, in Australia, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet took on a number of new policy areas (indigenous policy, women’s policy, national policy on cities, deregulation, digital and data policy, and population policy). The German Federal Chancellery added tasks such as co-ordination of the refugee situation, integration policy, better co-ordination of Federal intelligence services, and G7/G20 leadership. Ireland took on more staff to handle the EU Presidency in 2013 while recent budget increases are to fund two independent commissions of investigation. Significant staff increases in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in New Zealand reflect responsibilities for civil defence and emergency management and co-ordinating the recovery effort following a series of damaging earthquakes.

Government restructuring led to an increase in size and/or budget for the centre in some countries. In Brazil, the Secretariat for Economic and Social Development was moved to the Office of the Chief of Staff for the Presidency. Hungary upgraded the Prime Minister’s Office from a State Secretariat to a Ministry, with an increase in functions including public administration development, cultural heritage, and rural development. Budget decreases in other countries reflect government-wide cost-cutting measures (the Deficit Reduction Action Plan in Canada, austerity measures for fiscal sustainability in Slovenia) or reorganisation of existing functions (Sweden).

The configuration of the centre of government is fluid and evolves over time. Only a third of countries reported ‘stability’ in the types of units housed at the centre; two-thirds (67%) reported change. The 2013 centre of government survey reported a similar change story. Changes reflect new priorities of incoming governments, or are responses to emerging challenges. Examples of new units created since 2013 include the Results and Delivery Unit (Canada), a Directorate for Crisis Communication, and a State Data Banks Commissioner (Luxembourg), a National Council for Children (Chile), and a Government Strategy Secretariat (Finland).

Sometimes special units established at the centre have a limited lifespan, reflecting the changing priorities of the government of the day. The centre is often perceived as a safe space to incubate a function that, once sufficiently mature, can be later transferred to another department.

While there is no ideal configuration of organisations at the centre, centres of government would do well to have some framework to guide machinery of government decisions about adding or dropping functions. Such decisions would of course include relatively uncontrollable considerations such as “is it a priority or special interest of the head of government?” and assessments of whether the area would be best placed elsewhere in the administration (requiring assessments of capability outside the centre). Discussions at OECD meetings of Senior Officials from Centres of Government suggest general consensus that organisations at the centre of government perform best when they are nimble and strategic rather than bogged down in substantive policy and programme responsibilities. Some periodic evaluation of functions, to test whether they need to be at the centre, and a subsequent ‘spring clean’ would be a valuable exercise.
ENSURING HIGH-QUALITY DECISION MAKING

Despite the variety of constitutional models across the OECD and the related differences in how decisions are taken – from highly collegial consensus-based systems such as the Netherlands and Sweden to more top-down presidential systems such as Chile and the US – the centre of government in all countries takes the lead in ensuring support for decision-making processes. This involves relatively administrative but vital tasks, such as cabinet meeting and agenda organisation, to assuring the quality of the evidence and advice presented to decision makers. The centre’s role is to ensure that decision makers are able to debate the merits of policy options based on evidence-informed policy advice presented in a way that helps them understand the costs, benefits, likely impacts and overall implications of those options. That means co-ordinating the process by which advice gets to decision makers and the organisations that generate it.

SUPPORTING CABINET AND CABINET PROCEDURES

In most OECD countries more or less regular cabinet meetings are the principal forum for policy deliberation and decision making (Figure 6). In presidential systems, bilateral meetings with key ministers or advisors tend to be more common. Most systems also involve committees of ministers, state secretaries and advisors to prepare and transmit advice to cabinet or the head of government. The centre plays an important role in preparing these meetings to verify the quality of advice and supporting information, help resolve disputes and ensure that any required procedures (for example consultation, regulatory impact analysis, articulation of financial and legal implications) are followed.

Figure 6. Main institutional instruments used by the centre to ensure policy co-ordination

Centres of government play an active role in supporting cabinet, cabinet committees and the cabinet decision-making process (Box 2). The centre of government takes responsibility for co-ordinating discussion of agenda items prior to discussion by cabinet in most countries, mainly through briefings (59%) or ministerial committees (41%). Only 3 countries – Costa Rica, Norway, Portugal, – said they did not play this role. Where the leadership of the centre are career civil servants they tend to provide more administrative and secretarial support to cabinet meetings; political appointees are more likely to be directly involved in discussions.
Box 2. Centre of government support to cabinet

Canada

PCO supports the decision-making process in both secretariat and policy capacities. It arranges Cabinet Committee meetings, circulates agendas, and provides advice to Cabinet Committee Chairs on agenda items. It supports, via the Clerk of the Privy Council as Chair, several Deputy Minister Committees and task forces with policy co-ordination responsibilities. The Coordinating Committee of Deputy Ministers provides a forum for discussion of Government policy and priorities and ensures co-ordination across the deputy minister committees. PCO supports Cabinet committees including by: convening inter-departmental meetings and ensuring the departments meet submission deadlines.

The survey confirmed that the centre is also highly involved in organising cross-government policy co-ordination group and committees, including groups of ministers (Figure 7). More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents reported organising meetings of ministers, confirming the centre’s close proximity to and involvement with the wider executive, regardless of whether the centre is led by career civil servants or political appointees.

Figure 7. Centre responsibility for organising cross-government policy co-ordination groups or committees, and level of committee

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<th>0%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>90%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, State Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, Director</td>
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<td>Yes, Other</td>
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<td>No</td>
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REVIEW AND QUALITY CONTROL OF ITEMS FOR CABINET

In the vast majority of countries (91%) the centre of government is responsible for reviewing items submitted to cabinet. Only 3 countries – Chile, Portugal and Spain – reported not having this role. This review role involves assessing whether proper processes and procedures as well as presentational requirements have been followed, ensuring that the item is aligned with the overall government programme, that the item conforms to legal, regulatory, and financial criteria, and that adequate consultation has occurred (although comments suggested that this refers mainly to consultation within government not with wider stakeholders or the public) (Table 2). If procedures for preparation have not been respected, the centre has the authority to return proposals to the generating ministry or department; more than two-thirds (68%) of countries reported having this check and reject role.
In terms of legal, regulatory and fiscal conformity, the centre shares this audit role with other bodies. Testing fiscal implications is typically the responsibility of ministries of finance; only about a third of respondents (35%) reported reviewing the costing of items submitted to cabinet. Overall responsibility for regulatory quality and consistency is a shared in more than half (57%) of countries surveyed, usually with ministries of justice, economy or finance. However, differences in results from the 2013 survey in terms of reviewing items to cabinet, could suggest a more active regulatory quality review role for the centre (51% compared with 42% in 2013, and significantly fewer countries saying that aspect was reviewed by another body, 45% compared to 12%). This may be a result of more upstream activity, including the development of guidelines for quality regulation and requirements for regulatory impact statements to accompany proposals to cabinet, so that the role of the centre is more to check that procedures have been followed rather than test the quality of regulatory analysis itself.

Table 2. How are items submitted to cabinet reviewed by the centre?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentioned by % of respondents</th>
<th>CoG reviews</th>
<th>CoG has authority to return items to Ministry for additional work if criterion is not satisfied</th>
<th>This is reviewed by another body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That procedures for preparation and presentation are respected</td>
<td>65% (63%)</td>
<td>68% (75%)</td>
<td>11% (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the item is in line with the Government Programme</td>
<td>57% (57%)</td>
<td>38% (63%)</td>
<td>8% (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That item has been subject to an adequate consultation process</td>
<td>43% (52%)</td>
<td>51% (65%)</td>
<td>8% (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of legal drafting and legal conformity</td>
<td>38% (40%)</td>
<td>57% (53%)</td>
<td>32% (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That a regulation meets regulatory quality standards</td>
<td>51% (41%)</td>
<td>49% (62%)</td>
<td>32% (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That adequate costing has been carried out</td>
<td>35% (40%)</td>
<td>38% (50%)</td>
<td>57% (63%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 2013 results in brackets


There were some differences between the 2017 and 2013 results in terms of the centre’s authority to return items to the generating ministry if requirements have not been met. On all criteria, apart from legal conformity, the centre’s authority to reject items appears to have dropped. This will be something to watch in future enquiries.

Testing items to cabinet for conformity to presentational, legal, regulatory and fiscal standards necessitates that those standards and procedures are well codified and communicated to ministries and departments preparing cabinet submissions. The vast majority of centres of government (86%) reported providing guidance and or training on how to meet the standards required on the above criteria. In Westminster countries the Cabinet Manual and related directives sets out processes and procedures. In other countries guidelines are prepared by the centre based on constitutional requirements for decision-making (e.g Sweden).

The provision of accessible and easy-to-follow guidelines is likely to optimise conformity with cabinet processes as do administrative tools like templates. The Netherlands has recently introduced ‘fixed e-forms’ for submissions to ministers. The Canadian Privy Council Office provides templates for how memoranda to cabinet should be prepared and submitted. The release of a new template is followed by courses offered by the Canada School of Public Service which coordinates the course content with PCO. The centre in Norway also noted training and guidance in this context. Only 4 countries (Costa Rica, Germany, Morocco and Spain) said they did not provide guidance or training on criteria for submission of items to cabinet.
GOING UPSTREAM – IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF POLICY ADVICE

As noted above, differences in results between the 2013 and 2017 surveys in terms of reviewing items to cabinet for regulatory quality might be the result of more investment in policy advice upstream, such as requirements to prepare robust regulatory impact statements to accompany policy proposals to ministers and cabinet. While less than a third of countries claimed primary responsibility for regulatory quality (more than half shared that responsibility with other bodies such as Finance or Justice) 4 countries (France, Iceland, Lithuania and the United States) listed regulatory quality and consistency as among their 4 top priority responsibilities.

A few countries have gone beyond regulatory quality to take a broad whole-of-government approach to improving the quality of policy advice generally, notably New Zealand through its Policy Project and the United Kingdom through its Twelve Actions to professionalise policy making (UK Government, 2013). Both programmes are discussed later in Box 9. New Zealand’s Policy Quality Framework (DPMC, 2017) codifies the characteristics of quality policy advice as well as the ‘enablers’ of great advice, like considering multiple perspectives, good commissioning and quality assurance processes. It provides a range of ex-ante and ex-post tools (such as quality control and peer review templates) to support policy advisors to deliver high-quality advice to ministers (Policy Project). Departments are required to report policy quality scores annually and encouraged to set policy quality improvement targets.

Well-informed discussion and effective decisions taken by the head of government and cabinet depends on the quality of advice tendered to ministers as well as the co-ordination of processes and organisations that generate it. The centre plays a key brokerage and facilitation role, bringing other player together to ensure policy co-ordination.

BRINGING SENIOR OFFICIALS TOGETHER FOR POLICY CO-ORDINATION

While regular cabinet meetings were considered the main institutional instrument used by the centre for ensuring policy co-ordination, the survey confirmed that ad hoc meetings of senior officials are also an important institutional venue for co-ordination and for working through differences or conflicts in substance or territory before items get to cabinet.

The vast majority of respondents (81%) said they were responsible for organising pre-cabinet meetings of senior officials, either always (35%) or sometimes (46%). Only 7 countries said they did not – Brazil, Japan, Morocco, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Ireland (although the Irish Department of the Taoiseach convenes weekly meetings of officials to discuss the government’s overall agenda).

Other centres also reported convening more or less regular meetings of senior officials, not directly linked to the cabinet agenda, both with leaders at permanent secretary level and other senior policy managers. Estonia and Latvia reported convening weekly meetings of state secretaries, although Latvia suggests that there is still potential for these or similar meetings to be used for more content-oriented discussion on progress with policy implementation, new policy initiatives and foresight exercises. Iceland reported regular meetings of permanent secretaries.

These sessions offer an opportunity for senior civil service leaders to develop a shared understanding of the overall government programme and direction of travel. They offer the centre the opportunity to communicate the flavour of the head of government’s and council of ministers’ thinking and where they could anticipate future demands for policy advice. It is also an opportunity for what amounts to the senior leadership team of the government administration to be proactive in developing and co-ordinating a more strategic policy agenda. In Finland, for example, the agendas of the formal cabinet meetings are not discussed between the centre of government and ministries; however, “new bi-monthly strategy sessions and their agendas are prepared by the Government Strategy Secretariat of the centre of government. The agendas are designed in co-operation between the Strategy Secretariat and the political cabinet of the Prime Minister.” The personal relationships and networking opportunities provided by regular meetings of senior leaders help to build links between their departments and their sectoral policy responsibilities.
INFLUENCING AND INCENTIVISING POLICY CO-ORDINATION

The ability to bring substantive departments and their interests together is crucial for ensuring that decision makers receive coherent and co-ordinated policy advice. The authority of the centre derives from its proximity to and support of the head of government; its ability to lead will be strongest where it is able to show that the policy concerned is a priority of the head of government.

It may come as a surprise to line ministries that around three-quarters (73%) of centre of government officials consider that they only exert ‘moderate’ influence over other ministries. Only around a quarter (27%) felt they had ‘high’ influence (down from over a third, 34% in 2013). The ‘proximity to power’ authority of the centre therefore is important - but may not be sufficient - especially where substantive departments are facing pressure from the sectoral interests of their individual ministers.

The centre needs to have superior relationship management and networking skills to be able to work through both formal and informal channels, through collective bodies as well as bilaterally with individual leaders and departments (and actors outside government), and to co-ordinate and sometimes mediate simultaneously between ministers and senior officials. In many countries, including France, Germany, and Westminster systems, there is an expectation that conflicts should be resolved at the level of ministerial committee or below, and that differences of opinion should be reported and noted rather than having to be arbitrated by the head of government.

While influence and relationship management skills are crucial, the centre also increasingly employs a toolkit of mechanisms – incentives and levers, both formal and informal – to have influence over the policy system as a whole. Some are making use of performance and other targets.

MANDATES AND TARGETS

Countries were asked what incentives exist to promote policy co-ordination across ministries (Figure 8). Around 40% cited individual or collective performance targets (albeit down from just over half in 2013). Some of these derive from ministerial mandates handed down from the head of government. A number of countries reported involvement in supporting heads of government to prepare and communicate specific mandates to signal priorities to ministers and their departments. The Canadian PCO, for example, supports the prime minister in the writing of mandate letters to each cabinet minister responsible for a departmental portfolio. In France, each directeur d’administration centrale receives a mandate letter with objectives to be met.

Figure 8. Incentives to promote co-ordination across ministries and agencies
Policy or outcome goals and targets typically form part of the whole-of-government strategic planning process. Performance management of strategic goals and policy priorities is discussed later. However, recent research points to the relative effectiveness of collective responsibilities over individual accountability for achieving policy outcomes, especially where achieving those outcomes requires the involvement of a range of line departments. In this scenario, organisations at the centre are likely to be more effective as a broker and facilitator than a task master or after-the-fact auditor.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Only 7 countries reported offering financial incentives to drive policy co-ordination (Brazil, Estonia, Finland, France, Israel, NZ, USA) although in most cases this seemed to reflect funding available for cross-cutting projects. Estonia reported finances available and managed by the centre for task forces and analyses of cross-cutting issues, while Finland noted significant funding (1 billion euros) targeted at five priority areas and 26 related key projects. France reported financial penalties related to targets for gender equality not being met. More than a third of countries (38%) reported no formal incentives for policy co-ordination.

POLICY CO-ORDINATION ACROSS BRANCHES AND LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Policy co-ordination also involves relationships with actors other than departments and their ministers including legislatures, sub-national governments, and supra-national policy for a (where national governments strive to be more policy maker than policy taker).

RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT/LEGISLATURES

Most survey respondents stressed that each line ministry and its minister has responsibility for regulation/legislation in its own substantive portfolio area, and therefore assumes responsibility for managing relationships with and the passage of legislation through parliament. The centre tends to play more of an overview role, including through oversight of the legislative programme. This is more than just an administrative task. Processes and schedules for translating government policy into timely legislation can be complex and challenging. Systems where there are unstable or complex coalitions make this more of a challenge, for which the head of government and ministers need co-ordination and logistical support.

Maintaining good relations between the executive and the legislature therefore is an important function of the centre, albeit one shared with other bodies: 41% of centres claimed primary responsibility for relations with parliament while 54% shared the function with other bodies (line ministries). Moreover, almost a quarter (23%) of respondents said this function was one of the centre’s top 4 responsibilities (Chile, Costa Rica, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia, USA).

RELATIONS WITH SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Not surprisingly, managing relations with constituent governments to co-ordinate policy is more a priority for the centre in federal states. More than half of respondents (51%) said they had no co-ordinating role across levels of government. Only Australia and Hungary cited this as one of their top 4 functions.

Australia explained its administrative infrastructure set up to fulfil this role:

“[The Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet] PM&C leads the government’s relations with sub-national levels of government through its support for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). COAG is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes the first ministers of each Australian State and Territory and the head of the Australian Local Government Association. The COAG system includes ministerial councils that facilitate consultation and co-operation among the levels of government. Other departments and agencies may also engage with Australian States and Territories on specific issues.”
RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY FORA

Very few centres of government claimed primary responsibility for international policy co-ordination, which is usually the domain of foreign ministries. However, 41% of respondents said they did play a role co-ordinating their country’s position in some international bodies and discussions, and just under a third (31%) are involved in monitoring their country’s international commitments. Heads of governments are often heavily involved in direct bilateral or multi-lateral international meetings for which they require specific support, typically a separate advisory function within the centre, albeit with close ties to foreign ministry counterparts. Coherence and co-ordination of international connections is vital, especially as line ministries increasingly have direct relationships with counterparts working in substantive policy areas in other jurisdictions. It is important that the international policy domains of line ministries do not clash, and that the government speaks with a coherent voice on the international stage. Being an effective policy maker depends on being able to co-ordinate activities and policy goals at home in order to speak with one authoritative voice on the international stage.

The centre is more likely to play a direct role in monitoring international commitments that cut across government, such as the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (discussed later).

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT VISION, STRATEGY & PRIORITY-SETTING

Governments are elected on the basis of a programme that reflects a strategic vision for the future of their economies and societies. In office, they face a range of pressures to focus on the urgent and immediate, not least of which is the relatively short-term nature of election cycles. Most, if not all, governments also face a plethora of real or perceived crises, and concomitant demands to be seen to respond or react to every news event. The realities of managing domestic and international challenges tend to crowd out the pursuit of longer-term goals and the realisation of that initial strategic vision.

The centre of government is uniquely placed to act as the guardian of the government’s vision by translating election manifestos into a whole-of-government strategy that informs policy priorities and the work programmes of ministries and departments. It can promote consistent policies and strategic alignment, including by assessing the extent to which policy proposals generated by individual ministers and their ministries fit into the broader policy context, verifying the overall strategic “fit” of policies and programmes.

Increasingly, centres are recognising that to anticipate and respond to looming and future issues like climate change, aging populations and the changing nature of work, they need to move beyond just translating government manifestos into a strategic work programme; they also need to take on a longer-term public good stewardship role. This might mean providing proactive advice to heads of government and ministers on protecting the long-term public interest, including setting longer-term social, economic and environmental goals or at least taking steps to minimise harm to future generations. Forward-thinking governments will enable and support this.

The survey revealed that few governments are taking a systematic approach to embedding a long-term stewardship focus into institutional arrangements and policy frameworks.

STRATEGIC VISION – SETTING THE AGENDA

More than three-quarters (78%) of survey respondents reported the existence of a document outlining a strategic vision for their country. However, for more than a third of countries (35%) this document only covers a period of 5 years or less, the likely period of an electoral cycle. Indeed, a number of respondents referred to the ruling party’s manifesto as their strategic vision document. The concept of ‘vision’ is therefore often synonymous with a political strategy rather than a long-term future vision. However, there appears to be some improvement in this since 2013, where almost two-thirds (63%) of countries fell into that short-term category. Results for 2017 also show more countries having a whole-of-government strategy that covers 11-20 years (27% compared with 17% in 2013). Only 3 countries, Japan, Luxembourg and Norway reported having a document with a more than 20-year horizon (Table 3).
Table 3. Long-term strategic vision document timeframes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-5 years in</th>
<th>6-10 years in</th>
<th>11-20 years in</th>
<th>More than 20 years in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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### STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SETTING PRIORITIES

Unlike in the private sector, government strategic planning does not typically start with goal-setting. Rather a government programme reflects goals that have already been set by the ruling party’s or parties’ manifesto, usually the product of negotiation at the political level and broadly articulated by political staff. Once agreed at the political level then, the centre of government’s role is to translate and operationalise the government’s programme into a roadmap for work with downstream line ministries and departments.

#### Box 3. Cross-Agency Priority Goals in the United States

Federal Government Priority Goals (commonly referred to as the Cross-Agency Priority Goals, or CAP Goals) are set at the beginning of each Presidential term in consultation with Congress. CAP Goals are a tool for leadership to accelerate progress on a limited number of presidential priorities, overcome organizational barriers and achieve greater performance results than one agency can achieve on its own. For each CAP Goal, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identifies Goal Leaders, regularly tracks performance through a quarterly data-driven review, holds goal teams accountable for results, and publishes quarterly results on Performance.gov.

In fiscal year 2016 Congress provided $15 million in transfer authority for cross-agency implementation of CAP Goals. CAP Goal governance teams developed detailed plans for the use of the funds, which have a two-year period of availability. To drive progress, each supported project or initiative had a designated agency responsible for receiving funds to lead implementation efforts in collaboration with the Goal team. The authority allowed the General Services Administration (GSA), with the approval of the OMB Director, to collect funds from agencies to support these activities related to the implementation of CAP Goals. GSA’s Office of Government-wide Policy manages the funds, transferring funds from and to agencies supporting these efforts.

CAP Goal governance teams and agencies delivered tangible, measurable impacts across dozens of projects using the transfer authority authorized for FY 2016. For example, CAP Goal funding has proven instrumental in implementing various statutory requirements of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST Act), and has supported improvements to the cross-agency permitting process and to the Federal Infrastructure Permitting Dashboard website, which will enhance transparency, accountability and predictability for infrastructure projects. Funds have also been used by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) team to support the development of the first phase of a consolidated online request portal. The online portal will be interoperable with existing agency FOIA case management systems and will allow a member of the public to submit a FOIA request to any agency from a single website. A more complete listing of impacts across all CAP Goal teams and projects is available from OMB.
The 2013 survey noted that the history of strategic planning at the centre suggests a function that is not well anchored in institutional terms and struggles to influence the direction of policy in practice. It argued that long-term strategic perspectives translate into policy instruments in only a small number of countries and that few countries seem to have any specific capability for strategy. The 2017 results largely confirm this analysis although show some improvements and a few harbingers of the future.

Strategic planning for the whole of government is considered a key responsibility of the centre of government in over half the countries surveyed (56% slightly up on 52% in 2013). While less than half (46%) of respondents consider it one of their top 4 responsibilities, this too is up on 2013 results, where only a third considered it a top priority. Just over half (54%) of respondents claimed they were involved in identifying and defining government priorities.

However, digging deeper into what role the centre plays in priority setting and strategic alignment reveals more of a co-ordination and oversight role than strategic priority setting. In many cases this means ensuring that line ministries have longer-term plans in place and, in over a third of countries, mandating line ministries to develop plans (Figure 9). Qualitative comments revealed little insight into how ‘long-term’ is defined in the context of strategic planning; two-, four- and five-year planning cycles were mentioned in this context. And in any case, the sum of departmental plans does not equate to a whole-of-government strategy. It requires more of a cascade down (translating strategic priorities into departmental plans) rather than an adding up process (collating departmental strategic plans into an overall government plan).

Figure 9. Role of the centre in priority setting and strategic alignment

![Figure 9](image_url)  

Government strategic planning exercises have the added challenge of defining priorities in such a way that they are sufficiently concrete to engage and effect change in line ministries. Broad or poorly defined priorities can often result in line ministries retrofitting the status quo; arguing that what they are doing anyway is likely to contribute to government priorities and is therefore aligned with the overall strategic plan.

Some 61% of countries said they had a special unit dedicated to strategic planning or monitoring overall strategic direction. However, there were only a few mentions of any high-level cluster of staff reporting directly on longer-term direction or any institutionalised systems of strategy meetings co-ordinated by the centre. The exceptions were Finland (see Box 3) and Estonia. Estonia’s Strategy Unit monitors the implementation of Government’s programme. The Strategy Unit is also responsible for two horizontal strategies: Estonia 2020 (competitiveness strategy) and the Sustainable development strategy 2030 (while a third horizontal strategy related to national security is coordinated by a National Security and Defence Coordination Unit). In this survey countries mentioned units that appeared to be more involved in tracking immediate results and delivery than driving longer-term strategic direction.
A few countries described new developments in strategic priority setting. In the main they highlight the value of setting a limited number of key priorities. For example, New Zealand’s Better Public Services Result Areas – 10 highly defined policy goals with specific achievement targets – and Finland’s 5 priority areas coming under its new Strategic Government Programme (Box 4).

Box 4. Finland’s Strategic Government Programme

The new style Strategic Government Programme clearly indicates a limited number (5) of priority policy areas, all of which are cross-sectoral/horizontal. The programme also defines 26 related key projects. The government allocated 1 billion euros to ensure the effective implementation of those key projects; they signal policies where the government wants to achieve concrete, measurable change. Representatives of the Government Strategy Secretariat, set up in the Prime Minister’s Office in 2015, participates in the work of the 5 Groups of Ministers dealing with these priority areas. The Strategic Government Programme is accompanied by an annual implementation plan. Government Strategy sessions are held fortnightly – 4-hour evening sessions – with an agenda designed by the Strategy Secretariat together with the Prime Minister’s political cabinet. There are regular reports on progress towards the government strategic priorities. This is a new and effective way of encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation, through co-ordination by the centre with direct possibilities to bring messages from the government as a whole (via strategy sessions) to the administration and vice versa.

Source: Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government, OECD.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND FORESIGHT CAPABILITIES

The 2013 survey report noted that in an environment characterised by a heightened exposure to both natural and human-made disasters, centres of government should reassess their risk-management capacity (OECD, 2015). The global financial crisis showed the limited ability of governments to anticipate and respond to events as they unfold.

The 2017 results show that the vast majority of centres of government (83%) do assume some responsibility for risk management. Just over a third (36%) have primary responsibility. Some countries mentioned requiring line ministries to include risk assessments in their departmental planning processes but this does not appear to be part of a co-ordinated whole-of-government approach to risk assessment and management. In a few countries, for example New Zealand and Ireland, the centre is responsible for preparing an annual risk assessment or risk register. As Ireland explained

“The centre leads on risk anticipation for the whole of government as regards economic/strategic/reputational risk and publishes a National Risk Assessment on this every year. The Department of Defence leads on risk management for physical risk through its Office of Emergency Planning and publishes a National Risk Assessment on such risk every 2/3 years.”

The most common risk management functions for the centre remain at the reactive end of the scale, focused on the management and co-ordination of government operations in the event of a crisis. Less than a third have a role in scenario planning based on identifying and analysing risks to their country overall and only 2 countries (NZ and Spain) reported having a role in analysing and planning for internal systems risks (risks to the operation of government) (Table 4). Only 43% of countries treat risk management as part of wider strategic planning.

Table 4. Role of the CoG in Risk Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordination across central govt in the event of a crisis</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordination across levels of govt in the event of a crisis</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario planning based on identifying and analysing risks to the country</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying, analysing and planning for internal system risks</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategic foresight is an essential tool for governing in the face of uncertainty – looking to integrate the ‘known unknowns’ and the ‘unknown unknowns’ into policy and decision-making systems. It can strengthen policy quality by identifying new opportunities that could emerge under different scenarios and a means to test how current policy trajectories will fare against future scenarios so that they can be adjusted if necessary (OECD, 2017b).

Only a few countries referred to specific strategic foresight capabilities. Finland’s Prime Minister’s Office has responsibility for strategic foresight for the whole of government, which is part of its fairly comprehensive futures focus (Box 5). In the UK, strategic foresight is part of a wider approach to risk anticipation and management:

“The Cabinet Office is responsible for both strategic planning and risk management, but these are considered separately. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (within the Cabinet Office) leads the UK’s risk management. Its work falls into four main areas: identifying and assessing risk, enabling and improving preparedness across government, and coordinating the Government’s response to crises and coordinating recovery efforts across government. Additionally, the Joint Intelligence Organisation (a distinct organisation which sits in the Cabinet Office) produces independent all source assessments on issues of national security and foreign policy importance, including emerging risks. Lastly, the Horizon Scanning Programme Team is tasked with exploring what the future might look like to understand uncertainties better. Its work is supported by the Government Office for Science. Both the Joint Intelligence Organisation and the Horizon Scanning Programme Team feed into the Civil Contingencies Secretariat’s work on understanding risk.”

In general, strategic foresight and risk management remain weak in most centres of government.

TOWARDS ‘ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE’

A recent international study calls for governments to develop ‘anticipatory governance’, to take a systemic approach to mitigating the ‘presentist bias’ identified in most governments’ policy making systems (Boston, 2016). This means having a focus on the long term (well beyond the next election), being proactive in identifying, mitigating and managing significant risk, having analytical tools to understand trade-offs over time and between generations and making these trade-offs explicit in policy advice, and having the agility to recognise and adapt to emergent and looming issues that if not dealt with today are likely to bite in future. Follow-up work to the study offers a systemic framework and criteria for assessing the quality of anticipatory governance (Boston, 2017). Some of the recommended actions require political commitment, such as enhancing future-focused constitutional protections (often referred to as commitment devices), which are beyond the control of the centre to introduce (although not beyond their remit to advise politicians on the merits of). But the centre is well placed - as part of its role in whole-of-government strategy, strategic planning and policy performance assurance - to enhance the institutional infrastructure for building future considerations into current policy and institutional capabilities. This could include:

- Improving requirements for long-term economic, social and environmental reporting (to complement progress in long-term economic and fiscal reporting and forecasting)
- Embedding future considerations into policy and analytical frameworks
- Strengthening future-focused institutions and their connections to current policy processes
- Improving and joining-up foresight capability across government.

The 2017 Centres of Government Survey results show that governments in general still have not developed the institutions, processes and practices to focus on the long term. Few governments have the systems for anticipatory governance or for playing their important stewardship role. This will inevitably challenge their ability to identify challenges and assess risks to society, and to mitigate and manage those risks, let alone to contribute to strong and resilient future economies and societies.
However governments choose to develop a capacity and capability for longer-term thinking, that thinking needs to influence policy development. Where long-term goal setting, foresight capabilities, and strategic planning are not separate activities within the centre, there is a danger that long-term thinking and driving medium-term to long-term priorities is crowded out by immediate concerns and business as usual. However, if a whole-of-government strategic function is too much at arm’s length, then longer-term thinking will not influence current policy settings. The degree of separation between the different parts of that infrastructure will be a balancing act. What is clear is that a systemic approach is required to create an integrated infrastructure for whole-of-government strategy that takes account of the future and is embedded in policy frameworks, and in monitoring performance measurement and reporting processes. Finland is often cited as an exemplar of integrating long-term vision into its policy infrastructure, described briefly below (Box 5).

### Box 5. Finland’s Focus on the Future

Since the early 1990s (based on a cross-party Parliamentary decision) there has been a requirement for the Finnish Government to produce a Report on the Future with a 20-year perspective each Parliamentary term. Each Government Programme has to be aligned with the findings of the Futures Report. Supporting foresight activities are co-ordinated by a Government Foresight Group at the centre drawing on the activities of Government Foresight Network. Over time, Finland has invested in and built up considerable capability and experience in futures thinking, foresight methods and supporting data sources. The centre of government has been instrumental in the development and maintenance of institutional capability and co-ordination across government; this involvement is considered one of the critical factors underpinning the success of the overall futures approach, and linking it to other strategy and strategic planning processes.

Source: Boston, 2016; OECD, 2015; Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government, OECD.

### DRIVING CROSS-CUTTING AND PRIORITY POLICIES

The centre of government plays a crucial role in facilitating policy co-ordination, curating good policy processes, reviewing advice to decision-makers and promoting good policy advice. It has traditionally been less directly involved in substantive policy design and formulation. Survey respondents stressed that the centre typically takes a helicopter view of policy, providing strategic policy support and advice while line departments take primary responsibility for substantive policy development.

Accordingly, policy analysis and policy formulation were not considered to be among the top responsibilities of the centre (Figure 1). Only one country reported policy analysis as being the centre’s responsibility and only 2 countries considered policy formulation was their responsibility. The vast majority (around 90%) of respondents considered both aspects were shared by other ministries or bodies, with the centre playing more of an oversight, quality control and co-ordination role.

Table 5. The role of the centre in cross-ministerial initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of centre</th>
<th>Percentage of reporting countries noted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation / support</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in substance</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the survey confirmed the centre unlikely to take the lead in policy issues that would usually come under the remit of a substantive policy ministry or department, as policy issues become more cross-cutting there is often not an obvious home for them in line ministries focused on more contained policy domains. The increasing cross-cutting nature and complexity of many policy areas and the increasing number of cross-ministerial initiatives suggests that the centre may in future face increasing demands to get involved in the end-to-end policy process, from policy analysis and design to implementation and evaluation. Around half of respondents (51%) said the number of cross-ministerial initiatives had increased in their jurisdiction since the 2013 survey. Respondents to the previous survey also reported significant increases in cross-ministerial initiatives in the years preceding the survey. The upshot is that the centre may increasingly have a direct hand in substantive policy design and delivery.

The increase in contestable policy advice might also signal a more involved role for the centre in substantive policy processes. Decision makers have multiple and growing sources of advice outside the mainstream administration – political advisors, other bodies at arm’s length from central government and a range of private and other think tanks (OECD, 2017b). The capability to blend these often competing streams of advice to help the head of government and ministers make sense of the political and substantive implications of policy proposals also signals a potentially increased demand for substantive policy expertise at the centre. The centre and the wider senior policy advisory community will have to be ‘best in class’ to maintain their position as chief advisors to government.

Already the centre is taking the lead in a significant number and range of substantive policy initiatives. Many of these constitute the ‘exceptions’ where there is no obvious alternative home, or where the centre takes the lead because of the complexity of the topic, failure by one or more ministries to deliver effective policy advice or programmes, the need for expert co-ordination between departments, and/or because the area has become, by necessity or by design, a priority for the head of government. As one respondent described it,

“where the topic is of great importance and co-ordination crucial and difficult, the centre will tend to be heavily involved… where issues are less crucial and co-ordination less necessary/demanding, the [centre of government] role will tend to be less engaged.”

Survey respondents described where the centre was already leading substantive policy initiatives (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Policy initiatives managed from the centre (in 2017)

![Bar chart showing policy initiatives managed from the centre](chart.png)

The most common current centre-led initiatives are:

- Digital transformation. Over half of countries cited digital transformation as one of the top three priorities managed from the centre, while three-quarters (76%) said they were involved to some degree in digital government strategies. The centre’s role in digital transformation is described below).

- Public administration reform. Despite public sector reform not being offered in the survey questionnaire as one of the options of a substantive policy area led by the centre, ten countries described public sector reform as one their top 3 centre-led initiatives. Moreover, when describing their top 4 roles and responsibilities earlier in the survey, some three-quarters (75%) of respondents cited designing and implementing reform of the public administration. Examples and descriptions of public sector reform led from the centre of government are discussed on page 32.

- Migration. Just under one-third of countries (30%), mainly European, cited migration as a policy being led from the centre. Some have established centrally-co-ordinated migration policies (which is also being addressed and co-ordinated at the European Union level).

- Sustainable development. Just under one-third (30%) of countries cited sustainable development as a policy area being led by the centre. This includes developing structures and processes for implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The OECD survey on planning and co-ordinating the SDGs revealed that responsibilities for steering the implementation of the SDGs often sit with the centre of government, as is the case in Mexico and the Czech Republic. Indeed, the centre is substantially involved in all but one-third of countries. In previous OECD enquiries, countries reported that the co-ordination required for implementation of the SDGs was particularly challenging (OECD, 2016).

- Anti-corruption policies are being led by the centre in a smaller number of countries, although in qualitative comments respondents emphasised a focus on enhancing integrity and transparency rather than policing or dealing with a corruption problem.

- Gender equality is being led by the centre in another group of countries (Chile, Czech Republic, France and Portugal). Institutional arrangements for gender equity – to ensure that public policies take account of the differential impacts on women – differ across OECD countries. Being housed at the centre signals importance and ensures that gender issues are considered from a whole-of-government perspective and not confined to a limited policy domain (such as employment or social issues). Where countries have a separate ministry for gender issues, they also have a whole-of-government focus.

- Employment issues also featured as policy initiatives currently being led from the centre (although qualitative comments did not reveal any detail on the focus of activity).

Sometimes policy initiatives led by the centre are time-limited or temporary assignments. When initiatives require ongoing attention or quasi-permanent administrative support, they are often re-housed in line departments rather than remaining with the centre. For example, a number of countries have already relocated their digital transformation work away from the centre.

### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

While digital technologies have transformed business and society, government have taken longer to catch up. Issues related to data sharing and privacy, upgrading legacy IT systems, coupled with the usual problems of co-ordinating organisations and initiatives, equates to an overall challenging environment. But the rewards are great, including better policy, enhanced relationships between citizens and government and efficiency gains. Estonia is considered a front-runner in digital transformation; its efficiency gains have recently been quantified (Box 6).
Box 6. Digitally driven efficiency gains in Estonia

A report for The World Bank estimated that Estonia’s X-Road system (a secure data exchange system based on an ‘ask once’ principle for government seeking information from business and citizens) saved about 15 minutes of time on each transaction, which when extrapolated across time saved by both citizens and government employees, in 2014 terms, saved the equivalent of over 3000 people working continuously for a year. (Vassil, 2016).

As noted earlier, digital transformation was the most common substantive policy area driven by the centre. Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents said they were involved in some way in digital transformation strategies and initiatives. The type of involvement appears to be mainly related to advising on development (54%) or monitoring implementation of digital strategies (51%). There was less involvement reported at the more operational end of the digital spectrum; 38% said they were involved in prioritisation of ICT projects, 24% in evaluating ICT projects, and only 14% in financing digital projects. Less than a third (30%) reported being involved in developing technical guidelines.

Responsibility for digital transformation sits at the centre of government in a number of countries. For example, the UK’s Government Digital Service is part of the Cabinet Office and is charged with developing digital capability across government and promoting the use of common platforms as well as promoting the more effective use of data to improve both government services and policy development (including through data sharing). The Australian Digital Transformation Agency is a relatively new portfolio agency of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was set up to drive the Australian Government’s digital transformation agenda launched in 2016 and focuses on delivering better and more accessible digital services to individuals and businesses. The Slovak National Agency for Network and Electronic Services also sits at the centre as a contributory organisation of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. It has a range of roles including operating the government e-network GOVNET and the central government portal ‘slovenski.sk’.

In other countries, responsibility for digital transformation sits elsewhere, often in the ministry of finance. For example, in Denmark, the Agency for Digitisation and the Agency for Modernisation fall under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Finance and are jointly are tasked with improving the performance of the public administration. Estonia noted that while the main responsibility sits with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, “ICT is an important part of CoG agenda. There is an ICT adviser in the Strategy Unit who works in close co-operation with the ministry and with the Prime Minister.” A number of countries have already relocated their digital transformation work away from the centre, although retaining its whole-of-government focus, such as New Zealand’s Chief Government Information Officer and ICT functional lead based in the Department of Internal Affairs.

The centre’s role in digital transformation depends to a large extent on the level of maturity of the digital infrastructure, and/or how smooth the path towards digital transformation has been (few countries have not experienced challenges with ICT initiatives gone wrong with delays, cost overruns or complete failure). In general the role of the centre is focused on supporting and enabling digital transformation and providing assurance on the use of technology and data infrastructures (including data sharing across government).

Early transformation efforts have focused on digital as a way of joining up government, driving efficiencies and improving interactions between government and business and citizens. There is significant scope to build on that infrastructure and experience to think beyond digital transformation for enhancing service delivery to digital transformation for enhancing upstream policy processes. This would include the generation and better use of data analytics to strengthen the evidence base for policy design and using digital tools to improve public participation in the policy process, including as a means to capture and leverage insights and ideas from citizens. These are areas where the centre – as guardian of the overall policy system and the key player in ensuring heads of government and ministers make decisions on the basis of evidence-informed policy advice – could well focus some attention.
OPEN GOVERNMENT – PRINCIPLES, CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

OECD countries are increasingly institutionalising open government principles of transparency, accountability and participation. About half have adopted a national strategy on open government. Most have also adopted an "open by default" policy, whereby all government data is open unless there are legitimate justifications for withholding it (OECD, 2017c).

The survey confirmed the centre of government as a key player in open government initiatives. In 81% of responding countries, centres of government are actively involved in open government initiatives. However, they tend to be more closely involved up front in the design of open government initiatives (62%), and to a slightly lesser extent in communicating, co-ordinating and implementing open government activities (around half). They are less involved in monitoring or evaluating the impacts of open government strategies.

Where the centre is involved in monitoring, it is usually in the context of Open Government Partnership National Action Plans, which are led by the centre in Australia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, NZ, UK, and USA. Only 2 countries (Estonia and Israel) reported the centre providing funding for open government initiatives.

Some countries (e.g Iceland) reported monitoring official information requests including the time it takes agencies to respond to those requests. Most countries have guidelines on timeframes for responses to official information requests. Official information complaints are monitored in some countries, but often only on the basis of numbers of complaints. Complaints can also be mined for themes which can helpfully signal areas where information is opaque or where citizens and businesses feel there is a lack of information, not just where departments have been less than efficient in providing it. Open government is not just about making official information accessible; a crucial part is involving citizens in policy making.

The survey revealed that:

- Well over half of countries surveyed (57%) have an official document promoting citizen participation in policy making, applicable across government.
- In more than three-quarters (78%) of countries surveyed, the centre carries out some consultation on policies (Box 6).
- Where consultation occurs, it is targeted mainly towards the general public (70%) and organised professional groups such as trade unions and business associations (70%) and to a slightly lesser extent (65%) towards academic institutions and organised civil society organisations or NGOs.

Of the centres of government that carry out consultation, around two-thirds (65%) provide feedback on the input provided by stakeholders. In the UK for example, “the government must publish any response on the same page on gov.uk as the original consultation, and ensure it is clear when the government has responded to the consultation. This must explain the responses that have been received from consultees and how these have informed the policy. The government’s response must state how many responses have been received.”

Consultation occurs most often at the drafting stage of policy; just under half of respondents reported consultation at this stage in the policy process. As noted earlier, in many countries consultation is mandatory for draft legislation and regulation. However, less than a third of respondents (32%) reported consultation to help define policy priorities, with even less consultation being used to inform implementation strategies or to monitor the whether the policy had been implemented or to evaluate its impact.

While most countries have institutionalised the open government principles of transparency and accountability, the participation part of the open government equation is less well developed. The extent to which countries promote data re use outside government (such as hackathons and co creation events) varies greatly. Few countries evaluate whether open government initiatives achieve the desired economic, social, public sector productivity or accountability impacts (OECD, 2017c).
Increasing public participation in policy design and delivery can improve policy quality and effectiveness. Policy that is informed by citizens and user insights and needs is less likely to come unstuck at the implementation stage or fail to meet the needs of the people or groups it was designed for. This is an area where the centre would be well placed to help to develop deliberate approaches to public participation (from consultation to digital engagement to participatory decision making) including when and for what types of policy processes it is most appropriate, how to manage the risks and benefits, and how to build capability across the policy community. Opening up the policy process can improve policy, help to mitigate operational and ultimately political risk, and help to build legitimacy and trust in government.

Interestingly, in contrast to the 2013 survey report, trust in government did not feature in the 2017 survey responses. Moreover, centres reported even less measurement and monitoring of trust in government; just over a quarter neither measures nor monitors trust (27% compared with 28% in the 2013). Just over a half said they monitored trust (54% down from 69% in 2013) usually by referring to existing opinion polls. Very few actively measure trust (16%, slightly up from 13% in 2013).

Box 7. Examples of public consultations led by the centre of government

The survey responses reported consultations on a wide range of topics:

- **Australia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Latvia, New Zealand**: Developing OGP National Action Plans
- **Brazil**: the regulation of access to genetic heritage, the protection of and access to associated traditional knowledge and the sharing of benefits for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity
- **Canada**: federal electoral reform.
- **Denmark**: reform to create a more coherent public sector
- **France**: the maximum number of individual wolves (*Canis lupus*) that could be destroyed in 2017-2018.
- **Germany**: drafting of the Federal Intelligence Service Act 2016
- **Hungary**: reduction of administrative burdens and administrative procedure fees
- **Ireland**: National Risk Assessment of economic / strategic / reputational risks
- **Israel**: preparing the home front for emergencies
- **Lithuania**: improving the tax and social system; the prison system; innovations in the field of mental health; extension of the school year
- **Latvia**: Drafting of Public Administration Reform Plan 2020 started with idea hackathon where representatives of NGOs, private and public sector, and academia during interactive sessions developed fresh ideas for improving efficiency of public administration. Other examples include participation in the mid-term impact assessment of the National Development Plan (opinion polls on the success of policy, conference on key challenges), drafting of Latvia's Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the SDGs Report (multi-stakeholder advisory group).
- **Luxembourg**: constitutional reform (the division of powers between the executive and the legislative branches)
- **Slovak Republic**: Legislative Rules of the Government
- **United States**: In response to an Executive Order issued by the President for a comprehensive reorganization of the Federal government, OMB led the collection of input from citizens (which received over 60,000 submissions) as well as a wide variety of stakeholder groups.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM – ROLE OF THE CENTRE

While public administration reform may not be one of the main responsibilities of the centre, three-quarters (75%) of respondents to the survey reported being involved to some degree in designing and implementing reforms. More than half (56%) also claimed a role in promoting modernisation or innovation. Moreover, as noted earlier, ten countries – Canada, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Morocco, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey and the United Kingdom – proactively described public sector reform as one their top 3 centre-led initiatives.

Some centres of government are leading public administration reform programmes, either an entire reform programme or certain key aspects (Box 8).
Digital transformation, improving regulatory and policy quality and some aspects of developing human resources capabilities featured in survey responses as aspects of public administration reform led by the centre. Initiatives and developments are described in Box 2. Examples have been chosen on the basis of their relevance to the policy function and decision making, as well as the potential interest and transferability to other jurisdictions.

**Box 8. Centres leading public administration reform**

The survey offered a snapshot of the breadth and depth of various centres’ involvement in public administration reform programmes:

- **Denmark** initiated ‘Coherence Reform; Reform of the Public Sector’ to make government ‘more coherent from a citizen viewpoint’.
- In **Finland**, while overall reform is led by the Ministry of Finance, the PMO is responsible for reform of the Government’s policy-making processes and strategic policy making.
- In **Ireland** the Head of the CoG chairs the Civil Service Management Board, which oversees implementation of the overall Civil Service Reform Plan.
- The State Chancellery in **Latvia** launched the Public Administration Reform Plan 2020, focusing on achieving a ‘results orientated and efficient public administration and human resources policy’, which includes, reducing administrative burdens (“zero bureaucracy”), increasing public e-services, revision of small institutions and consolidation of support functions into shared service centres, and regular expenditure reviews.
- **New Zealand**’s Better Public Services reform programme is jointly led by the three ‘central agencies’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, and the State Services Commission) and includes a number of publicly reported policy ‘Result Areas’ with targets, the establishment of whole-of-government ‘functional leadership’ roles in the areas of ICT, procurement, policy, and legal services, as well as a programme to build leadership capability across government.
- The **UK** Cabinet Office highlighted its widespread functional leadership model: “since the last survey, there has been significant transformational change with the bringing together of appointed Functional Leaders within the centre to improve technical skills across Government. These Functions include, for example, Commercial, Digital, Project Delivery and HR. A ‘Function’ delivers expertise and services to departments and the Civil Service as a whole, and sets quality standards. Most Functions include a central component and a devolved component within individual departments and arm’s-length bodies. This emerging ‘Functional Model’ to drive up capability has been given an increasing priority in the Department’s business since 2013.”

**Source:** *Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government, OECD, 2015*

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**IMPROVING REGULATORY QUALITY**

While some processes to ensure regulatory quality and consistency are in place in all OECD countries, the OECD Council Recommendation on Regulatory Policy and Governance adopted in 2012 is far from being implemented in OECD countries. It sets out the measures that Governments should take to deliver regulations that meet public policy objectives, including how they are designed, evaluated, enforced and supported by appropriate institutions (OECD, 2012). By now, virtually all OECD countries have introduced formal requirements and a methodology for conducting regulatory impact assessments (RIA). A number of countries, such as Canada, have gone beyond just assessing the costs of regulation to assess a wide range of social and other impacts. Overall, economic impacts, such as on competition and on small businesses, on the environment and on the public sector as well as the budget, remain the most frequently assessed types of impacts. Despite an increase, the analysis of social impacts, e.g. on income inequality and poverty, remains less developed across countries. Likewise, the assessment of impacts on foreign jurisdictions remains comparatively low. However, only 36% of OECD countries have a requirement to systematically conduct public consultations on RIAs (OECD, 2018).
At a time of general mistrust of governments, it is imperative that consultation with stakeholders provides a meaningful avenue for those affected to be able to help best shape policy and regulations so as to maximise overall well-being. Almost all OECD countries have entrenched stakeholder engagement in their rule-making process by establishing and expanding formal requirements to consult on new laws and regulations. Nevertheless, consultation could be better integrated into regulatory decision making. In particular, regulators could better demonstrate how consultations have affected the final development of laws. Only a minority of OECD countries provide stakeholders with feedback as to how their input was used in the rule-making process by publishing a response to consultation comments online (OECD, 2018). As has been found previously, receiving an explanation is a key element for stakeholders to feel included and fairly treated in their interaction with government (Lind and Arndt, 2016).

Ex-post evaluation of impact is a work in progress: only about one-third of OECD countries systematically assess whether laws and regulations achieve their policy goals. Evaluation of the impact of regulation and broader policy initiatives against intended outcomes is a gap common to many countries. Yet outdated or ineffective regulation puts citizens at risk, imposes unnecessary burdens on business and citizens and can slow down growth (OECD, 2018).

The gaps in regulatory policy may stem from limited quality control and oversight. Regulatory oversight is a critical link in the regulatory governance framework, one that helps bridge the gap between formal requirements and implementation. There are signs that some OECD countries have established regulatory oversight capacities and functions. However, in many countries, responsibility for regulatory oversight is split among several institutions, making effective co-ordination crucial. Quality control of regulatory management tools occurs late in the rule-making cycle, and mainly focuses on the compliance with formal requirements (OECD, 2018).

As noted earlier, less than one-third of respondents (29%) said that they held primary responsibility for regulatory quality; more than half (57%) said they shared this role with other bodies, mainly finance or justice ministries. As noted earlier, the regulatory role of the centre is typically linked to cabinet and legislative processes to verify that processes have been followed correctly, rather than assessing the quality of the RIA analysis itself. As Canada explained for its Privy Council Office (PCO):

“PCO assesses Memoranda to Cabinet and legislative proposals with regard to instrument selection, regulatory implications, and consistency with the Cabinet Directive on Regulation and with the Cabinet Directive on Law-making. PCO is also responsible for informing and involving the Treasury Board Secretariat’s Regulatory Affairs Sector when policy proposals may have a regulatory aspect. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat does assess the quality of RIAs for subordinate regulations. It provides a review and challenge function to ensure quality RIA, consultation, and regulatory co-operation.”

For more information on centre of government bodies in OECD countries with a role in regulatory oversight and RIA, see the 2018 OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook (OECD, 2018).

Regulation is a policy implementation tool so is the end point of a policy formulation process. As governments seek to streamline regulation and cut red tape, they are searching for alternative tools to achieve policy outcomes. Some governments are shifting their sights upstream to improve the policy formulation process itself. They are seeking to enhance the choice of policy instruments, and to improve the quality and scope of evidence and analysis that underpin policy design, as well as the skills of policy practitioners responsible for it.
Box 9. Leading reform of the policy system: UK and NZ

In 2012, the UK Head of Policy Profession (HoPP) launched 12 Actions to Professionalise Policy Making, endorsed and signed by a range of Permanent Secretaries and departmental HoPPs. The Actions focus on improving skills, expertise and talent management of policy professionals, and improving policy advice itself, through better use of evidence and effective implementation (to ensure policy is actually delivered). The Policy Profession Support Unit based in the Cabinet Office has since delivered a Policy Profession Development Framework and Standards (which sets out 18 policy skills areas with 3 levels of expertise) and a learning and development strategy with a ‘core curriculum’ for policy. It facilitates broad networks of policy professionals across the Civil Service. Other parts of the Cabinet Office are involved in improving the policy system including a Future Policy Network, which includes the Policy Lab and Open Innovation Team. There are also links to the Behavioural Insights Unit (incubated in the Cabinet Office) and the network of ‘What Works centres’ to build and share policy-related evidence. The overall 12 Actions programme is set to be reviewed and refreshed later in 2018. (UK Government, 2018; UK Government, 2013)

The New Zealand Policy Project was initiated in early 2014 and established the Chief Executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as Head of the Policy Profession. He is supported by a small Policy Project team in DPMC and is responsible for improving policy quality and capability across government. In August 2016 the NZ Prime Minister launched the Policy Project’s policy improvement frameworks described as a ‘policy improvement infrastructure’: the Policy Capability Framework is a diagnostic tool focused on achieving high-performing policy organisations; the Policy Skills Framework sets out skills required of policy practitioners with diagnostic tools for assessing the skills base of individuals and teams; and the Policy Quality Framework sets out the characteristics and enablers of quality policy advice with a range of ex-ante and ex-post tools for ensuring quality advice to ministers. An on-line policy tool box offers advice and resources on methods (such as design-thinking, behavioural insights and use of data) and a project management or ‘start right’ tool for policy. The frameworks were all co-produced by a broad section of the New Zealand policy community including the Tier 2 Policy Leaders (deputy secretaries with policy responsibilities from across the public service). The Policy Project team facilitates networks across the policy community to share good practice.

Both the UK and the NZ programmes are funded jointly by line departments - via a fixed levy in the UK and through voluntary club funding in NZ – to emphasise the collective responsibility for improving the policy system. The two programmes benefit from cross-fertilisation of ideas, described as ‘stealing with pride’ (Washington, 2016). The 2 HoPPs have semi-regular contact.

The United Kingdom and New Zealand have both taken a systematic approach to improving policy quality and capability; both have appointed a Head of the Policy Profession (HoPP) to lead the process, with dedicated teams based in the centre of government (Davison, 2015; Washington, 2016; Washington and Mintrom, 2018).

Ensuring evidence-informed policy making is a common challenge for governments (www.oecd.org/gov/evidence-informed-policy-making.htm). Countries will benefit from exchanging strategies for generating and using evidence as well as sharing the evidence itself. They can also develop as well as share insights and strategies for using and embedding new methods such as design-thinking and behavioural insights into the policy-making process, including as alternatives to regulation. The centre is well placed to look at how they can enhance policy quality and capability across government and whether the requisite capability and skills exist to deal with increasingly complex policy challenges. In Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, for instance, capacity for supporting the use of these new tools such as behavioural insights has been integrated into specialized units within the centre of government (OECD, 2017a).
HR INITIATIVES – LEADERSHIP, TALENT MANAGEMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Responsibilities for human resources strategies for the public administration as a whole typically do not sit with the centre of government, unless the head of the centre is also head of the civil service. Only 3 respondents said they had responsibility for overall human resources strategies: Austria, Latvia and New Zealand. In over half of countries (57%) another body is responsible for whole-of-government human resources, typically ministries of finance or public administration, or a separate body such as the Office of Personnel Management in the US. Only 4 countries - Austria, Latvia, New Zealand and the Slovak Republic - cited human resources across government as a policy priority.

Developments mentioned in survey responses mostly related to initiatives for talent management and leadership development in the context of better succession planning for the civil service. Latvia’s human resource policy sets key performance indicators for senior managers, establishes leadership competences, and remodellers related development programmes. New Zealand’s Leadership Success Profile sets out the skills, experience and behaviours required to advance to senior positions, and provides a common approach to identifying and developing leadership talent for potential future chief executive roles. In the United States, the White House Leadership Development Program seeks to build a cadre of government leaders with strong inter-agency experience and exposure to a broad cross-section of government. Fellows work on challenging, cross-agency initiatives to develop a whole-of-government perspective as well as skills in stakeholder collaboration and engagement, working across boundaries without formal authority, and working outside traditional agency structures. France noted targets for gender equity. In OECD countries, while women represent well over half (58%) of the total public sector workforce, they still hold less than a third (32%) of senior government positions (OECD, 2017).

As described above, some countries, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, have taken a whole-of-government approach to developing policy skills and capability. They have both codified the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required of policy professionals, underpinned by the notion that policy roles require more than just academic qualifications and being smart. These capabilities include traditional analytical and advisory skills and knowledge of government systems, but policy professionals will increasingly need skills in engagement, collaboration, strategic and futures thinking, and using methods like behavioural insights and user-centred design to support more participatory decision-making processes. These frameworks and OECD work on skills for a high-performing public service, which includes analysis on policy skills, might provide a starting point for other jurisdictions wanting to build their policy capabilities (OECD, 2017c).

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PERFORMANCE

Once strategic or policy priorities are agreed, ensuring they are implemented effectively and have the intended impact is one of the key roles of the centre. To do so it must work closely with line departments. As noted above, this might involve transmitting guidelines to departments to frame the government’s strategic vision and agenda, ensuring that government priorities are reflected in key policy documents (fiscal plans, growth strategies, etc.), verifying that departmental work plans are aligned with government priorities, and monitoring the implementation and impacts of policy, or results.

Table 6. Role of the CoG in implementing strategic priorities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The centre...</th>
<th>Mentioned by % of 37 respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitors implementation</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that ministries’ proposals are linked to government priorities</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoG collects reports on implementation</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoG co-ordinates implementation</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can reallocate resources</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

While the survey asked separate questions about implementation and monitoring in relation to whole-of-government strategy and policy generally, the results suggest that, in practice, the oversight role of the centre tends not to be separated into different types of policy: strategy, cross-cutting, substantive, or operational. Mechanisms for ensuring implementation and related monitoring regimes tend to be similar and cover the breadth of policy and related programmes. Moreover, they tend to be more at the monitoring end of the scale. In general, line ministries are expected to track the implementation of their own policies, while the centre provides oversight of collective performance, including to be able to support the head of government to report on overall progress on achieving the government’s programme. There was scant mention of any evaluation of the impact of policies or overall changes in social and economic outcomes. Monitoring seems focused on ‘doing things right’ (following procedures) rather than ‘doing the right things’. Very few centres reported having the ability to reallocate resources between ministries to meet strategic goals. In Latvia, for example, social and economic outcomes are monitored at least a biannual basis. However, determining the correlation between particular policy measures and policy results remains a major challenge. Closing this gap would require substantial resources, but given that it is arguably the most important part of the policy cycle, it may be worth exploring how to improve it.

**ASSURING FISCAL ALIGNMENT**

Ministries of finance take the lead in tracking expenditure. However, the centre is relatively more involved in assuring funding for overall national strategies and assessing whether the overall programme respects the boundaries of the country’s fiscal framework; just over half (54%) of respondents claimed overall responsibility for this. Digging deeper into that role showed working partnerships with ministries of finance, although 40% of respondents also identified a fiscal unit at the centre providing independent advice to the head of government (Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Centre’s role in ensuring national strategies are financed and respect the country’s fiscal framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CoG works with MoF to link national strategies with the national budget</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a fiscal unit within the CoG that provides fiscal advice</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoG mandates line ministries to ensure that strategic goals are adequately funded</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government, OECD (2017).*

**MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION**

Centres of government agreed that they had responsibility for monitoring the implementation of government policy. However, just under half of respondents (49%) claimed full responsibility, less than in 2013 when 55% claimed full responsibility for implementation assurance.

The vast majority of countries (84%, albeit slightly less than the 91% reported in 2013) have some form of implementation monitoring regime. Some are more formal than others, including regular reports to the head of government and/or cabinet that track progress against agreed work programmes and may include targets and deadlines.
Most monitoring regimes are based on requirements for departments to report on progress against their own individual departmental plans – including financial, human resources and administrative performance – which the centre then collates. Around half of respondents noted the use of reporting against implementation workplans (51%) while just over a third (37%) reported the use of associated performance targets. Both of these results are down on 2013 survey results, where 61% indicated reporting against implementation plans and 45% cited the use of performance targets as mechanisms for ensuring policy and programme implementation. Again, given differences in group of countries responding to the first and second surveys, it is difficult to point to a trend. This will be something to watch in future surveys.

Table 7. Mechanisms used by the centre to ensure government policies are implemented by line ministries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The centre....</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitors implementation</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplan for the implementation of the Government Programme with deadlines</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance targets</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY UNITS

Some respondents referred to special units for monitoring and tracking progress, and in some cases for actively supporting line departments in their implementation efforts. The UK Implementation Unit (replacing the former Delivery Unit) carries out ‘deep dives’ involving ‘in-depth research into progress on implementation of priority areas’. In addition, implementation taskforces ensure delivery of key cross-government priorities, and are chaired by the prime minister or another senior minister and attended by ministers and senior officials from relevant departments. Canada set up a Results and Delivery Unit in the PCO in 2016. It serves the Cabinet Committee on Agenda and Results and “focuses on outcomes for Canadians and ensuring that government decisions are based in evidence, anchored in meaningful data and indicators”. It also has a public results reporting role. In the USA, a unit in OMB, in the office of the Deputy Director for Management, is responsible for “monitoring progress on approximately 15 of the top cross agency priority goals that are set one year after each new administration’s term begins as well as approximately 100 priority goals set by our line ministries (e.g., 4-5 per ministry) each quarter. Progress is also reported on a common web site, www.performance.gov, each quarter.”

MEASURING COLLECTIVE PERFORMANCE

There is some early evidence of a more joined-up and more collaborative approach to targets and performance. Performance management regimes driven by New Public Management theories emphasised vertical management and strict legal and financial accountabilities based on individual managers, programmes, and organisations (Peters, 2018). These ignored collective or cross-cutting goals, which characterise the majority of today’s strategic priorities and medium-term to long-term policy challenges. Achieving cross-cutting goals requires new implementation strategies and monitoring and accountability regimes that recognise collaboration, collective responsibility and relative contributions to collective goals.

Research evaluating the critical success factors behind the approach to New Zealand’s 10 Better Public Service Result Areas suggested that the shift to collective responsibility (including awarding bonuses or ‘at risk’ performance payments based on collective not individual or departmental effort), rather than enabling free-loaders, seems to have encouraged group effort and led to better overall performance. Central agencies were actively involved in the supporting and enabling responsible cross-agency groups, including advising on measurement targets and performance indicators (Scott and Boyd, 2017).
A number of other survey respondents also mentioned working more actively with departments including providing support and advisory services to help them achieve strategic or policy goals. For example, in Slovenia a Government Project Office has been set up at the centre with direct accountability to the prime minister to "provide, from methodological and systemic aspects, professional assistance to ministries as promoters of government strategic projects in their preparation and implementation".

A number of countries specifically mentioned public reporting or publishing of results against cross-agency or strategic policy priorities as a mechanism for incentivising collective performance and accountability (NZ, UK, USA, Israel).

Whatever the approach to assuring implementation of strategy or policy, it is important that monitoring regimes are not too onerous, on either departments providing information, or the centre trying to process it. It is also important to clarify the related monitoring role of finance ministries to ensure there are synergies and not duplication in performance information reporting and tracking. Administrative transaction costs of monitoring regimes can be high and may not have the desired result of improved performance, especially when it comes to strategic or cross-cutting policy goals. It is important to measure impact and not just activity.

The centre would be well placed to analyse the critical success factors for ensuring policy decisions – whether whole-of-government strategy, policy priorities or individual initiatives – are implemented and have the desired effect, and to adjust monitoring and reporting regimes accordingly. Monitoring and measuring progress towards the UN SDGs might provide useful demonstration cases where alternative approaches can be evaluated and used to draw out 'lessons learned'.

More collaborative strategies for achieving policy goals suggest a role for the centre that is less about being a watchdog or auditor and more about providing active facilitation, support and implementation advice to ministries or groups of ministries, especially when trying to make progress on cross-cutting policy challenges. Defining common goals or shared outcomes and measuring progress towards them is likely to have more impact in the long term than simply measuring whether departments did what they said they would.

**EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Communicating government messages to the public and across the administration has become relatively more important to the centres of government since the last survey; it was one of the top 4 tasks of the centre in this survey (Figure 1).

Continuous news cycles and the proliferation of social media channels has increased the quantity but not necessarily the quality of information available to citizens. People expect instant information and answers, including from government. This puts pressure on politicians to give an immediate response sometimes with little time for them (or their advisors) to reflect. Being responsive without simply being reactive is a constant challenge. In times of crisis, governments need to be able to get clear, informed messages out quickly. New communication tools offer opportunities for government to improve their direct engagement with citizens; to better inform them, seek insights from them and to even ‘nudge’ them as part of the policy design and implementation process.

Effective government communications involves a range of capabilities. Managing relations with the press – an important conduit to the general public – requires both reactive responses to media queries, and proactive press conferences, statements and building relationships with trusted journalists. Often there is a separation between politics and policy, with the centre of government more involved in the latter (politicians maintain their own political media crew and spokespeople) but the lines in practice are often quite blurred.

Communications as direct information sharing, both with the public and internally across government, requires different capabilities and skills sets. A communications strategy is a normal part of any policy project plan. Policy advisors themselves are increasingly expected to be able to build an narrative around any policy process, to tell the policy story in an accessible way – simple without being simplistic. Moreover, as individual ministers and ministries have their own communications capabilities, co-ordination is required to mitigate mixed messages and ensure that government messages to the public are joined-up. The centre of government is increasingly called on to ensure a strategic and systemic approach to communications.
More than three-quarters (78%) of centres of government responding to the survey said they had some responsibility for strategic whole-of-government communications. Some aspects of that role are more important than others (Figure 12). Communicating during crises and preparing for a crisis is a key role for the centre; people need to know how to prepare for and what to do in the event of an emergency. Communicating government decisions and actions and publicising results is also an important task for the centre. However, in terms of communicating messages to the public, this role is shared with individual ministries and their ministers who respondents confirmed had their own communications capabilities. The centre’s role in this context is one of co-ordination and coherence; whether the centre gets directly involved is likely to be handled on a case-by-case basis depending on the magnitude of the issue, whether it cuts across a range of portfolios and how interested, involved, or exposed the head of government is.

Just over half of respondents (51%) said that they co-ordinated relations with the media. Mechanisms for this appeared fairly traditional, with almost two-thirds listing central press conferences and media released as the usual communication channels. Only 2 countries (Slovak Republic and Luxembourg) reported having a dedicated press institution at the centre while there were some mentions of central co-ordination of government press secretaries (Sweden).

Less than half of respondents said they oversaw public communications policy, and less than a third play a gatekeeper role in approving government advertising. A little over one-third manage space for citizen engagement (discussed later in sections on open government and communications).

Social media has also become more important for governments. Some 70% of centres of government have a social media strategy, significantly more than the 42% in 2013 who reported having a strategy for managing the risk and opportunities associated with social media. It is tool for getting messages to the public directly and rapidly, often with the added bonus of making government and politicians appear more accessible and ‘real’. A number of respondents referred to the concept of ‘fake news’ and how new channels allowed government to ‘present undistorted messages to the public’ and quickly ‘set the record straight’. They allow government to bypass traditional media (some perceived as biased) to go straight to citizens or use influential social networks to get the message out. One respondent referred to social media as a means “to set the agenda by initiating new topics and themes” with the public. Social media can enhance government dialogue and engagement with citizens, and as a result be tapped as a means to monitor public opinion.

Social media is not without risks. Its reach and immediacy mean that an error, misstep or unconsidered comment can go viral very quickly. Some 70% of countries responding to the survey have guidelines for using social media, compared to just over half (55%) in 2013.
Engaged employees can be the best ambassadors for any organisation. The same is true for civil servants wanting to express pride in their work and the achievements of their organisations. However, it can be difficult to make a clear distinction between professional and personal comments on Internet-based media.

The risks are arguably greater for staff at the centre who, the public might assume, have inside information and could mistakenly be seen to speak on behalf of ministers or the head of government. Accordingly, social media guidelines appear to be stricter for centre of government officials than other government employees; more than three-quarters (76%) reported social media guidelines for centre employees, although this is only marginally higher than the the extent of guidelines applying to centre staff for interactions with the media generally (73%).

Twitter accounts, blogs and other platforms must be updated regularly or followers will lose interest. Maintaining official blogs, Twitter and other social media accounts therefore requires resources and specialist expertise, including to balance the desire to look modern and connected while maintaining the dignity and gravitas of official information.

Overall the tone of comments from respondents suggested that engagement with social media was seen as a positive opportunity rather than a risk to be managed. Moreover, it is seen as complementary to other channels, not a substitute; social media information bites are a means to generate interest and attract people to government websites where official information exists in more detail.

MANAGING GOVERNMENT TRANSITIONS

The vast majority of centres of government have responsibility for managing the transition between outgoing and incoming governments; 86% of respondents said they played this role. This is where the political administrative interface is most stark. Where the centre is mainly staffed by career civil servants (this varies greatly across countries as discussed later) the centre and staff have to manage the exit of one administration and smooth the path for the new one, while keeping the wider machinery of government focused and functioning. Where the centre is mainly politically appointed there is arguably a broader range of relationships to be forged and roles and functions to be determined.

Only half of countries responding to the survey have written guidelines for government transitions. In Westminster systems the main laws, rules and conventions are typically set out in the Cabinet Manual. In other countries transition management is codified in government decree, statute or some legal framework (e.g. Hungary, Mexico, Israel, USA). With or without written guidelines, transition management can be politically charged following in the wake of a political contest and involving shifting loyalties.

The most common actions reported by the centre to facilitate transition include:

- provision of administrative information on physical and logistical aspects of the centre of government office (human resources, budgets, inventories, archiving practices) and often the overall machinery of government
- a status report on existing policies and programme or ‘work in progress’ – described in one country as ‘goals met’ ‘in progress’ and ‘goals not met’
- co-ordination by the centre of line department progress reports or briefings to the incoming portfolio ministers and the government overall, audits and other material to be shared with the incoming government
- ensuring that written records relating to previous decisions are transmitted to the incoming government, and
- providing policy advice to the incoming government, taking into account the activities of the outgoing government and the new government’s election manifesto.
Some centres of government provide broad support to the incoming government. As Canada explained, “PCO leads and coordinates a whole-of-government exercise to provide the incoming Prime Minister with comprehensive information and advice regarding the launch of a new government mandate, the formation of a new Cabinet, the opening of a new Parliament, the machinery of government, and strategic policy issues, among other decisions and issues.”

Support to a new government requires up-front planning. Briefings to incoming governments take time to put together; the process usually starts well before the election takes place and often involves discreet high-level pre-election contacts for senior officials. The centre often guides line ministries on decisions as to whether those briefings are politically neutral – free and frank advice, regardless of which party or parties wins the election – or tailored advice that is politically savvy and takes into account differences in the election manifestos of leading parties. Briefings to incoming governments can be relatively bland and administrative, or an opportunity for civil servants to offer proactive advice.

Civil servants in some countries offer new ministers and their political advisers training on what being a minister involves, accountability issues, the legislative process, administrative procedures and the like. This would usually be the responsibility of very senior civil servants, for example the cabinet secretary in Westminster systems. Often new ministers have scant information or experience in government and no detailed knowledge of administrative processes. A few countries noted guidelines provided to new ministers (Estonia) or a Handbook for Ministers (Finland). Other competent organisations, such as associations of public administration or respected government-focused think tanks are sometimes called on to support training for new ministers. In the UK for example, the Institute for Government provides some training for ministers and shadow ministers and publishes a series called “Ministers Reflect”, where previous ministers reflect on what they see as the critical factors for successful ministers (Hughes, 2018).

Where centres are working to improve the quality of policy advice to ministers, including by codifying what good quality advice looks like (the supply side), some complementary demand-side framework for ministers – how to commission good advice, how to interrogate information and advice tendered – would be useful, especially for inexperienced ministers. Whatever the current conventions or usual arrangements, it would seem useful to have more or less formal guidelines for government transitions to ensure a smooth and transparent transition from one administration to the next and to avoid having to reinvent the wheel after each election.
CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR REFORM

Throughout the report there are suggestions for where the centre could focus some attention to enhance policy processes or overall governance. They may form the basis for future OECD discussions of senior officials from centres of government, and will be areas to test in any future OECD survey of the roles and functions of centres of government. They include:

- As part of its role in whole-of-government strategy, strategic planning and policy performance assurance, how the centre could enhance the institutional infrastructure for building future considerations into policy (policy frameworks, methodological tools and institutional capabilities) and how it might assume a longer-term stewardship role while at the same time respecting the strategic direction of elected governments.
- How to develop policy capability at the centre, including to manage growing pressure to lead cross-cutting or cross-ministerial initiatives, and how to facilitate and encourage improvements in policy capability (skills, methods, evidence base) generally across the whole of government.
- How to develop a more collaborative style of leadership, one that is less about command and control and monitoring performance, and more about providing active facilitation, support and advice to line ministries in order to collectively meet complex, cross-cutting and often intransigent policy challenges. This would include mechanisms to bring ministries together in the pursuit of common goals or outcomes, and performance management methods for incentivising, acknowledging and rewarding contributions to collective goals.
- How to build the participatory part of open government to improve policy quality and effectiveness. This would involve developing deliberate approaches to public participation, understanding and building capability in methodologies for incorporating user-insights into policy, and shared understanding of when and for what types of policy public participation is most appropriate.
REFERENCES
