

Degree of influence of the centres of government

Centres of government (CoGs) are currently taking a more active role to align multi-department workplans to government actions. This more active role for the centre of government across the policy cycle suggests the need for new co-ordination and monitoring tools. Rather than organising policy discussions, the CoG has to be able to set agendas and work with other government institutions, including with respect to human and financial resources. However, this horizontal co-ordination process managed by the CoG could be even broader in terms of scope and participation. While policy co-ordination within the administration is a key focus for the CoG, the evolution of modern government means that the CoG is becoming more involved with actors outside the executive branch. Effective working at the international level is an increasingly important aspect of good governance at the domestic level and comes increasingly into the sphere of the CoG.

The degree of influence of CoGs over line ministries is heterogeneous across OECD countries. The OECD survey on the Organisation and Functions of the CoG conducted in 2013 reports that only 29.6% of the OECD countries show a high degree of influence over ministries to promote co-ordination, namely, Canada, Denmark, France, Japan, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Turkey. However, the survey indicates that most CoG officials consider that they exert a moderate degree of influence (59.3%). This is partly a result of the general institutional problem of co-ordination in any large organisation. And in cases where influence is low, such as in Austria and Portugal, it is clearly linked to political traditions that give significant autonomy to ministers and their departments.

Additionally, in order to understand how the CoG can best fulfil its key tasks it is important to analyse the figure of the head of the CoG. Indeed, its role is demanding and complex since the head of the CoG must be close to and trusted by the head of government and his political staff, while also close to and trusted by senior civil servants and, more generally, respected by the civil service. Electoral changes generally bring new directions, priorities and perspectives that can require an organisational response at the CoG.

Across OECD countries there is a clear split with respect to how the position of head of the CoG is filled. Based on the OECD survey, in 53.57% of the countries surveyed, the head of the CoG was a political appointee and was replaced when the government changed (except insofar as the post-holder was allowed to complete a fixed-term appoint-

ment before being replaced, as in Austria, for example). In the remaining countries (46.43%), the head of the centre of government was a civil servant, normally holding the most senior civil servant rank.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the 2013 OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government (33 countries, of which 28 OECD countries and 5 non-members, and the European Commission, responded). Respondents were senior officials who provide direct support and advice to heads of government and the council of ministers, or cabinet and provided information for the period 2008-12.

Centre of government (CoG) refers to the administrative structure that serves the Executive (president or prime minister, and the cabinet collectively). The centre of government has a great variety of names across countries, such as General Secretariat, Cabinet Office, Chancellery, Office/Ministry of the Presidency, Council of Ministers Office, etc. In many countries the CoG is made up of more than one unit, fulfilling different functions. A unit that is shared by virtually all CoGs is the unit that serves specifically the head of the government, but not the CoG collectively. This too has a variety of names, such as the Cabinet of the Prime Minister or the Private Office.

Further reading

OECD (2015), "Centre Stage: Driving Better Policies from the Centre of Government", GOV/PGC/MPM(2014)3, OECD, Paris, [http://www2.oecd.org/oeclinfo/info.aspx?app=OLISciteEN&Ref=GOV/PGC/MPM\(2014\)3](http://www2.oecd.org/oeclinfo/info.aspx?app=OLISciteEN&Ref=GOV/PGC/MPM(2014)3).

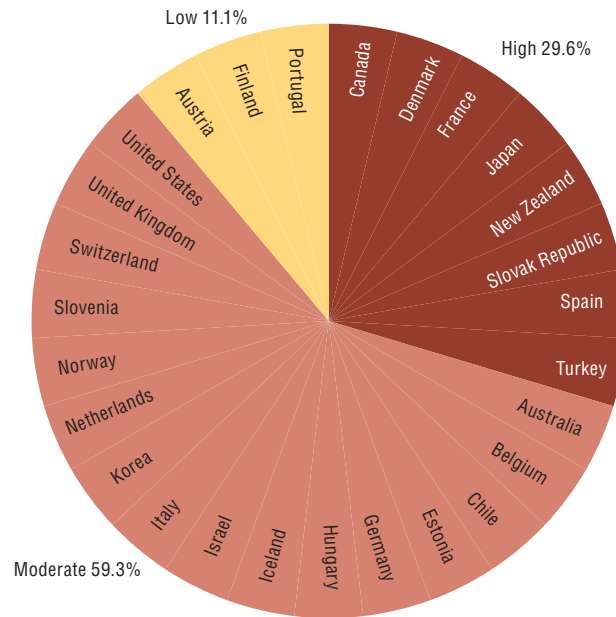
Figure notes

Data for Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico and Poland are not available. Only data from OECD countries were included in the figures.

4.6: Data for Sweden are not available.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

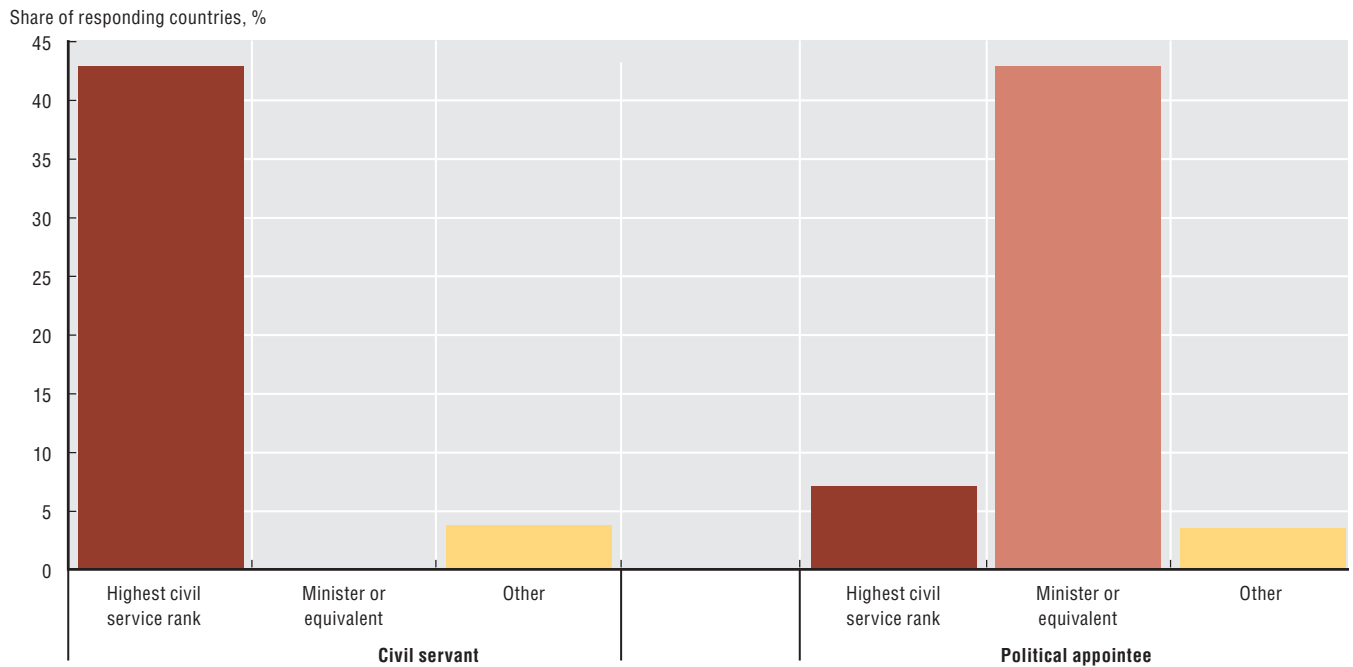
4.6. Level of influence of CoG over line ministries to encourage them to co-ordinate with each other, 2013



Source: 2013 OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248713>

4.7. Status of the head of the centre of government, 2013



Source: 2013 OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248726>



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