Federal Chancellery
Republic of Austria

OECD

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TRUST IN GOVERNMENTS
THROUGH INNOVATIVE RESPONSES
TO CRISES AND CHALLENGES

INNOVATION
REQUIRED

Session Notes

41st Annual Meeting
of the Network of Senior Officials
from Centres of Government

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## Session 1: Innovating in CoG to address the trust and democracy challenge

1.   In many OECD countries, centres of government (CoGs) have met with increasing difficulties in policy design and implementation due to a number of factors, in particular, decreasing levels of citizens' trust in public institutions. The 2020 Statement by the Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government noted that "*The success of the [COVID-19] recovery will depend on the trust people have in the capacity of governments to deliver and to safeguard long-term interests*" and pointed to contributing to the work of the OECD Public Governance Committee (PGC) to improve trust in government.

2.   In response to this statement and further demands of OECD member countries, a process to deliver the inaugural OECD Trust Survey in 22 OECD countries began in the first half of 2021 and the final report "Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions" (OECD, 2022[1]) was launched in July 2022 building on over a decade of work on this issue, including in-depth country studies of Korea, Finland and Norway ((OECD/KDI, 2018[2]), (OECD, 2021[3]), (OECD, 2022[4])). The survey aims to help governments improve public confidence in government **reliability**, **responsiveness**, **integrity**, **fairness** and **openness** based on comparable data and evidence.

3.   Acknowledging that the strength of democracy depends on continuous efforts to reinforce the link between citizens and their public institutions, the PGC also launched the **Reinforcing Democracy Initiative in 2021 (**Box 2**)** with the dual goal of deepening the democratic model and protecting it from existing and emerging threats. The OECD has placed trust in public institutions at the backbone of this initiative. The survey results provide a shared agenda for OECD countries to strengthen trust, reinforce democracy, and recommit to reducing inequalities.

4.   This session will provide an opportunity for senior officials from the centres of government to reflect on the findings of this work and discuss how to best design trust-promoting policies and share experiences on what has worked in terms of strengthening trust in public institutions.

Main findings from the OECD Trust Survey

- As countries fight to emerge from the largest health, economic and social crisis in decades, trust levels decreased in 2021 but remained slightly higher than in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis (OECD, 2021[2]). **The OECD Trust Survey finds public confidence is evenly split between people who say they trust their national government and those who do not** (Figure 1)**.** On average, about four in ten people say they trust their national government (41.4%) and another four in ten (41.1%) say they do not. Data show that it takes a long time to rebuild trust when it is diminished; it took about a decade for trust to recover from the 2008 crisis.

Figure 1. Just over four in ten people trust their national government

Share of respondents who indicate different levels of trust in their national government (on a 0-10 scale), 2021
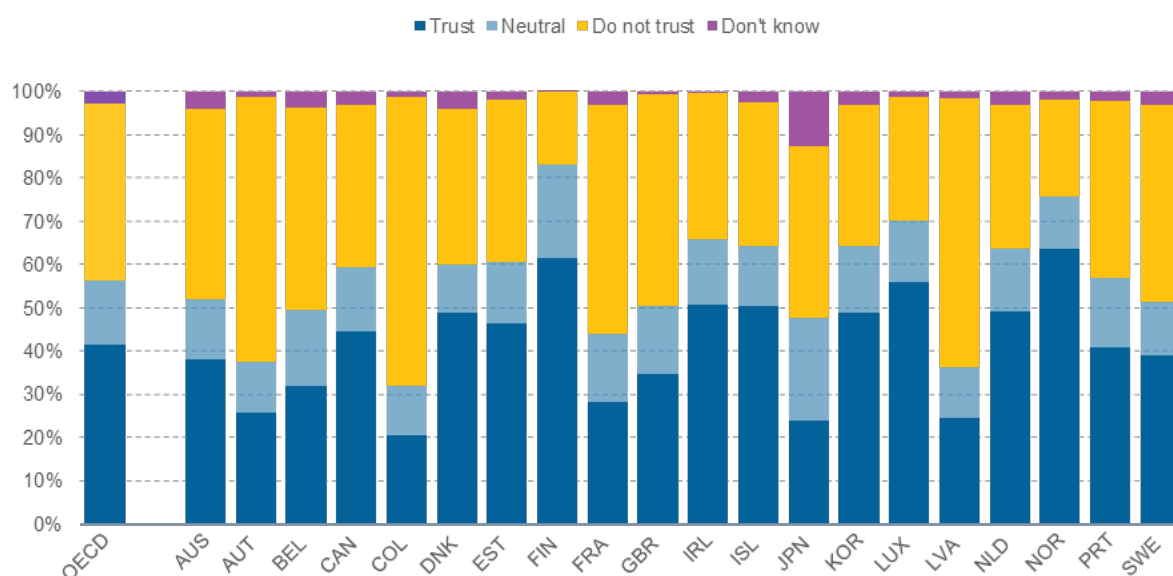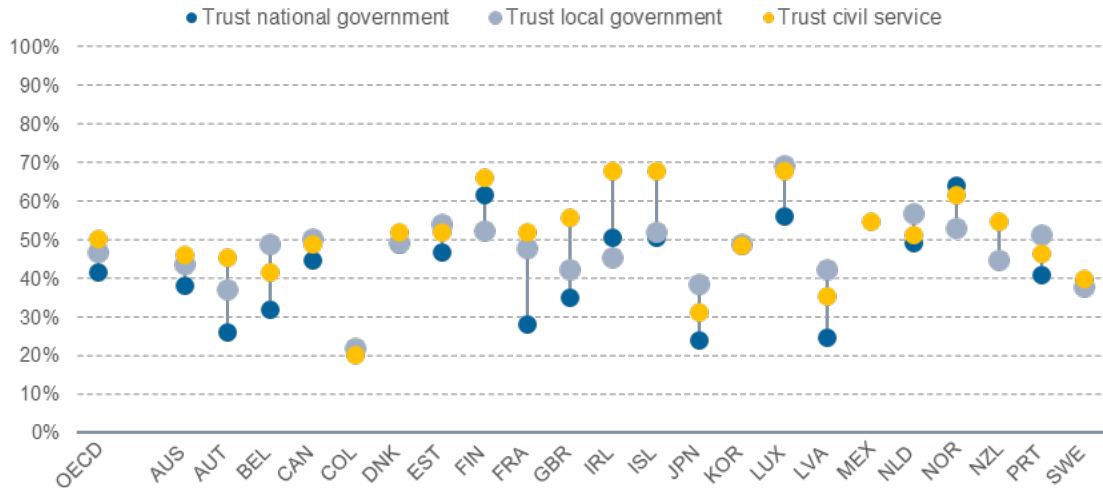

Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?" Mexico and New Zealand are excluded from the figure as the question "trust in national government" is not asked. For more detailed information, please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust. For access to data see https://stat.link/jlkt6v.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

- **Trust varies across institutions - civil servants and local governments are perceived as more trustworthy.** The police (67.1%), courts (56.9%), civil service (50.2%) and local government (46.9%) garner higher levels of public trust than national government (41.4%) and national legislatures -congresses and parliaments- (39.4%) and political parties (24.5%) (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

- **Most governments perform satisfactorily in public perceptions of government reliability, service provision, and data openness.** 65.1% of respondents, on average, say they can find information about administrative processes easily, and a slight majority (51.1%) trust government to use their personal data safely.

- **Citizens are reasonably confident they can rely on governments to deliver public services**: Most people, in most countries, report feeling satisfied with their national healthcare (61.7% satisfied, on average) and education systems (57.6% satisfied). Nearly half (49.4%) of respondents say their government is prepared to respond to a future pandemic and only a third (32.6%) of respondents say their government would *not* be prepared to a future pandemic– a noteworthy outcome considering the ongoing human and economic costs of COVID-19.

Figure 2. People generally trust their civil service and local government more than their national government

Share of respondents who indicate trust in various government institutions (responses 6-10 on a 10-point scale), 2021

Note: Figure presents the share of response values 6-10 in three separate questions: "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the [national government / local government / civil service]?" For New Zealand, data for trust in national government are not available; for Mexico data on trust in national and local government are not available. For more detailed information please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust. For access to data see https://stat.link/akn5wb.
Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

Figure 3. Trust in national legislatures, political parties, and the media is low throughout the OECD

Share of respondents who indicate trust in various government institutions (responses 6-10 on a 10-point scale), 2021
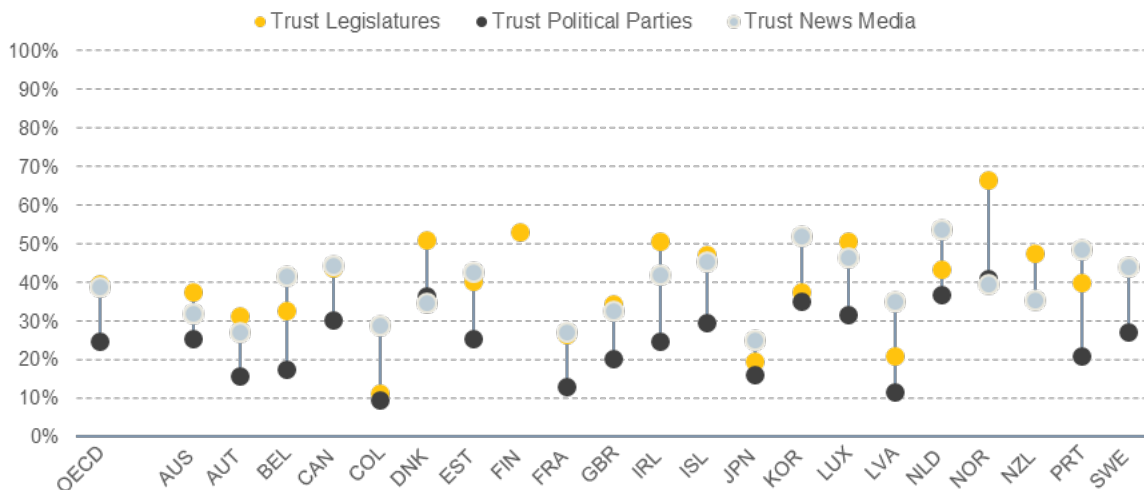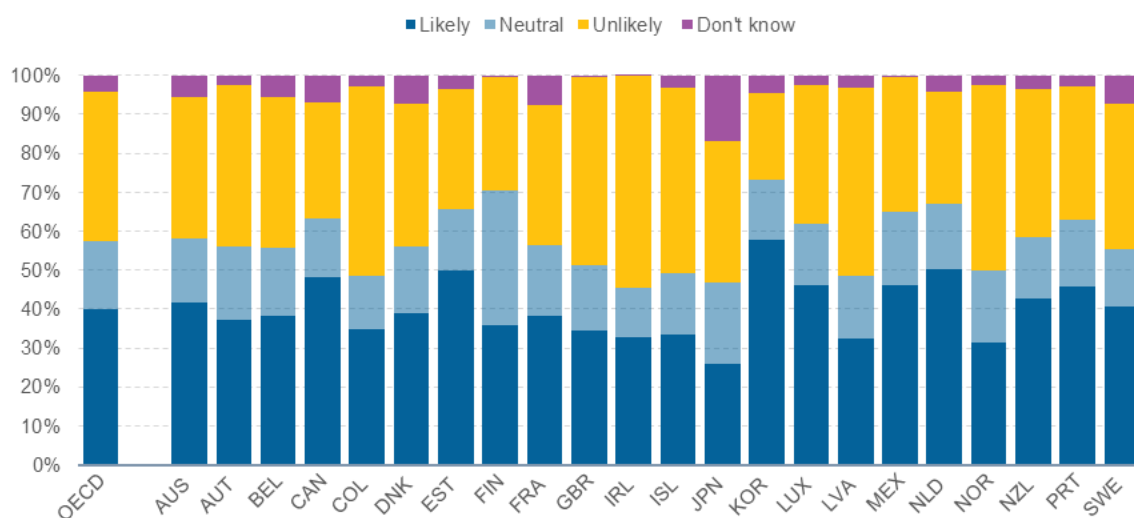

Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to two separate questions: "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust [Parliament or Congress (varied by country) / political parties]?" The "trust" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "Do not trust" is the aggregation of responses from 1-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. Mexico is excluded from the figure as data are not available; for Finland and New Zealand, data on trust in political parties are not available. For more detailed information please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust. For access to data see https://stat.link/gwa9bk.
Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

- **Yet there is a strong sense that countries are falling short of meeting citizens' expectations of government responsiveness, and few people see opportunities to participate in policymaking.** Results from multiple questions in the OECD Trust Survey consistently illustrate that governments are seen as unresponsive to people's demands both in policymaking and in more obviously democratic processes. Fewer than one-third of respondents, cross-nationally, feel the political system in their country allows them to have a say in government decision-making, and a similar share of respondents believe that the government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation. Many also do not view governments as responsive to people's needs and public feedback on policies or programmes. Only about four in ten respondents, on average across countries, say that their government would improve a poorly performing service, implement an innovative idea, or change a national policy in response to public demands (Figure 4).

Figure 4. A minority of respondents say a public service would be improved if people complained

Share of respondents reporting different levels of perceived likelihood that a poorly performing public service would be improved if many people complained about it (on a 0-10 scale), 2021

Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If many people complained about a public service that is working badly, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that it would be improved?" The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 1-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. For more detailed information please find the survey method document at http://oe.cd/trust. For access to data see https://stat.link/cp72lv.
Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

- **Generational, educational, income, gender and regional gaps in trust illustrate that progress can be made in enhancing participation and representation for all.** Young people, respondents with low levels of education, and those living on low incomes report markedly lower levels of trust in government than other groups. Perceptions are important, too – trust in government is noticeably lower for people feeling a sense of financial insecurity or a lack of political voice. Perhaps related to this, trust in even apolitical public institutions is much lower among those who did not vote for the parties in power than those who did, suggesting deeply embedded polarisation.

- **Public perception of government integrity is an issue.** Slightly less than half of respondents, on average across countries, think that a high-level political official would grant a political favour in exchange for the offer of a well-paid private sector job. About one-third say a public employee

would accept money in exchange for speeding up access to a public service. This perception could lead some citizens to believe officials' decisions are biased.

- **Strengthening confidence in government's ability to address global challenges is also a priority.** Governments face new threats in the form of disinformation/misinformation, unequal opportunities for representation and participation, and intergenerational, global, and existential crises like climate change. While 50.4% think governments should be doing more to reduce climate change, only 35.5% are confident that countries will actually succeed in reducing their country's contribution to climate change – and those who think their government will succeed are more likely to trust their government (Figure 5). Ensuring that people trust governments to tackle these major issues, using modern, data-driven tools, will be a challenge for every government in the OECD – even the most responsive ones.

Figure 5. Half of respondents think their government should prioritise climate change mitigation, but only one-third have confidence in their country's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Share of respondents who say government should prioritise reducing their country contribution to climate change and share of respondents who have confidence in their country's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, 2021
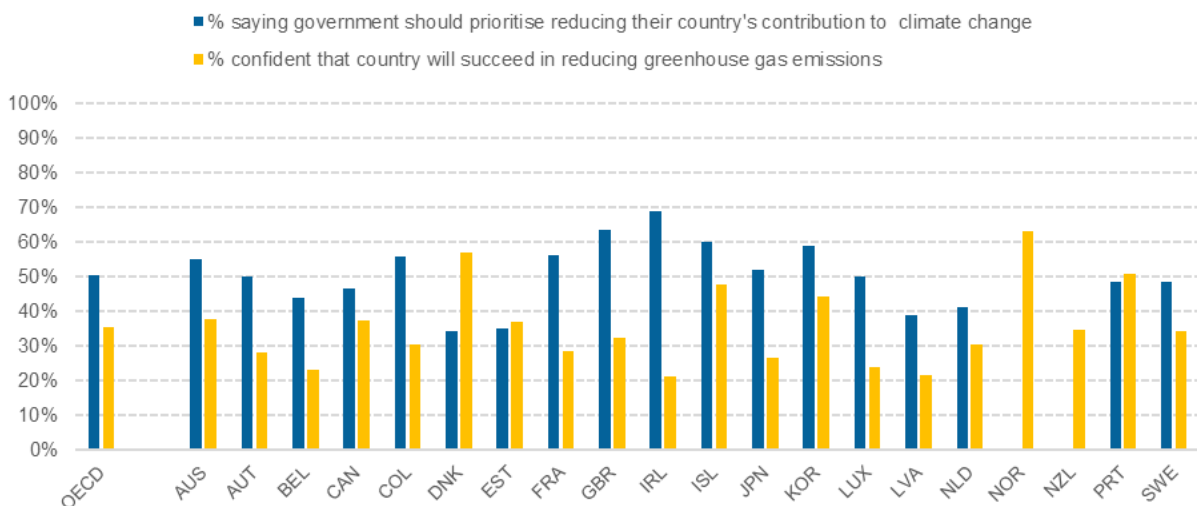
Note: Figure presents the average share of respondents to the questions "On reducing your country contribution to climate change, do you think the government should be prioritising a lot more, more, about the same, less, or a lot less?". The "more" share in the figure is the aggregation of the responses choices "a lot more" and "more". Respondents were asked "How confident are you that your country will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years?" The "confident" share is the aggregation of response choices "somewhat confident" and "very confident". For access to data see https://stat.link/j0cb7i.
Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

5.   The results of the Trust survey also indicate areas where national governments should invest to have most impact on public trust. Figure 6 shows the most robust determinants of trust at national level of government, giving insight into which actions governments should focus their attention on, in order to strengthen citizens' trust. The y axis shows how big a driver these factors are. So the blue quarter shows where the room for manoeuvre is the biggest, for a maximum increase in trust in government.

6.   For instance, while 63% of respondents on average are satisfied with administrative services, just over one in four (30.2%) find that the political system lets them have a say. In turn, strengthening people's voices in public decision-making can have a considerable positive effect on trust in government. This simple graph shows us where national governments should invest to have the most impact on public trust – in particular anything in the upper left quadrant.

Figure 6. Actions for impact on trust in national government

Percentage point change in trust in national government in response to improvements in selected variables (left Y-axis, represented by bar) and OECD unweighted average respondents' satisfaction in the noted variables (right Y-axis, represented by dot), 2021
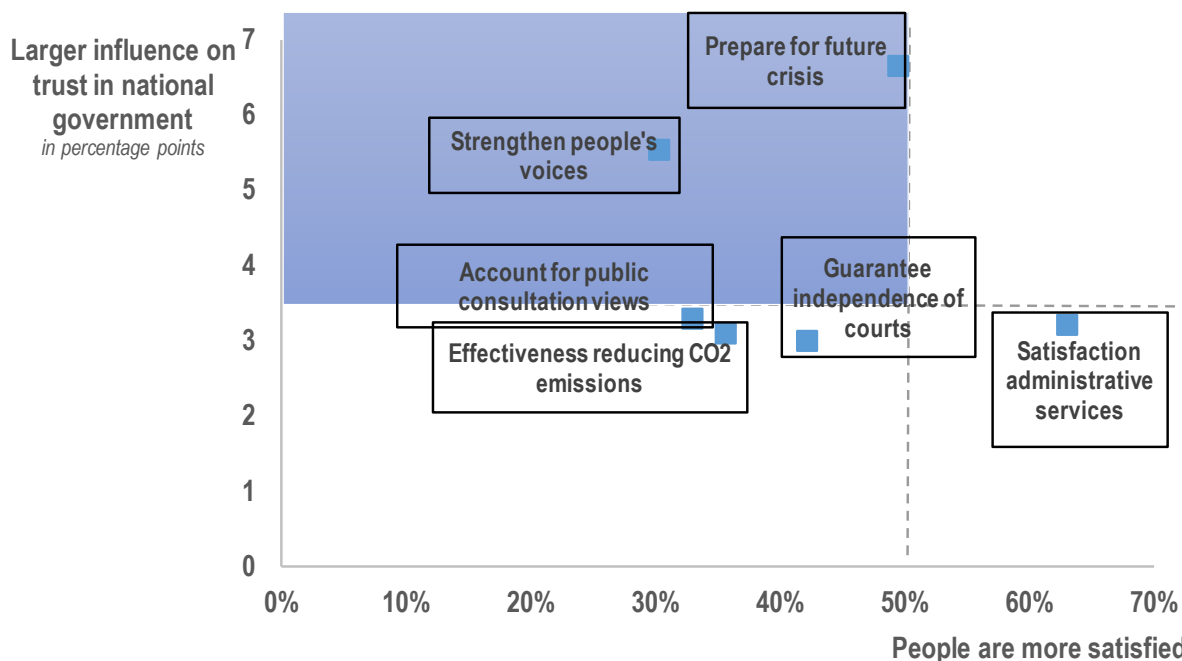
Note: The figure shows the most robust determinants of self-reported trust in national government in a logistic estimation that controls for individual characteristics, self-reported levels of interpersonal trust, and country fixed effects. The model includes 18 countries; Finland, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are not included, mainly due to missing variables. All variables depicted are statistically significant at 99%. Only questions derived from the OECD Trust Framework (Chapter 1) are depicted on the x-axis, while individual characteristics such as age, gender, education, political orientation, which also may be statistically significant, are not shown.
Source: OECD Trust Survey (http://oe.cd/trust)

Rebuilding trust in institutions: what role and practices for the centres of government?

7.   **Centres of government are uniquely placed to align the machinery of government and make trust in public institutions a strategic priority**. CoGs play an essential role in the prioritisation of high-level policy objectives and the co-ordination of the design and implementation of policy responses across government. Their role is particularly critical on multidimensional and cross-cutting issues that call for whole-of-government responses such as those linked to building trust in public institutions. CoGs can take the lead in placing trust at the core of the agenda helping governments improve the way they govern, monitor results over time, better identify and anticipate challenges, and respond to public feedback. Some OECD countries are already taking place in this direction (Box 1).

Box 1. Key examples of the roles of centres of government in promoting trust in institutions

Using the evidence from the OECD Trust Survey

- The Ministry of Interior and Security of **South Korea** includes "trust-building" as a measurable objective within its five-year innovation strategy plan. The Ministry has also undertaken a series of related actions, from engagement strategy reviews (with the public) to improvements in cross-agency coordination.

- **In Finland** a working group joins together the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Well-Being - to address recommendations in the report on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Finland (OECD, 2021[3]).
- **Norway** is currently carrying out a "trust reform" in alignment with OECD case-study recommendations (OECD, 2022[4]) to streamline service provision processes, shifting the focus toward more experimentation, and better use of central and local administrations' innovation and knowledge - to improve satisfaction with services and contribute to building trust.
- Following OECD Trust Survey results, **Portugal** plans to review its scientific advisory system. Survey results indicated that respondents were not confident of government future-crises preparedness, of which many felt evidence and experts' views should be more prominent within a variety of policy priorities, including climate change.

Public communication's potential for building trust in government

Effective public communication can play a key role in helping to rebuild confidence in public institutions, OECD data shows that half of CoGs point to strengthening trust as a top objective of their communication (OECD, 2021[6]). Developing clear public communication strategies can strengthen impact, improve co-ordination and help ensure communication supports citizen's trust. For example, the Government of **Canada**'s Policy on Communications and Federal Identity, providing context and rules for how the government should communicate with the public on policies, programs, services and initiatives, emphasises the importance of communications for public trust in the government.

Mis- and Dis-information

Mis- and dis-information can build on and aggravate the erosion of trust in institutions. CoGs can play a key leadership and coordination role to counter the spread of mis- and disinformation. Notably, in 2019 only 38% of CoG had developed guidance related to these topics (OECD, 2021[6]). Among the 15 countries that reported having a defined strategy at the CoG level to counter disinformation, the top three goals included "increasing societal resistance to disinformation," "helping civil servants understand the threat posed by disinformation," and "helping civil servants respond to disinformation." Current and proposed measures to prevent and combat mis- and dis-information can be grouped under: 1. Governance policies and initiatives that help prepare for and respond to the publication and spread of mis- and dis-information 2. Regulatory and policy measures to increase transparency and prevention 3. Policy and regulatory responses that reduce economic and structural drivers of misand dis-information [GOV/PGC(2022)8/REV1]. The **UK** government has developed a number of structures and guidelines to respond to mis- and disinformation, including the Rapid Response Unit (RRU).

Activating stakeholder engagement

CoGs play an increasingly active role in fostering new forms of citizen engagement, representation and public participation that can help bolster trust, for instance by setting standards and providing guidance on how to implement co-design practices. For example, **Ireland** has implemented Citizens' Assemblies, a deliberative democracy model reporting to Parliament on issues such as biodiversity loss (current), Gender Equality (20/21), among others.

Leading on Global Issues

CoGs have a key role to play in promoting co-ordination to address transboundary challenges and connecting the domestic and international policy agendas. International portfolios are often placed closer to the Head of Government office to enhance the co-ordination of international policy issues. In 2018, 68% of respondents of the centre of government survey shared responsibility on international policy issues, against 48% in 2014 (OECD, 2018[7]). For example in **Korea**, with the Director General
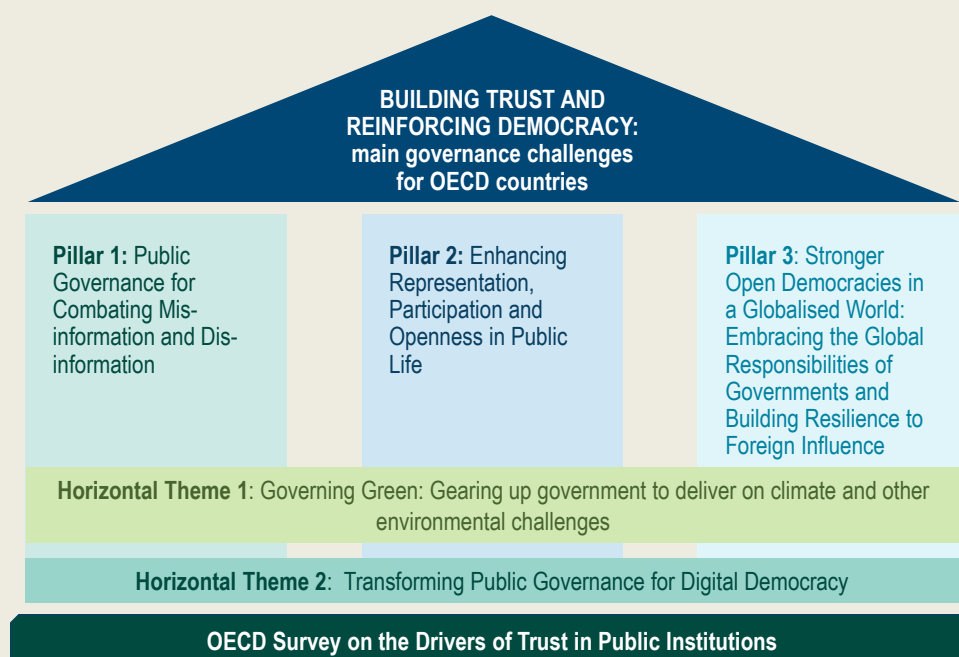
for Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy situated in the Prime Minister's Office. Similarly, **Sweden** and **Estonia** have integrated offices at the centre of government to manage EU Affairs.

Sources: OECD Report on *Public Communication: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/22f8031c-en; Background note on Public Governance for Combating Mis-information and Disinformation for the Meeting of the Public Governance Committee at Ministerial level on "Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy" [GOV/PGC(2022)8/REV1]; Ireland's Citizens' Assembly https://citizensassembly.ie/en/; Initial Scoping Background Note on Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence [GOV/PGC(2022)17/REV1].

Box 2. The future of the OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative and work on trust

The 2022 meeting of the Public Governance Committee at Ministerial level represents an important opportunity to take this agenda forward (17-18 November, Luxembourg). Building on the OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative, the meeting will discuss the three common governance challenges of advanced and mature democracies: i) Combating Mis- and Dis-Information; ii) Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life; and iii) Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence. In addition, it will cover the two horizontal themes, looking across all three pillars, on the major challenges of climate and democracy, and digitalisation and democracy. Underpinned by the findings of the OECD Trust Survey, these challenges constitute the main components of the Initiative (Figure 7), tying in with the 2021 and 2022 OECD Ministerial Council Statements [C/MIN(2021)25/FINAL; C/MIN(2022)16/FINAL] and the vision for the OECD for the next decade [C/MIN(2021)16/FINAL].

Figure 7. OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative

BUILDING TRUST AND REINFORCING DEMOCRACY: main governance challenges for OECD countries

Pillar 1: Public Governance for Combating Mis-information and Dis-information

Pillar 2: Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life

Pillar 3: Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World: Embracing the Global Responsibilities of Governments and Building Resilience to Foreign Influence

Horizontal Theme 1: Governing Green: Gearing up government to deliver on climate and other environmental challenges

Horizontal Theme 2: Transforming Public Governance for Digital Democracy

OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions

Note: Author's own elaboration

Key questions for discussion

- What are the main barriers to trust – and opportunities to foster it – in your country?
- What policy areas for trust seem most important for centres of government?
- What experience have you had of building trust in institutions in your country? What has worked well and what has not?
- What messages would officials of the Network wish to give to OECD members on these issues?

Session 2: CoG driving public sector innovation in the face of multiple simultaneous crises

When things fall apart, the centre can hold

8. Today, governments must respond to constantly emerging challenges and crises as disruptions due to widespread events and processes connected to climate change, migration, pandemics, geopolitical security, and others quickly develop and demand rapid public policy actions.

9. **Centres of government have demonstrated a critical role in addressing crises.** In response to the COVID-19, CoGs bolstered their co-ordination and strategic planning roles, the use of evidence to inform decision-making, and communicating decisions to the public (OECD, 2020[6]). In 2020, 73% of OECD countries reported an increase in the number of cross-ministerial co-ordination instances to which the centre of government had to provide support; 55% stated new or increased responsibilities for the centre of government; 68% indicated that the centre of government's mechanisms to monitor and evaluate future crises increased since the start of the crisis. More generally, the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the ability of governments to move and act quickly in response to challenges, which require immediate action (OECD, 2021[5]).

10. **All crises are different - but CoGs have and continue to play a critical role in innovating in the face of the crisis, serving as leaders of innovation initiatives and conveners across government.** Over a decade ago, the Global Financial Crisis placed governments and financial institutions at the core of the response. With COVID-19 fading from the headlines as governments shift their focus to other pressing events -such as the cost of living and energy crisis, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and frequent extreme weather events- centres of government must take stock both of their progress, as well as their weaknesses and challenges ahead. They will need to carefully consider how to convert the difficult lessons learned over the last years into long-term solutions and reforms. This will be critical to help countries prepare for future crises and to avoid the sometimes inadequate responses seen during the pandemic. More than any other part of the public sector, CoGs are the best placed to truly build governments capacity to be agile, responsive and resilient into the future.

11. This session will provide an opportunity for senior officials to discuss what key lessons have been learned as governments now evaluate their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and share examples of how centres of government have reinvigorated the public innovation agenda (both in different ways of doing policymaking and public administration, as well as in new solutions). In this context, the group could also discuss how centres of governments should adapt to ensure that they are able to act quickly and effectively using new tools and technologies in the face of future shocks.

Leveraging on lessons learned

12.   At the previous meeting of the Network of Senior Officials from Centre of Governments held in Luxembourg in December 2021, governments were still very much in the response phase to the COVID-19 crisis. As we now move into the *recovery* phase, there is an opportunity for governments to take immediate action to leverage lessons learned and to build on the new tools and approaches emerging from the pandemic to face the complex challenges ahead, notably to fight the climate crisis.

13.   Recent OECD work surfacing lessons from government evaluations of COVID-19 responses reiterates that governments took swift and massive action to mitigate the economic and financial effects of the pandemic (OECD, 2022[7]). Centres of government responded to the crisis with extraordinary flexibility and innovation.

14.   However, the report also flags several deficiencies that governments need to address. Pandemic preparedness was inadequate. Back in 2018, only half of OECD countries had a specific government body whose purpose was to identify novel, unforeseen or complex crises. By 2020, very few countries still had permanently established scientific advisory mechanisms, which have proved vital in the response to this pandemic. Evidence shows that those governments that had locked in lessons from previous crises and put in place appropriate emergency protocols have often been more resilient in their response to COVID-19. Central governments also faced challenges in working together with regional and local actors, whereas those actors were often at the forefront of the crisis response. Governments must now leverage these lessons learned to both recover and improve resilience for the future (Box 3).

15.   Policy evaluation will be critical to help to understand what worked (or did not), why, and for whom. They also provide citizens and stakeholders with information on whether public funds achieved their intended objectives and are producing the expected results. These are crucial to preserve the public's trust in governments, as well as -by extension- the effectiveness of public action. Indeed, in a context where 'states of emergency' curtailed the scope or time for democratic deliberation, resulting in what some authors refer to as the loss of "input legitimacy", policy evaluations can offer "results-based legitimacy". OECD 'Evaluations of COVID-19 responses', such as the recent Evaluation of Luxembourg's COVID-19 responses (OECD, 2022[10]), can help governments as they endeavour to increase levels of trust and build back better.

Box 3. First lessons from government evaluations of COVID-19

OECD work providing insight from 67 evaluations from 18 OECD countries, draws 14 key lessons:

- Investment in risk anticipation capacities and in critical sectors was insufficient in most countries for adequate pandemic preparedness.
- Interagency co-operation requires commitment from leadership and fit-for-purpose governance structures with clear mandates.
- To be effective, crisis management needs to rely on predefined internal communication and reporting channels, which can prove challenging between levels of government.
- Scientific advisory bodies provided valuable evidence to inform decision-making during this complex crises, but could rely on more varied sources of expertise.
- More targeted, informed and coherent messaging is needed to foster trust.
- Governments could involve civil society, the private sector and local actors more to increase transparency in decision-making and facilitate the implementation of crisis management responses.

- Tax measures have played an important role in supporting the liquidity of households and businesses, but did not always target the right beneficiaries.
- Balance-sheet measures likely kept businesses afloat on the short term, but they come with risks linked to their longer-term budgetary costs.
- Measures aimed at households were generally successful at supplementing existing social safety nets.
- Countries rapidly deployed measures aimed at supporting businesses but had to adapt them frequently, impacting their relevance and effectiveness.
- Learning from the global financial crisis, countries massively deployed measures aimed at supporting self-employed workers.
- To minimise the social impacts of the crisis, countries had to implement policies targeted at the most disadvantaged groups in society.
- Countries encountered important implementation challenges in mitigating the health impacts of the crisis.
- Countries were quick to close their border and implement travel restrictions, but encountered issues with coherence of, and compliance with, lockdown measures.

Source: OECD, First lessons from government evaluations of COVID-19 responses: A synthesis, (OECD, 2022[7])

Public sector innovation in the COVID-19 response phase

16.   Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the OECD has also conducted work to collect and understand innovative practices and help spread successful approaches and ideas. The COVID-19 Innovative Response Tracker allowed to identify innovative solutions piloted by organisations responding to the crisis. The Tracker currently contains more than 700 innovations from 63 countries – over 300 of which were carried out by national or federal governments. In the initial stretch of the pandemic—the *response* phase—governments unleashed a torrent of innovation at a pace and scale not seen in generations. Faced with no choice but to act, they compressed years of progress into weeks and months. Box 4 summarises some key themes from this phase, along with country examples, many of which were steered or supported by the centre of government.

Box 4. Key themes and examples of public sector innovation in the COVID response phase

Rapid acceleration of digital innovation and transformation.

Governments compressed years' worth of advancements into weeks and months, including adopting virtual government operations, crafting digitally enabled public communications, and enabling digital transformation through dedicated COVID-19 response teams, guidance, resources, and partnerships. Governments can now consider how to best use digitalisation as part of more seamless, accessible and tailored services.

For example, the Centres of Government in **Austria** and **Spain** created digital units to deal with the detection and correction of misinformation about COVID-19, and **Portugal** created a central government Office for the Digital Response to COVID-19.

Participatory approaches for new solutions and insights

Stewarding opportunities for new ideas, solutions and insights to come from citizens, residents and businesses.

For example, **Estonia**'s Hack the Crisis, which was duplicated around the world, positioned the public sector as a convener to bring together and raise up outside voices (e.g., businesses and members of the public) that may have ideas for new solutions. Such efforts resulted in digital solutions for managing personal protective equipment in hospitals, new methods for manufacturing face shields, and AI-enabled chatbots that can help provide reliable answers to questions from the public.

Social solidarity and collective action

The activation and mobilisation of individuals who want to help their communities.

For example, the **United Kingdom**'s National Health Service (NHS) Volunteer Responders programme to match volunteers with at-risk members of the public to help them with various needs (e.g., medication pickup, medical appointment transportation).

Infection control and tracking

Taking actions that are critical to virus tracking and contact tracing in order to "flatten the curve" and limit the spread of the virus.

For example, many governments around the word develop contact-tracing applications, often through novel partnerships with tech companies, while needing to consider and balance challenges around privacy and sharing of data.

Collective learning and sense-making

Making sense of the crisis and its effects with different actors as a way to learn for current and potentially future crises.

For example, **Finland**'s "Lockdown Dialogues" offered citizens and communities the chance to undertake constructive dialogue during the lockdown and help to build an understanding of what it is like to live in a world under these unusual circumstances that could hopefully inform future policy decisions.

Structural responses towards recovery and longer-term shifts

Devising exit strategies and ways to get economies back on track while re-envisioning what the new normal should be, including response measures, and public sector reform agendas focused on ensuring more agility and adaptability when required.

For example, **France**'s EUR 7 billion bailout of Air-France-KLM has a "rail alternative" condition stating that Air France must eliminate flights that conflict with train alternatives, particularly for journeys under two hours.

For example, **Australia** implemented a wage subsidy program to cover businesses who were significantly impacted by COVID-19.

Source: Synthesis of themes identified in https://oe.cd/c19-innovation and https://oe.cd/c19-catalyst.

Public sector innovation in the recovery phase

17.   The frenzy of public sector innovations seen earlier in the pandemic has slowed down significantly. This may in part simply reflect a return to some normalcy, but it also indicates an easing back to the *status quo*. Despite deceleration, a few general themes have emerged regarding how governments are rethinking their governing, policymaking and public administration in the recovery phase (Box 5) (OECD-OPSI, 2021[8]).

18.   These themes are very preliminary and are subject to change as governments are still getting their footing in moving towards a post-pandemic world. However, they provide a starting point for longer-term issues that could be incorporated into the core of policymaking and public administration. The world has changed, and centres of government can now consider systemically and meaningfully how it wants to transform in the future**.**

Box 5. Early themes and examples of public sector innovation in the recovery phase

Co-creating evidence for recovery and to anticipate risks

As touched on in Box 4, many response efforts took the form of ground-up initiatives and participatory approaches. In the recovery phase, the most viable solutions are being scaled up and incorporated into the public policy co-creation pipeline or as insights for the improvement of public services. Such approaches could continue to prove useful for governments to gain real-time, valuable insights on the needs and perspectives of society as a way of informing policy-decisions and building trust.

For example, **Germany**'s Chancellery's #WeVsVirus hackathon resulted in 1,494 project ideas in the response phase, some of which received seed funding for piloting. This effort has evolved into Update Germany, a nation-wide future laboratory where citizens co-create solutions for the most pressing challenges with partners from all federal levels and with actors from business, science and civil society.

Upskilling the public sector workforce and leveraging agile approaches

The pandemic shed light on the knowledge gaps of public servants to respond adequately and in a timely manner to crises. It also revealed the need to move away from top-down task forces to mobile teams and horizontal networks. Governments should continue to focus on the types of skills it needs to build for a future that will no doubt contain disruptions and uncertainty, while considering how it can mobilise resources from different domains quickly when required.

For example, **Scotland**'s Improvement Hub for Healthcare (iHub) seeks to prepare Scotland's healthcare system on crisis response and anticipation, as well as on how to look more systemically to grasp learnings to support long term improvements. With a refocus in 2021 amid the pandemic, it developed a future-oriented framework on how systems are likely to act and evolve during crisis and the implications this would have for their health care staff.

Collective intelligence and self-reflection to address health complexity

Collective patient-patient and patient-health provider models are beginning to emerge. They explore common aspects that are under-addressed by traditional health systems (e.g., long COVID), with the unique experiences of patients as central inputs. Such models can be built as part of a suite of levers that governments take for more holistic, systems change.

For example, the **United States** Health+ programme uses human-centred design to co-create patient-centred solutions with people—not for people—impacted by healthcare challenges. The goal is to improve U.S. government programmes to better support and serve those affected. This Health+ model

works best when applied to complex, multi-systemic, multi-disciplinary challenges like long COVID in collaboration with patients, caregivers, practitioners, and diverse partner communities.

Source: https://updatedeutschland.org, https://ihub.scot, https://www.hhs.gov/ash/osm/innovationx/human-centered-design/longcovid.

Key questions for discussion

- What experience have you had in COG steering government innovation in the face of crisis? What has worked well and what has not?
- How can governments fully leverage on policy evaluation to lock in lessons from past crisis responses?
- How can centres of government steward the public sector to identify, pursue and implement more innovative solutions to complex challenges?
- How can governments integrate more systemic, forward-looking and iterative approaches into their public administration systems, given that long-ingrained issues such as climate change will demand this?
- How can COGs ensure that digital means deliver and reach all? What institutions for the digital transition need to be established in COG?

Session 3: Paths for transformation: the future of Centres of Government

19.   With the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic still lingering, governments currently face a challenging scenario of elevated uncertainty, slowing growth, strong inflationary pressures and the ongoing impact of the war in Ukraine on energy markets (OECD, 2022[9]). While CoGs move very rapidly from one crisis to another, it is vital that those at the helm take stock and plan for reforms that will see governments become both more effective and more agile. This is particularly important in the context of known global challenges such as climate change, as discussed in depth at the 40th Meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government.

20.   This session will provide an opportunity for senior officials to share what plans they have to make this happen. This could include, how CoGs plan to organise themselves and manage the profiles and skills of their workforce, any special units they are setting up to coordinate on specific global challenges, how they are planning for strengthened citizen engagement and public communications or how they are developing more future orientated thinking within their institutions. The below Boxes pull together a range of examples in these areas to provoke ideas and further discussions.

Box 6. COG Institutional setting innovations

Australia: Developing Common Operating Pictures

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia's Department of the Cabinet and Prime Minister developed metrics-based performance information tools to support high-level decision-makers in the handling of the complexities of public policies. Although initially health-crisis focused, their use has extended to include other key priorities. One of these tools is the "common operating picture", an infographic that supports strategic decision-making – integrating cross-departmental performance

metrics and presenting them in traffic-light formats. Two years on, ministers regularly utilise these tools on several key priorities, and within Cabinet and Council of Ministers meetings.

Chile: State Modernisation Advisory Council

The State Modernisation Advisory Council provides advice to the President of Chile on the analysis of policies, plans, programs related to state modernisation reforms. As an advisory body, the Council's long-term vision provides continuity to the modernisation process. It also functions as a coordinating body, aligning with other government advisory entities that have similar missions. Hosted by the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency, the Council is comprised of twelve counsellors and a chair, each with recognised public and/or private management experience. Members are appointed by the President, and represent academia, government, the private sector, and civil society organisations. The Council also appoints an Executive Secretary, who serves as a permanent contact with the State Modernisation Secretariat.

Germany: Transformation Alliance

Since 2021, the "Transformation Alliance" led by the German Chancellery, brings together several ministries and representatives from businesses and trade unions, research entities and civil society. The alliance focuses on major transformational issues such as climate neutrality and resource efficiency, digitalisation, state resilience and how to shape a society that is open to innovation. Initiated as part of the government's 2021 coalition agreement, the alliance will hold regular high-level talks with ministers.

Source: (OECD, forthcoming[13])

Box 7. Anticipatory governance at the centre of government

CoGs can play a key role enabling whole-of-government initiatives to identify emerging challenges and build the necessary capabilities across the system to deal with them effectively. The OECD's **anticipatory innovation governance framework** shows how governments can integrate anticipatory capacities into public governance and policy steering and identifies 12 mechanisms that contribute to more proactive governance (Figure 8).

Recent OECD work looking at **Finland**'s governance system and focusing on factors that may promote or discourage an anticipatory innovation approach, points to core CoG functions that are relevant to all governments wanting to build anticipatory innovation governance at the centre:

- Developing **knowledge management and institutional memory** to encourage a long-term perspective learning from one government term to another in the context of long-term reforms that aim to build resilience for future challenges.
- Establishing clear procedures for the **diagnosis of emerging issues** and the design of flexible, reflexive and impactful organisational solutions.
- Building capacity for **collective sense-making** of future signals using the convening power of the CoG.
- Promoting a culture in which strategies are challenged in order to encourage the identification of **alternative approaches to emerging issues.**

For the centre of government the analysis showed the need for two new functions:

- Systematic **government transition processes** to ensure the continuity of long-term reforms and avoid the loss of know-how and insights in the change-of-government process. This should be supported by a knowledge repository around long-term reforms and anticipatory issues, encouraging learning from one government to another, but also between public officials, politicians, and stakeholders. Using technology can help make data across government interoperable.

- A **new anticipatory government planning** function in government to plan responses to emerging issues, with a clear procedure to diagnose emerging issues and design flexible, reflexive and impactful anticipatory organisational solutions with clear ownership. CoGs should also support a standing body across government for senior leadership to discuss emerging, anticipatory issues with the ability and resources to create demand for anticipation.

Figure 8. Anticipatory innovation governance mechanisms

Source: (OECD, 2022[14]), *Anticipatory innovation governance: towards a new way of governing in Finland - a Summary Report*, OECD, Paris; and https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/unlocking-the-future-in-finland/

Box 8. Steering the green transition from the centre of government

Countries have placed key climate-governance attributions and functions at the centre of government, and established a number of institutional frameworks - including regulatory frameworks - planning systems, coordination mechanisms, policy development skills and capacities, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms to deliver on this (OECD, 2022[10]).

When it comes to co-ordination, some countries have created a lead unit situated at the centre of government as the primary body tasked with co-ordination. For instance, in **Ireland** a climate action unit was created within the Taoiseach's [Prime Minister's] Department. These units have a number of tools

at their disposal to ensure both greater coherence across policy development and the mainstreaming of environmental issues in sectoral policies:

- They can lead the development and monitoring of **overarching national strategies** and plans to meeting climate and environment commitments.

- They can **facilitate dialogue with key stakeholders**, for instance by organising cross-government policy co-ordination groups or committees at the ministerial, state secretary or director level. In France, the *Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement* within the PMO supports the organisation and preparation of the Conseil de Défense Écologique (Ecological Defence Council) chaired by the President and bringing together relevant ministries and public bodies involved in the green transition.[1]

- They can provide a clear framework for the *ex ante* **evaluation of climate-related bills**. In France, the *Haut Conseil pour le Climat* recommended a series of steps prior to a bill's presentation to parliament including public consultation, impact assessment linked to the low-carbon national strategy (*stratégie nationale bas-carbone*), an opinion on the quality of this assessment, issued by an independent authority.

- They can **host a knowledge-management infrastructure** to level the playing field across sectors and provide a common source of evidence. In Germany, for example, the Advisory Council on Global Change provides guidance to decision makers (despite existing uncertainties), assessing risks, identifying precautionary options and raising awareness to push for action.

Source: Background note on "Governing Green: Gearing up government to deliver on climate and other environmental challenges" [GOV/PGC/RPC/SBO(2021)1/REV2], and "Strengthening decision-making processes to deliver on climate commitments: review of current government practices" (OECD, forthcoming).

Key questions for discussion

- What trends are/will further shape the function of the Centres of Government?
- What are the priority reforms to the CoG that you are currently focused on?
- What skills and capabilities are needed at the Centre of Government to ensure strategic decision making and policy coherence and to deliver the government of the future?
- How can this group and the work of the OECD best support you in these endeavours?

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