

2 Centre-of-government-led Co-ordination Capacity in the Czech Republic

This chapter examines how key functions of decision-making, strategic planning and policy coordination are carried out in the Czech Republic and assesses the capacities and instruments at the Centre of Government (CoG) to exert these functions efficiently, looking in particular at the role of the Office of the Government, the main CoG institution in the country. The chapter will discuss first strategic planning processes and instruments in the country, then the existing frameworks and mechanisms on policy coordination and decision-making. It also focuses on the role of government Councils and on strategy and mechanisms to support public administration reforms in the country. Finally, the chapter provides recommendations to the government to further strengthen the role of the centre.

Introduction

The Czech Republic has a well-established set of institutions, rules and documents for decision-making, policy co-ordination and strategy

As a support structure serving the highest levels of the executive branch, the centre of government (CoG) provides critical functions for the whole-of-government that underpin a robust governance framework, notably by supporting and steering the definition and implementation of the government's vision and strategy as well as government co-ordination and decision-making processes (OECD, 2020^[1]). The CoG can be defined as the highest level support structure of the executive branch of government that generally supports the activities of the head of government. Its mandate is to “ensure the coherence and prudence of government decisions and promote strategic and coherent evidence-based policies” (OECD, 2018^[2]). In its broader functional definition, the CoG refers not only to bodies reporting directly to the head of government but also other bodies or agencies such as the Ministry of Finance (MoF), that performs cross-cutting government functions within the national administration (OECD, 2018^[2]).

In OECD countries, the CoG plays a central role in the performance of key co-ordination functions, primarily in Cabinet meeting preparations, policy co-ordination and strategic management. The CoG helps translate an electoral mandate obtained by the government into a government programme and ensure it is implemented in a co-ordinated and efficient manner. It helps set a vision for the country and to connect longer term strategic objectives with national and sectoral strategies and policies (OECD, 2018^[2]). The CoG's role in cross-governmental policy co-ordination is instrumental in developing consistent whole-of-government strategies and policies, aligning ministries and public agencies around key priorities, and addressing administrative silos. This role has increasingly involved over time, leading cross-cutting policy priorities or initiatives as current systemic policy issues – such as the green transition, the pandemic, migration or energy – which require governments to develop policy responses spanning across different sectors, institutions and time frames that correspond to international commitments and national priorities. Strategic planning is another central function of CoGs in OECD countries. Indeed, its central position, cross-cutting approach and proximity to the chief executive make the CoG well-positioned to lead strategic planning activities for the whole of government.

In the Czech Republic, the Office of the Government (OG) is the “central body of the state administration”. It constitutes the main entity of the CoG, performing functions such as preparing the government session and co-ordination across ministries. Its role is succinctly and very broadly described in the 1969 Competency Law (Government of the Czech Republic, 1969^[3]). The description does not cover specific activities related to strategic planning or co-ordination. The law remains unspecific in its definition of the OG's role and competencies, primarily covering its administrative functions.¹ The OG's activities, in practice, have been more encompassing and have evolved depending on the government in power between playing a prominent co-ordination and strategic role in line with full-fledged, traditional CoGs in OECD countries and providing more administrative support functions, which has been the case in the recent past. According to responses to an OECD questionnaire, the OG has traditionally comprised two main organisational sections: 1) the “economic/technical section”, in charge of preparing government sessions, particularly the organisational aspects, including the agenda and supporting material (technical support, protocol, catering, etc.); and 2) the “legislative section”, in charge of the expert and legislative content of government sessions (preparing draft legislation, etc.). The OG has also traditionally been tasked with supporting the government's public advisory and working bodies, though their structure and connection to line ministries have evolved.

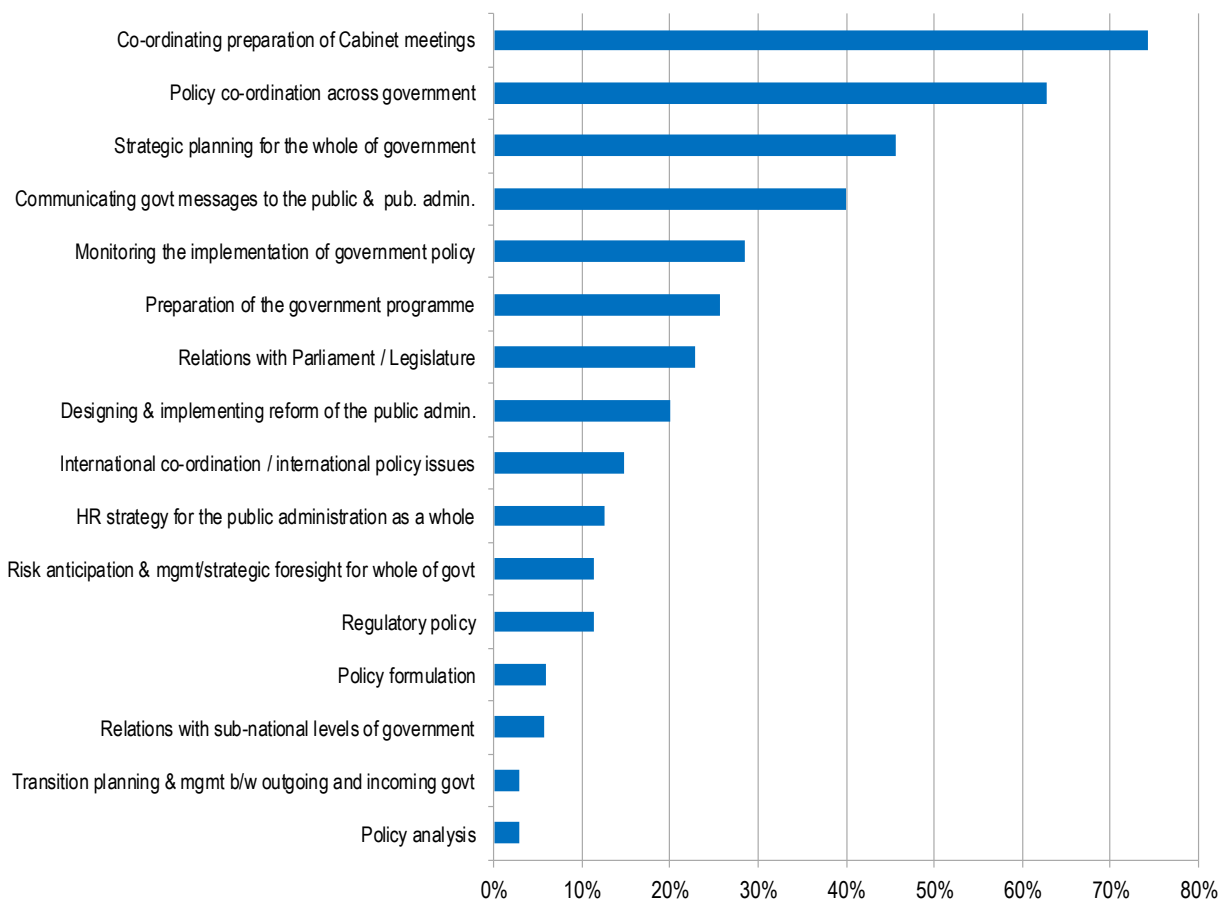
Under this mandate, some CoG functions in the Czech Republic have been performed by different bodies and line ministries and have evolved over time, particularly the Ministry for Regional Development (MORD), which has a mandate on strategic planning, and the Ministries of the Interior and of Environment on

horizontal topics such as digitalisation and sustainable development, as explained in more detail later in this chapter.

Centre of governments traditionally perform key co-ordination functions in OECD countries, primarily preparing Cabinet meetings, policy co-ordination and strategic planning

The CoG has evolved from a traditional role of administrative support to the head of government to performing functions related to supporting the decision-making process of the head of government and their Cabinet, co-ordinating policies within government, strategic planning for the government as a whole, communicating horizontal government messages to the public and the administration, and monitoring the implementation of government policy (OECD, 2018^[2]). While the range of responsibilities carried out by the CoG varies across countries, some functions are common to most, in particular co-ordinating the preparation of Cabinet meetings and policy co-ordination across government, especially for horizontal priorities. The centre takes almost exclusive responsibility for those functions in virtually all OECD countries. Whole-of-government strategic planning and monitoring the implementation of government policy are also high on the agenda (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Key responsibilities of the centre of government in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2018^[2]).

The Office of the Government is the main CoG institution in the Czech Republic, but its role is only partly defined in the Competency Law and has weakened in recent years

The OG represents the main CoG institution in the Czech Republic, but its power and capacity to exert the functions expected of CoG units have changed with changes in government and their political priorities. This is partly because its role is not well-defined by the Competency Law and has been evolving over time. For example, its mandate overlooks key functions on co-ordination and strategic alignment that have often been performed by the OG.

The OG's current organisational chart reflects a lack of clarity on its functions, scope and priorities. The OG includes departments focusing on preparing the government session and of the legislative preparations and review, but the function on legislative preparations is linked to a specific minister within the OG (the minister of legislation). Several other departments are listed under the head of the OG, including those working on administrative functions and public advisory bodies corresponding to the official tasks of the OG. Aside from the Prime Minister's Cabinet, four other members of the government and their cabinets are attached to the OG (Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation; Minister for European affairs; Minister of Legislation; and Minister for Science, Research and Innovation). Some of these topic-oriented sections and the attached ministerial positions usually evolve depending on priorities – for instance, the recent appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation – while others are more firmly established. This is also the case for many departments (such as the Department of Human Rights and Minority Protection or the Department of Gender Equality), that were originally set up to cover a particular cross-cutting issue (called “agenda” in the Czech administrative culture) and that have remained since in the organisational chart directly under the head of the Office of the Government, as indicated by the OG.

The OG carries out important functions that are attached to CoGs in OECD countries. It has an essential role in decision-making through the preparations of government meetings, especially by preparing the agenda and the materials to be submitted (as it administers the interagency commenting procedure and its online tool, eKlep) and checking the legal conformity of documents. The OG steers the implementation of the Policy Statement of the Government and the strategic priorities defined by the Prime Minister and supports the preparations of annual legislative and non-legislative work plans, particularly by collecting input from ministries, to organise the work of the government. It co-ordinates and steers government work on a number of issues by supporting the work of advisory and working groups under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, particularly on European Union (EU) affairs and on specific topics, including gender equality, human rights and the protection of minorities. The OG also has specific capacities and functions in areas such as managing and supervising the government's legislative work and regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), and on science and innovation.

While in the past the OG had a role in strategic planning and co-ordination across the government, over recent years, its role and capacities in strategic planning have been undermined with the dissolution of the team in charge of strategic planning and the transfer of the Government Council for Sustainable Development and its supporting unit from the OG to the Ministry of the Environment under the previous government. This has deprived the OG of the capacity to design, align and support strategic planning across the government and has resulted in an increase in the number of silos. As importantly, the OG needs to have the capacity and instruments to steer and ensure that the government delivers on its key priorities. This includes having strategic and analytical units and competencies related to selected topics and the lead on horizontal bodies in charge of them. This role would need to be closely articulated with the MORD, which currently plays a crucial role in strategic planning.

There have been recent changes towards strengthening the role of the OG, especially by restoring and strengthening its policy and strategic co-ordination and analytical capabilities. There is a willingness and initiative to build up policy and strategic co-ordination and analytical capabilities in the government, particularly in the OG. The latest government plans on “systematisation” (a stocktaking process that involves changing positions, jobs and structures in the state administration, to streamline and make the

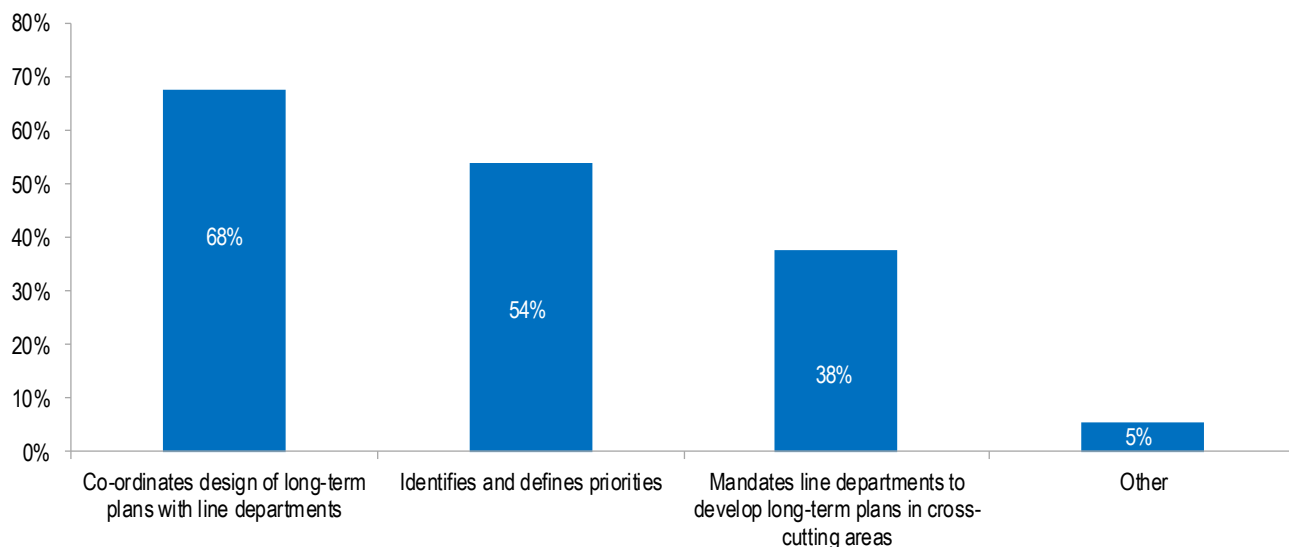
administration more effective) include the re-establishment of a strategic unit and of a government analytical unit in the OG. In particular, plans to establish a government analytical unit (VAU) in the OG aim to increase analytical capacities in the CoG, starting with legislation and RIAs, to improve the quality of and alignment of regulations from the centre with line ministries. The creation of the VAU could also help increase support and capacity for strategic co-ordination in the line ministries.

Strategic planning: Reinforcing the role of the centre

Strategic planning aims to establish a shared vision for a country's future and identify strategic priorities and objectives for different time horizons in order to achieve the vision. The strategic planning process allows preparing and implementing strategic plans that respond to this vision and translates them into priorities and programmes for the different ministries. Strategic planning also provides a frame of reference for prioritising reforms and actions across government. The prioritisation process involves making choices between a large number of initiatives in a context of limited financial and human resources (OECD, 2018^[2]). It allows sequencing decisions and for their implementation to enable the government to achieve its strategic objectives over different time horizons. Finally, strategic planning must allow governments to face national strategic challenges, sometimes immediate, but also to respond to long-term global issues such as climate change or digital transition. It must thus combine urgency, the medium term, which often corresponds to the duration of an electoral cycle, and the long term.

The CoG is a driving force in strategic planning in OECD countries, and strategic planning is one of its main functions. The CoG is primarily responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing strategic plans, a role it plays in more than two-thirds of OECD countries. This involves ensuring that ministries have long-term plans aligned with the national strategic plan or mandating them to implement such plans (Figure 2.2). The aim of the CoG is then to ensure coherence and strategic alignment across government, whether national or sectoral strategies, including with the country's main strategic documents (OECD, 2018^[2]).

Figure 2.2. Role of the centre of government in priority setting and strategic alignment in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2018^[2]).

In more than half of the cases, the CoG also helps identify and define the government's strategic priorities. The prioritisation process requires the CoG to define priorities based on criteria, make trade-offs between initiatives submitted by ministries, and ensure that the government's electoral mandate is translated and implemented through the government's programme and sectoral policies. The CoG also often operationalises the government's vision or programme into an action plan or road map to be implemented by the ministries.

The CoG has also played an important role in planning the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in most OECD countries, helping to identify and select priorities and prepare recovery plans. In many OECD countries, the CoG is also in charge of co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the recovery plan (OECD, 2021^[4]).

The Czech Republic has a large number of short- and long-term cross-governmental and sectoral strategies

The clear and explicit articulation of strategic planning instruments and documents allows the government to focus on a few policy priorities and ensure better and more consistent implementation in the face of resource constraints (OECD, 2018^[2]). The Czech Republic has a high number of national, sectoral, regional and local strategies that makes their implementation and coherence challenging. While Czech Republic 2030 appears to be the country's main reference strategy, there is a proliferation of strategies, not all of which are connected with Czech Republic 2030.

Czech Republic 2030 is the Czech Republic's main long-term strategy but is not co-ordinated by the CoG

Czech Republic 2030 is a strategic framework that indicates the direction the development of the country and society should take in the decade to come. It aims to improve the quality of life in the Czech Republic and points the country towards strengthening sustainable development in terms of social, economic and environmental aspects. The so-called "strategy of strategies" consists of detailed measures and policies for the country's sustainable development. It covers six national priority areas: 1) people and society; 2) economic model; 3) resilient ecosystems; 4) municipalities; 5) global development; and 6) good governance. Czech Republic 2030 was drafted by the Sustainable Development Unit of the OG and approved by the Czech government on 19 April 2017, replacing the 2010 Strategic Framework of Sustainable Development. Since then, the framework has been used as the main national document for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The adoption of Czech Republic 2030 was followed by an implementation document adopted in October 2018 that links to further documents and indicates specific measures to ensure the operationalisation of the strategy. The set of indicators in Czech Republic 2030 serves to measure progress in meeting specific objectives and as a foundation for regular assessment reports. Its second implementation plan was adopted in September 2022.

In parallel, the *Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the other document focused on sustainable development* approved by the government in October 2018, has been evaluating the relevance of 17 SDGs and their 169 sub-objectives (only 4 are not relevant for the Czech Republic). To avoid duplication of efforts, the Czech government could consider further aligning, if not merging, of Czech Republic 2030 and the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda to make the SDG implementation process more effective and enhance the alignment of the SDGs with the Czech Republic 2030's goals.

The OG was expected to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation, and the Government Council for Sustainable Development and its committees were supposed to support an expert network. In 2018, however, the Sustainable Development Unit of the OG and the Government Council for Sustainable Development were moved to the Ministry of the Environment. This poses several challenges for steering

and monitoring the strategy, as the Ministry of the Environment lacks the convening power of the CoG to co-ordinate line ministries and ensure that key national and sectoral strategies are aligned with Czech Republic 2030 beyond environmental topics that are within the scope of the ministry.

The Czech Republic has a large number of horizontal and sectoral strategies that are supported by line ministries and councils rather than the CoG

One important element hampering effective and efficient strategic planning from the centre is the excessive complexity of the strategic planning system and the associated proliferation of strategic documents. In some OECD countries, the number of strategic planning documents identified across the government exceeds several hundred, leading to a lack of clarity on the direction of actions, an absence of consistency and continuity in the implementation of strategies, and very often duplications of efforts. The same is true in the Czech Republic (Nakrošis, Vilpišauskas and Jahn, 2020^[5]).

In the Czech Republic, other important national strategic documents have been developed by different line ministries, not by the CoG. For instance, the Czech National Recovery Plan was developed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the MORD, which raises questions about its co-ordination and alignment with the Policy Statement of the Government and the priorities of the government led by the OG.

Sectoral strategies often respond to a priority identified in a government strategic framework document, government programme or long-term strategic plan, or to needs identified by the ministry in charge of the topic. In both cases, the development and implementation of a sectoral strategy require government-wide coherence and alignment, which in OECD countries is usually achieved by the CoG (OECD, 2018^[2]). There is no single framework for strategic planning in the Czech Republic nor clear institutional responsibility over the area defined by law or by specific strategic documents beyond methodological guidance for strategic documents prepared by the MORD. This has resulted in more than 300 sectoral strategies, making it impossible to set coherent policy objectives. In addition, according to participants during the fact-finding mission, most strategies are not implemented, for reasons such as a lack of capacity or funding, the irrelevance of the strategy with the current priorities, or purely formal preparations of strategies to respond to EU requirements in some areas or a lack of focus on implementation during the design phase.

Ministries consistently mentioned the Policy Statement of the Government as the reference document

On 6 January 2022, the government approved the final version of the Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic, which guides the government's actions and priorities for the duration of its mandate. A key objective of the current Policy Statement is the development of a modern, effective and digital public administration. Streamlining the performance of the public administration has regularly been included in past Policy Statements of the Government, for example in 2010, 2013 and 2017. Increasing the efficiency and flexibility of the state administration and improving rule-making are among the main priorities of the new government. Additionally, the government's priorities include, among others, stabilising public finances and having a more modern, lean and flexible state administration. This translates into a series of measures related to digitalising public services and the evolution of the governance of the digital area, the willingness to amend the Civil Service Law and streamline the state administration through personnel reductions, administrative simplification in areas related to identity, and procurement and further improvements in the effectiveness of the joint model of public administration and of inter-municipal co-operation. Nevertheless, the Policy Statement only includes a marginal and rather indirect reference to the Czech Republic 2030 strategic framework (on the coherence of national strategies and the SDGs) and no reference to the Client-oriented Public Administration 2030 (PAR). Priority measures differ on the public administration, with limited references to the objectives of improving the functioning and co-ordination of the administration and of public institutions in the Policy Statement, and to the needs to develop civil servants' skills.

The Policy Statement of the Government is the main reference document for ministries when they develop proposals. Line ministries and other public entities the OECD met with all pointed to the importance of the document and to establishing clear connections with the priorities underlined in it. Policy and legislative proposals submitted by line ministries to the OG as part of the annual legislative and non-legislative work plans are expected to be aligned with the directions set in the Policy Statement.

The public administration has developed a number of structures, tools and practices, mostly ad hoc, to prepare and co-ordinate strategies

Strategic planning is performed by different units in line ministries and councils

As in most OECD countries, the CoG in the Czech Republic, particularly the OG, is involved in the strategic planning process. Until 2018, the OG played a central role in steering and co-ordinating strategic planning. Among its core activities, it still prepares government sessions and supports the activities of the advisory and working bodies of the government that are all part of the strategic planning process. Advisory and working bodies, some of which are under the OG, contribute to preparing, revising and monitoring specific strategies related to their field of expertise. These strategies are also submitted for review through the interagency online commenting procedures system eKLEP, before being approved at the government sessions. Other institutions that correspond to a wider definition of the CoG also play a crucial role in strategic planning, including the Ministry of the Interior, which prepares and steers public administration reform, especially the PAR. The MORD is mandated to develop and co-ordinate regional strategies, help ensure that they are aligned with national ones, and support strategic work across public administration at both the regional and national levels. The MORD has played an important role in that regard and has notably provided quality control and methodological support and helped other ministries prepare strategies. Line ministries also have an extended role in preparing government programmes, strategic planning and stakeholder consultations in their respective areas.

While the OG had a central role in strategic planning and co-ordination in the past, these activities were transferred to several line ministries under the previous government. Following these evolutions, the MORD has been *de facto* leading strategic planning activities, in particular its Strategic Planning Unit, while this is not included in its mandate as defined by the Competency Law, along with other fields and responsibilities that emerged and were not anticipated in the Competency Law (Government of the Czech Republic, 1969^[3]). The Strategic Planning Unit was dismantled in 2019 and its tasks were merged with those of urban policy and continued under the Unit for Urban Policies and Strategies. The number of people engaged in strategic work decreased with respect to the previous unit. The unit has continued to support the development of strategies across the government. While it offers methodological support and emphasises the importance of strategic planning, the MORD lacks the official mandate and convening power to carry out this function for the whole-of-government effectively. The ministry supports and co-ordinates outputs in strategic documents and access to such documents but does not co-ordinate policies, as it does not have resources or the legitimacy, in particular for whole-of-government, horizontal strategies. The MORD has been using the interministerial working group on strategic planning, the Expert Group for Strategy Work, to co-ordinate these activities and share methodologies and guidance (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015^[6]). Despite the role assigned to it, the unit has limited capabilities and convening power to steer and co-ordinate strategic planning for the whole-of-government.

The Ministry of the Environment is now leading the implementation and co-ordination of the Sustainable Development Agenda in support of the Sustainable Development Council. The ministry steers the Sustainable Development Council, as it is tasked with organising its plenary sessions, co-ordinating its agenda and the information flow between the working groups and the council, and preparing background materials.

Apart from the MORD and the Ministry of the Environment, which play *de facto* wider roles in strategic planning, reportedly half of the line ministries in the Czech Republic have strategic units but usually suffer from a lack of capacities and need support and guidance. Strategic activities are often merged with other types of activities performed by the ministry. In addition, this activity is strongly dependent on specific individuals and can be very fragile.

The Czech Republic has established a number of public advisory bodies and working groups that prepare and revise strategies in their field

Advisory and working bodies such as public councils support and co-ordinate strategic planning activities in the Czech Republic on topics related to their field and the scope of the ministry in charge of the committee, unless they operate under the Office of the Government. For instance, the Council for Public Administration, chaired by the Ministry of the Interior, co-ordinates and monitors the PAR through a dedicated working group; the Council on Information Society has been focusing on the implementation of the Digital Czech Republic programme.

As will be further elaborated later in this chapter, some public councils are also used as an institutionalised mechanism for consulting with citizens and stakeholders and play an important role in strategic planning, mostly for those located in the OG. Councils are permanent advisory bodies where experts, citizens, civil society organisations and representatives of certain communities are involved. The role of councils is to exchange with stakeholders on a particular sectoral topic, bring expertise and legitimacy, work on sectoral plans, and inform stakeholders about government action. These councils prepare and revise strategies in their specialised fields. For instance, the Inter-ministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs has prepared a National Roma Strategic Framework (2021-2030). They do not have a time-bound mandate and are regulated by decrees. Each council meets at a different frequency, between two and five times per year. There is no single guidance on the functioning of the councils suggesting the duration, composition, or types of outcomes and deliverables expected beyond templates (“rules of procedures”) to establish them.

The Rules of Procedure of the Government (eKLEP) are widely used, including for submitting and commenting on strategies

The preparation of key documents for submission to government meetings in the Czech Republic is done according to the Rules of Procedure defined by the government and via the electronic document-sharing system eKLEP (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998^[7]). eKLEP is managed by the OG, which ensures access to all ministries and a large number of public institutions and committees. Interviews showed that it is systematically used to gather extensive comments and reviews by different parts of the administration on draft laws, public policies and strategies prior to the government meeting. It is accompanied by defined arbitration procedures in case of a disagreement between ministries that can lead to arbitration at the level of the Prime Minister.

eKLEP is used for the approval process of strategies, providing the opportunity for a limited set of stakeholders to review and provide comments on national and sectoral strategies prepared by the government. This allows a whole-of-government process for strategic alignment. eKLEP is widely used by the government and public institutions, but its use for consulting external stakeholders and civil society has been limited (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Different instruments have been developed, including a strategic methodological framework and a registry of strategies

The MORD has created a number of tools and instruments to provide guidance and consistency for preparing strategic documents, including a registry of strategies, templates for strategies and a methodological guide. All of these are available on line.

A registry of all existing strategies was developed in 2012 in the context of an EU-funded project (Government of the Czech Republic, 2013^[8]). It includes all strategic and conceptual documents and is accessible on line. It allows clearly displaying documents, their goals and measures, responsibilities for fulfilling them, and indicators of success. Goals from the international level, through ministries' and national institutions' documents down to the regional and local level can be connected thematically and functionally. All line ministries and regions add their strategic documents to this registry. One of the main aims of the existing registry of strategies is to connect and align existing and new strategies to avoid duplication and find consistencies and synergies across proposed measures. This has not been achieved in practice. There is also a working group for the registry of strategies, the Strategies Database Working Group, with representatives from all line ministries and regions, that is mainly facilitated by the MORD. This working group was first established with its own statute and rules of procedure and, after the creation of the Expert Group for Strategy Work, was placed under it as one of its working groups to act as a co-ordination tool (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015^[6]).

The main challenges have been ensuring that the relevant actors upload their strategic documents to the registry and ensuring a proactive use of the registry to safeguard the consistency of initiatives and measures when they relate to connected sectors or topics. Nevertheless, while the registry and the working group can support such an exercise, there has been little effort or capacity to align and evaluate strategies through reviews of the documents included in the registry.

In addition, a methodological framework was created to support the development of the strategic planning process (Government of the Czech Republic, 2019^[9]). The MORD shares the guidelines with sectoral ministries, the CoG and local levels of government to ensure methodological consistency across documents. A methodology to develop strategies and a number of templates on the structure, planning, indicators and budget for a public strategy are available on the dedicated portal.

The lack of reference to longer term priorities and the proliferation of strategies lead to inconsistencies and a lack of implementation

The lack of reference to the government's long-term priorities and strategies in policymaking hamper the consistency and continuity of strategies

For implementation to be effective, planning needs to be systematic and streamlined, ensuring alignment between long-term and medium-term plans, sectoral and whole-of-government strategies, and balancing local autonomy with the need to translate strategic decisions at all levels of government. Strategic planning activities across OECD countries have not always been accompanied by sufficient articulation mechanisms to ensure activities and goals are aligned over time to improve outcomes (OECD, 2018^[10]). Well-aligned whole-of-government strategies, sectoral strategies and local strategies need to reflect a global vision affecting all public action and aim to deploy co-ordinated resources around a limited set of priorities. This level of articulation requires effective co-ordination instruments at the highest level to avoid the dispersion and complexity of public action and increase its effectiveness. The CoG can be a lynchpin of this effort by helping to ensure the coherence of public policies and guaranteeing the continuity of action around major strategic objectives, between sectoral policies, between levels of intervention, between territories, and between public and private actors. It can also provide guidance on strategic documents, including on the methodologies, templates and indicators to be used (OECD, 2018^[10]).

In the Czech Republic, goals from the Policy Statement of the Government are often implemented as priorities, while long-term priorities and strategies are side-lined. The Policy Statement appears to be the reference document for the development of new strategies and policies in the Czech Republic and tends to overshadow crucial horizontal and long-term priorities that are not directly covered by it, particularly on climate change and sustainable development. While this supports the implementation of the government's key priorities, it also highlights a lack of explicit connection with longer term national or sectoral strategies established under the previous government. One of the challenges mentioned during the fact-finding mission is that the implementation of long-term priorities is often underprioritised with respect to short-term sectoral strategies. This is particularly true for the highly political goals in the Policy Statement. Long-term priorities and strategies are often neglected while new sectoral strategies are established and prioritised. In addition, planned measures are connected with the Policy Statement, but only *ex post*.

The prioritisation process does not allow reconciling long-term priorities and those included in the Policy Statement. The Policy Statement of the Government makes limited references to the government's long-term priorities outlined in different strategic documents, including Czech Republic 2030 or the PAR. One of the most cutting-edge and innovative approaches to prioritising the government agenda and linking it with long-term objectives can be found in Finland (Box 2.1). The prioritisation process was characterised by an approach based on long-term objectives and vision and underpinned by a solid problem identification phase supported by the CoG.

Box 2.1. Prioritisation approach of the Finnish Government Programme

Conceptually, the Finnish Government Programme is not based on ministerial structure and sectoral objectives but on societal phenomena or systems changes, focusing on systemic opportunities and challenges in society. This concept emphasises and applies a sustainability approach and coherence from ecological, social and economic points of view (in a short-term and especially a long-term perspective).

The government assigned the Prime Minister's Office's Government Strategy Department to facilitate and co-ordinate the preparation of the programme in the spring of 2019. The process included: defining a situational picture on key themes; a future (four-year) projection exercise; setting goals and objectives (complementing rhetoric-based and actions-based objectives with output-based and impact-based targets, as a basis for further elaborating indicators and measures for each of the strategic themes).

The process was managed by thematic groups of political actors, supported by approximately 200 experts, under the co-ordination of the Government Strategy Department. A dedicated tech platform allowed stakeholders to follow the progress made on the different negotiation strands.

Source: Finnish Government (2019_[11]).

The lack of focus on long-term priorities and future risks and challenges is also connected to the limited use of foresight in strategic planning in the Czech Republic. There is no dedicated unit nor capacity in the CoG or line ministries to carry out foresight exercises, including long-term scenario planning and horizon scanning. Some of the identified issues include the lack of financial resources, political support and institutional culture on foresight. Among the current initiatives, the Government Council for Research, Development and Innovation, with the support of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and the think tank Czech Priority, developed studies and a methodology on foresight looking at mega trends and how they could affect the Czech Republic. The methodologies and the results could be further used and disseminated in the public administration (Czech Priority, 2022_[12]). Examples in some countries include the development of long-term insights briefings using foresight, which try to bring some accountability to delivering long-term priorities across departments (Box 2.2).

Box 2.2. Long-term insights briefings in New Zealand and Australia

New Zealand's Public Service Act 2020 requires chief executives of government departments, independently from ministers, to produce a long-term insights briefing (LTIB) at least once every three years. The LTIB should explore future trends, risks and opportunities. LTIBs are expected to provide information and impartial analysis, as well as policy options for responding to risks and seizing opportunities. The development of such LTIBs is based on eight high-level steps, which include engagement with citizens both on the subject matter and on the draft briefing itself. The first LTIB was presented to a parliamentary select committee in mid-2022. After parliamentary scrutiny, it was made available in the public domain. Public consultation on draft briefings is a requirement of the process.

Prior to the Public Service Act 2020, New Zealand's senior policy community had discussed the challenges of building long-term issues into policy formulation, including the relative dearth of foresight capacity across the public service. It held workshops on a future policy heat map and policy stewardship. While there is no associated programme to build capability in strategic foresight, the LTIB requirement process may catalyse demand for strategic foresight capabilities.

To strengthen policy development and planning, the government of Australia has also expressed its intention to start developing long-term insights. Overseen by the Secretaries Board, these briefings will connect experts from across the public service and will include public consultations with various stakeholders such as citizens, academia, industry and non-governmental organisations on specific longer term policy challenges to help identify solutions.

Sources: Government of New Zealand (2022^[13]); ANZOG (2021^[14]); Australian Government (2022^[15]).

Another challenge in the Czech Republic is that the government lacks tools to translate the Policy Statement into co-ordinated administrative action. Despite the existence of a yearly legislative and a non-legislative work plan completed by line ministries at the request of the OG, these documents do not translate the government's priorities into action consistently and effectively, as they lack steering and guidance from the centre in drawing sectoral measures from priorities. Both programmes are compiled with a bottom-up approach without an in-depth substantive check on whether the Policy Statement and its priorities are fully covered. They also fail to meet the criteria for efficient policy co-ordination tool that the OG could use. Additionally, the Policy Statement is a political document and includes political initiatives and priorities that might add to or contradict previous strategies and priorities. The lack of steering from the centre opens the door for initiatives led by ministries according to their political priorities.

The multiplication and fragmentation of government strategies and the lack of strategic alignment lead to a lack of consistency and implementation across strategies

Planning needs to be systematic, ensuring alignment between various plans as well as between long-, medium- and short-term policy priorities towards a common goal (OECD, 2020^[1]). As in other OECD countries, the CoG in the Czech Republic has a role to play in improving the harmonisation of sectoral plans and their alignment with national priorities. Some international good practices in articulating national and sectoral plans could provide some useful insight for the Czech Republic (Box 2.3).

Box 2.3. The Belgian architecture for articulating political priorities with outcomes at the operational level

Strategic planning in Belgium has been developed to be highly collaborative and iterative to account for the federal and consociational nature of the administration. A distinction is made between strategic plans on the one hand and operational plans on the other, to better link priorities with outcomes.

Strategic planning documents are cascaded down from the Government Agreement (*Accord de Gouvernement*), which feeds into the government's policy statement (*Exposé d'orientation politique*), declined into a yearly general policy note (*note de politique générale*). Once political priorities have been established through these documents, the Federal Public Service/Policy and Support (FPS/PPS BOSA) elaborates a draft national strategic plan, and further refines it following feedback from ministers. The national strategic plan also includes the budget framework, internal management, communication plan and allocation of responsibilities. Transversal objectives derived from political priorities are elaborated and selected in parallel then integrated into the strategic plan after a formal validation process.

Yearly operational plans translate the strategic and tactical goals outlined in the strategic plans into operational objectives and processes. These operational plans differ from the strategic plan by their elaboration process; modalities; content; and obligations to politicians, citizens and the BOSA unit. Following the budget approval, the FPS/PPS elaborates and shares the operational plan with ministers and state secretaries for information. In essence, the operational plan includes a SMART description of operational objectives and resources allocated to these, outlines the processes and initiatives through which the operational objectives will be achieved, and related indicators to measure achievement and assign responsibility. Specific key performance indicators are also assigned to transversal objectives.

Source: Government of Belgium (2022^[16]).

While there are numerous strategies in the Czech Republic, most stakeholders interviewed for this review did not identify the quantity of the strategies as the main challenge for strategic planning. The quality of the strategies was not indicated as a significant challenge either. Strategies tend to be long and very detailed documents, with a high number of measures, which may be making their implementation challenging. Stakeholders highlighted the strategies' implementation and their consistency as the most crucial challenge. Respondents to the OECD survey identified the lack of capacity and issues of co-ordination as major limits to successful planning and implementation. To address this challenge, the United Kingdom introduced outcome delivery plans to streamline and better articulate the planning architecture and support their implementation and steering from the centre (Box 2.4).

Box 2.4. The United Kingdom's outcome delivery plans

To streamline and better articulate the government's planning architecture, in 2021, the UK government introduced outcome delivery plans, building on the previous single departmental plans, to ensure government departments contribute to overarching whole-of-government priorities. These plans set out how each UK government department is working towards delivering its priority outcomes and place a greater emphasis on joint work between departments, enabling departments to plan together to deliver shared outcomes. They include priority objectives and actions to implement to reach the outcomes and contain key performance indicators to measure progress and success. They set out plans for delivering critical enabling activities for successfully delivering outcomes and outline the needed capabilities and resources and their use. They are steered and monitored by the Cabinet Office. Outcome delivery plans are revised annually as part of the annual budget and strategic planning cycles.

Source: UK Government (2021^[17]); (UK Government, 2021^[18]).

No clear whole-of-government strategic planning process is implemented, beyond the Rules of Procedures

In most OECD countries, the CoG is tasked with translating the government's strategic vision into a government programme, articulating it with existing strategies, mandating line ministries to develop sectoral strategies, and monitoring their development and implementation. The CoG very often also plays a role in resolving conflicts between ministries, including strategic misalignments or disagreements.

The government of the Czech Republic has developed a number of mechanisms and instruments to support the strategic planning process. In particular, as mentioned above, the government Rules of Procedures, eKLEP, and the architecture of public advisory and working groups in specific fields help provide structure in the preparation and approval stages of strategies.

However, the current strategic planning process from the centre defined in the Czech Republic does not cover the entire strategic planning cycle from the initiation to the approval and implementation of strategies. It also does not enable the centre to provide strategic guidance and play an effective role of checks and balances. There is also no mechanism in the centre to ensure that a new strategy is systematically linked with the challenges and needs identified in Czech Republic 2030 and other key long-term strategies. At the initiation phase of a strategy, for instance, the Czech Republic does not have specific interministerial mechanisms led by the OG where the need for an existing strategy can be updated or dismissed, or a new strategy framed, discussed and compared with existing documents to avoid duplication, and which helps the CoG to give a mandate to prepare a specific strategy. These co-ordination mechanisms can also help at the development stage of the strategy to revise the draft document in terms of consistency and methodology before going through the formal interagency commenting procedure, which is already at a late stage in the strategic planning process.

During the review stage of this procedure, the OG plays the role of one of the commenting points but does not play a leading role in checking and reviewing the substance of the documents in accordance with the Policy Statement of the Government. It also does not resolve conflicts and cannot send the document back to line ministries, except on legislative grounds through the role of the Legislative Council. The OG does not have the final say on the consistency and coherence of the new strategic document with the Policy Statement and government's priorities before the document is submitted to the government meeting. These gaps contribute to the proliferation and parallel preparations of strategies by different ministries and committees and the overall misalignment of strategies. While the MORD assesses the technical quality of

the strategy, the OG could further assess its fulfilment and alignment with strategic priorities, the Policy Statement and other existing strategies.

Recent cross-government efforts to support strategies being replaced, merged or co-ordinated have not brought significant results

The high number of strategies leads to inconsistencies and difficulties in co-ordinating and implementing strategies considering available resources. One way to address such a challenge is to streamline the number of strategies by cancelling or merging redundant documents. To abolish some of the existing strategies, the MORD analysed 60 documents in 2016 and 2017, to decide whether they would be developed or not (Government of the Czech Republic, 2017^[19]). Nevertheless, this initiative had a very limited impact and the number of strategies in the Czech Republic remains high.

The MORD also undertook a stocktaking exercise in 2021, when other ministries were officially asked to update the relevance and necessity of their individual strategies in the registry. More than 90% of the answers stated that the documents were still relevant and necessary. It was thus perceived that there was virtually no place for merging or reducing the number of strategies. The process and results of the stocktaking exercise raise questions on the clarity of the objectives and the absence of constraining targets in the exercise. They also raise questions about the convening power of the MORD in leading the streamlining process and challenging these answers *vis-à-vis* line ministries. Strategic documents might also sometimes play a legitimising role and create a mandate for ministries in given fields, making their abolition not seem desirable.

As described in Box 2.5, for example, in Lithuania, there were around 290 strategic documents in 2015 and 1 800 monitoring indicators based on the strategic action plans. The country is working on streamlining them (Nakrošis, Vilpišauskas and Jahn, 2020^[5]).

Box 2.5. Auditing the strategic planning system – Lithuania

In Lithuania, there were about 290 strategic documents in 2015, and strategic action plans included 1 800 monitoring indicators.

The 2016-20 government developed guidelines and an action plan for restructuring the strategic planning and budget formulation system to focus more on results and ensure fiscal sustainability. A new Law on Strategic Management No. XIII-3096 was adopted on 25 June 2020 and regulates a results-oriented strategic management system: laying down the principles of the new strategic management system, the levels and types of planning documents, their interrelationships and their impact on the planning of funds, the participants of the strategic management system, their rights and duties, and the provisions for governing the strategic management system. The objectives are to optimise the number of strategic planning documents to make planning, monitoring and evaluation clearer, as well as to revise the preparation, approval and implementation of strategic planning, i.e. thus setting out a new strategic planning system (National Audit Office of Lithuania, 2021^[20]).

On the basis of the law, the government planned to approve the Strategic Management Methodology detailing its implementation. To ensure that the strategic action plans reflect the essential objectives set out in other planning documents, the guidelines must determine which elements of the planning documents must be transferred to the strategic action plans, and according to which criteria.

The ongoing implementation of this audit of strategic planning documents aims to reduce the number of strategic planning documents from 290 to 100. However, many types of strategic planning documents would remain (Nakrošis, Vilpišauskas and Jahn, 2020^[5]).

Sources: National Audit Office of Lithuania (2021^[20]); Nakrošis, Vilpišauskas and Jahn (2020^[5]).

A number of strategies were prepared based on EU funding requirements but are not necessarily used or connected with other strategies

A number of EU funds are conditional on the existence of a strategy in the specific area concerned. OECD interviews with different stakeholders in the Czech Republic highlighted that several strategies have been developed because of these strict requirements for receiving EU funds. For example, different strategies on minorities were reported to be developed following EU requirements. This programming requirement does foster the development of longer-term strategies in the Czech Republic and encourages strategic thinking over time horizons longer than the government's mandate.

Nevertheless, several of these strategies have been reported to be “tick-the-box” exercises and are not used nor linked to other long-term or sectoral strategies. This can thus reinforce the lack of ownership of some strategies, the existence of a high number of strategies in the country and the misalignment between them. The preparation of new strategies needs to ensure there is no overlap with existing strategies or a lack of focus on implementation. It should be used as an incentive to update, complement or replace strategies to make the process useful for the country.

Monitoring and evaluation of specific strategies is reportedly done at the agency/ministry level, but results are insufficiently integrated into new strategic cycles

A robust monitoring and evaluation system is essential to achieve short-, medium- and long-term objectives. When information from monitoring and evaluation reports is fed back to policymakers and decision-makers, it can provide the necessary data and information to guide strategic planning and design, implement programmes and projects, and allocate and reallocate resources better (OECD, 2021^[21]). There is no centralised monitoring system in the OG that allows measuring the progress of the implementation of major national strategies or the contributions of sectoral strategies to the achievement of the country's strategic goals. As highlighted by stakeholders interviewed for this review, the results of each strategy are assessed separately by each committee or each ministry and are not shared through a defined process or monitoring tool. A number of the monitoring activities also focus on outputs and deliverables, looking at the number of measures and laws passed rather than on the strategy's outcome and impact assessment. That leaves the OG in the dark on the actual results and impacts of key strategies, impeding its capacity to develop or adapt strategies or to mandate line ministries to do so.

Individual strategies in the Czech Republic are reportedly monitored and evaluated by the body in charge of the strategy. Implementation of sectoral policies is discussed in the different government committees. When the action plan period of the strategy ends, implementation and evaluation reports are also processed through the government meeting. However, there are rarely discussions on the monitoring results and on what needs to be changed or revised during implementation or in the preparation for future documents. The overall tendency observed and reported in most cases, for both monitoring and evaluation practices, is to comply with the requirement without actually feeding back the information into decision-making at the level of the CoG and the ministry. This prevents adapting existing strategies or developing new ones in light of previous experiences, achievements and gaps. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service is a good practice that could prove useful for the Czech Republic (Box 2.6).

Several stakeholders reported an absence, inaccessibility or inadequacy of indicators in many strategies. According to stakeholders interviewed during the fact-finding mission, indicators are missing in most strategies, or are inadequate for effective monitoring.

Box 2.6. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service

The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) is an integrated cross-government service, also anchored in the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform, to enhance the role of economics and value-for-money analysis in public policymaking. Created in 2012, the IGEES demonstrates the government's strong commitment to a high and consistent standard of policy evaluation and economic analysis throughout the Irish civil service. In that regard, the IGEES has an important role in the reform and strengthening of the civil service and in supporting the government in progressing major cross-cutting policy challenges such as economic growth, social exclusion, and better service delivery and policy design.

The IGEES' goals include: developing a professional economic and evaluation service that will provide high standards of economic and policy analysis to assist the government's decision-making process; ensuring the application of established best practices in policy evaluation in support of better value for money and more effective policy and programme interventions by state authorities; facilitating more open policy dialogue with academia, external specialists and stakeholders across the broad socio-economic spectrum.

The IGEES has over 200 staff to fulfil its different missions, working not only on evaluations, but also on expenditure reviews, economic analysis and more broadly evidence-based policymaking. Its employees are seconded across departments to instil a culture and expertise on policy development across government.

Sources: OECD (n.d._[22]; 2020_[23]).

Alignment with the Ministry of Finance is largely carried out through formal procedure, but there is a limited link between funding and strategic priorities

Strategic planning needs to ensure that policy instruments such as budgeting, regulations and workforce planning are allocated to support the strategy. Strategic planning can be a shared responsibility, like in more than a third of OECD countries, where the CoG plays a collaborative or supportive role. Here, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance play a crucial role in strategic planning. To ensure fiscal alignment, 85% of CoGs work with Ministries of Finance to link national strategies with the national budget (OECD, 2018_[10]). However, a number of them report challenges in practice in aligning strategies and budgets. Countries consequently experience a disconnect between the development of strategies and their monitoring and implementation. For instance, Ministries of Economy and/or Finance are more likely to play a leading role in the planning process when budget rigidity is a determinant factor in whole-of-government planning (OECD, 2022_[24]). Principle 2 of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Budgetary Governance (OECD, 2015_[25]) aims to help policymakers use the budget as a substantial policy instrument to achieve the government's medium-term strategic priorities (OECD, 2020_[11]).

The Ministry of Finance plays a role in revising strategic documents in connection with the budget

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) plays an important role in reshaping and revising government strategies and policy documents. Indeed, the MoF revises and comments on documents, particularly during the interagency commenting procedures. Line ministries must provide a costing estimation with the strategy that the MoF reviews to assess its feasibility. In some cases, experts in two departments in the budgetary section of the MoF who are specialised in individual line ministries and state funds budgets co-operate with

line ministries on the preparation of documents if so required by the line ministry. Before the government approves the document, it is submitted to the commenting procedure and this procedure can, according to line ministries, generate comments and challenges on some measures due to a lack of financial feasibility that can result in the adjustment or removal of measures and components, including some that are considered crucial by the authoring public institution. While the financial costing of the measures is compulsory in the submitted document, the MoF might have conducted the financial costing exercise and scenarios more thoroughly and commented on revising the document accordingly. As a result of this review, a number of measures in different strategies do not receive the funding necessary for their implementation and are not pursued and implemented. Cost estimation is compulsory but the full set of measures planned in the strategic document can go beyond the financial estimation.

According to the Rules of Procedure, when the submitted documents create financial requirements to be included in the state budget, the material for a government meeting contains the specific source from which these requirements will be covered (a shift within the scope of the budget of the relevant chapter or a reduction in the expenditure of another state budget chapter, etc.) (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998^[7]).

Line ministries underlined the lack of co-operation between the line ministry authoring the strategy and the MoF on costing the measures in the earlier stages of strategy preparations before the document is submitted for comment. The dialogue should involve the ministry's budget and policy departments to ensure a common approach to costing measures and funding priorities. This collaboration would entail discussions on the prioritisation of the allocation of resources, on the preparation and review of cost estimations, and on the cost effectiveness of measures *vis-à-vis* the strategy's key measures and objectives. The MoF also noted the absence of a systematic process to ensure that cost estimates and the link with costing are done when the strategy is conceived and developed. The OG could support this dialogue and be involved in the discussion on strategic plans related to the government's key priorities and ensure decision points and blocking points are reported to the Prime Minister when needed.

The MoF is creating a new unit on spending review to increase the value for money of expenditures. This unit is expected to improve the assessment of the cost effectiveness of measures, enhance the dialogue on funding priorities and strategies, and align spending allocations with government priorities (OECD, 2021^[4]).

Overall, it appears that policy planning is not systematically linked with financial planning, apart from the commenting procedure, so strategic documents are aligned with appropriate financing during their development phase, decreasing their relevance. For instance, discussions on costing strategies and their measures before the interagency commenting procedure could have helped foster dialogue and revise options according to the financial scenarios and costing done with the MoF.

There is a limited connection between high-level prioritisation and the budget

The government does not prepare a detailed financial assessment of the cost of the Policy Statement. Line ministries provide detailed annual measures to the OG through the annual work plans requested by the government agenda team and the minister for legislation, but cost estimation is sometimes not enough to fund a full set of measures, which can lead to measures being taken out because of a lack of financial viability. This can hinder the effective implementation, as no specific resources are allocated to each action. To ensure that there is funding associated with each action, the MoF needs to prepare financial scenarios mainly based on the legislative work plan for the year, but these scenarios are not done in direct interaction with the line ministries and public institutions that put forward the measures. This results in measures that are planned in the Policy Statement and annual work plans being removed or reduced due to a lack of resources and funding from the budget. The upcoming creation of a Spending Review Unit in the MoF can also help align expenditure with government priorities during the budget process and improve expenditure prioritisation. Sweden provides an example of linking the budget with government priorities (Box 2.7).

Box 2.7. The budgetary framework in Sweden and its link with strategic priorities

Sweden has a robust budget framework based on the Budget Act and carries out prudent fiscal policies, resulting in a budget surplus/small deficits. Its budgetary framework is characterised by a number of features that evolved in 2019: a target surplus corresponding to one-third of a per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on average over an economic cycle; a central government expenditure ceiling; and a desired debt anchor of 35% of GDP.

The government submits a Budget Bill to parliament in the fall. The starting point for this whole-of-government exercise is the government's economic policy objectives. The Budget Bill notably includes proposals for expenditure allocation, a revenue estimate, and an outlook of the economy and the public finances. The budget also includes a table of reforms through which the government identifies key priorities and measures and provides cost estimates for the next three years. These reforms relate to the government priorities, for instance on "A reliable welfare state" and "A new effective and ambitious energy and climate policy", and help ensure specific, appropriate funding.

Sweden has a sound and particularly stable medium-term expenditure framework, with three-year rolling ceilings legally grounded in the Budget Act and government priorities discussed in December of budget year 2. Sweden stands out for the very strong connectedness between the national medium-term fiscal plans and the annual budgets, as well as for the extensive coverage of targets included in the national medium-term fiscal plans.

Like 31 OECD countries, Sweden has introduced spending reviews that it conducts on an annual basis. These reviews aim primarily to control the level of expenditures and increase the effectiveness of spending.

Sources: EU (2020^[26]); Swedish Fiscal Policy Council (2019^[27]); OECD (2021^[4]); Swedish Ministry of Finance (2022^[28]).

The centre of government lacks a coherent whole-of-government vision, ownership and steering capacities on strategies, despite the existing set of instruments

The realities and emergencies of managing immediate domestic and international challenges tend to crowd out the pursuit of longer term goals and the realisation of that initial strategic vision in most countries. The CoG 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 ministries' and departments' work programmes. 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 (OECD, 2018^[10]).

Strategies are sometimes not implemented by incumbent governments as they were driven by the previous governments' priorities

New governments do not consider themselves accountable for past strategies and do not connect new strategic documents or policies with them, making them redundant or irrelevant. When this occurs, the chances of a strategy being successfully implemented are drastically reduced. This undermines the continuity of the implementation of the strategy and can result in inconsistencies in strategic priorities. Better steering efforts from the centre are needed to ensure that existing strategies are updated or replaced according to new priorities to provide clear whole-of-government direction on the priorities and the work to be carried out and to avoid the multiplication of strategic documents and efforts.

Challenges can be expected with implementing strategies that are not led by the CoG, starting with the Recovery and Resilience Plan

Through its central location and proximity to the Prime Minister, the CoG is best placed to develop, co-ordinate, steer and monitor government-wide strategies and action plans. CoGs in virtually all OECD countries were tasked with managing the strategic planning for the recovery from the pandemic (OECD, 2021^[4]). In the Czech Republic, strategic planning for the recovery has been mainly led by the Ministry of Industry and Trade together with the Ministry of Finance, the MORD, and the Ministry of the Interior. The EU approved the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) in July 2021 that will help the Czech Republic finance and implement reforms and investments to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, covering the green and digital transitions and economic and social resilience (European Commission and Czech Republic, 2021^[29]). All ministries were involved in preparing the RRP and were in charge of some parts of the plan that cover areas related to digitalisation, climate change, and economic and social resilience. The Section for European Affairs in the OG plays a key role in co-ordinating all policies and work related to EU affairs on behalf of the government. The implementation of the RRP will need to be properly aligned with the Policy Statement and key strategic documents to avoid encountering challenges similar to the ones described above, as no action was taken to improve co-ordination or decision-making mechanisms, emphasising the key role to be played by the OG in strategic co-ordination.

There is an overall lack of analytical resources and strategic capacities in the government

Interviews with the OG and line ministries also pointed to a lack of strategic and analytical capacities to effectively prepare and implement strategies, policies and legislation.

A key initiative to address this issue has been the creation of the VAU. The VAU has been built in the OG under the minister for legislation and, as a first step, will focus on helping line ministries to develop quality RIAs and legislation. The government had appointed resources and staff in the VAU at the time of writing. This initiative was, however, not linked or co-ordinated with the PAR, even though Objective 3.1.1 of the PAR foresees the creation of a central analytical unit providing knowledge support to other ministries through a network (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020^[30]).

The state administration in the Czech Republic must be able to ensure that the use of public funds and the creation of regulations always lead to sustainable public finances and the greatest possible improvement in the quality of life of citizens. The long-term goal is therefore to develop a culture of decision making in the public administration that is based on the best available data. The establishment of the VAU aims to significantly support a quality system of analytical work in the state administration. The unit is expected to contribute to improving the functioning of the state administration in two ways. The first is its direct involvement in the process of strategic work preparations and regulations. The second is the support of analytical departments, including the activities of the so-called policy lab, networking with external experts and informing about the benefits of fact-based decision-making. In addition, the department will perform ongoing analytical tasks for the needs of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, in the long term, it is necessary to strengthen analytical capacities in line ministries too, as having just the analytical unit in the OG will not be enough to strengthen the quality and evidence-based approach of policies and regulations across the government.

The objective would be to develop similar entities in the line ministries to create a network of VAUs, support quality policy and legislation making across the administration, and expand the model to strategies beyond legislation. Similar gaps in strategic capacities have been observed in line ministries and also call for the development of strategic units in all line ministries. The government of the Slovak Republic also followed an approach of developing specific bodies to reinforce analytical capacities across the government through the creation of institutes (see Chapter 3).

The centre of government lacks the leadership to drive and co-ordinate strategic priorities and the government agenda, and help break down silos

Long-term priorities are addressed from different locations and by mechanisms

The emergence of horizontal multidimensional challenges has reinforced the need for a whole-of-government approach and co-ordination to address them. In the Czech Republic, the management of cross-cutting strategies and topics is very often located in different ministries and through different committees, making it difficult to steer directions and align the whole of government at a decision-making level on these issues, leading to insufficient capacities to address horizontal issues, such as inequalities and sustainable development. For example, digitalisation has been mainly located in the Ministry of the Interior, while climate issues are addressed by the Ministry of the Environment, even though these cross-cutting topics concern far more than only these ministries.

The institutional setting on digitalisation has been evolving to reinforce a whole-of-government steering and approach to the topic with the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation in the CoG. This model can improve the co-ordination and monitoring of digital initiatives across the government with a steering role of the centre. Current activities and implementation would be supported by the new Digital and Information Agency and some initiatives would remain in the different ministries. Horizontal strategies could be followed by dedicated units and staff in the OG for steering and co-ordinating purposes, such as sustainable development and public administration reform.

There is a lack of a central unit to carry out this strategic co-ordination and align roles

The Czech government's latest plans on systematisation consider re-establishing a strategic unit in the CoG. The unit could help steer, align and monitor key strategies across the government, provided its mandate is allocated the appropriate capacities, authority and mechanisms to co-ordinate national and sectoral strategies. Previous units for horizontal strategic planning were based in the OG and the MORD but were subject to many changes, hampering continuous action. Strategic units established in different ministries lack the convening power to align and review for the whole of government.

While there are various institutional models to steer strategic planning in OECD countries, 61% had a strategic unit in the CoG. These units are tasked with preparing and/or co-ordinating the government's main strategic initiatives and articulating the whole-of-government strategic framework (OECD, 2018_[10]). They also co-ordinate and support the work of strategic units across line ministries. Estonia has created a Strategy Unit in the CoG that has helped the country better lead, align and implement its government programmes as well as its long-term strategies (Box 2.8).

Box 2.8. The Strategy Unit in the Office of the Government of Estonia

Estonia has a Strategy Unit in the Office of the Government in charge of translating the Coalition Agreement into a strategic four-year action plan called the Government Programme. The Strategy Unit translates the Government Programme into actionable commitments for implementation by the government.

The unit works with the other centre-of-government institutions and line ministries to translate the coalition's political commitments into the Government Programme and action plans. This includes refining policy objectives by sector and sub-sector along with the performance information needed to assess whether departments and ministries achieve the results the government commits to under its programme.

The Strategy Unit sustains close working relations with the network of deputy secretaries-general responsible for policy in line ministries for this exercise and monitoring performance as these action plans are being implemented. It also sustains a close working relationship with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that the Government Programme, National Competitiveness Strategy and multi-year budget framework are linked.

The Strategy Unit has allowed the Prime Minister to exercise quality control over all government-wide strategies and to decrease the number of strategies – notably through the Strategy Unit exercising its mandate in co-ordination with the Ministry of Finance. The unit has allowed establishing:

- clearer ties between the Government Programme, overarching national strategies, sector development plans, organisational development plans and the state budget
- better tools to set development plans and ensuring they are aligned with the Government Programme's overarching objectives
- improved development plans that demonstrate more thorough planning on the rationale for the plan's policy objectives, their alignment with the government's strategic objectives and the financial resources to implement these plans that align with the state budget
- clearer responsibilities and shared accountability for implementing priorities in the Government Programme
- closer monitoring of the implementation performance of the Government Programme
- better links between strategic planning and the budget process.

The Strategy Unit also ensures that all single-sector and horizontal strategies align with the Government Programme. During the process of creating or renewing strategies, the Strategy Unit ensures close communication with relevant ministries to ensure their strategies align with the government's single-sector and government-wide strategic objectives. To this end, ministry-based single-sector strategies must be accompanied by action plans that are presented to the government no more than three months after the strategy is adopted. They must be renewed every year.

Source: OECD (2015^[31]).

The Czech Republic lacks a performance framework to monitor the implementation of strategies

The OG lacks specific monitoring instruments and indicators to assess the implementation of key national strategies and the achievement of outcomes. To help define the CoG's purpose as the efficient and effective manager of the whole of government with a focus on results for, and with, citizens, it is important to establish a performance framework that describes the set of cross-agency joint goals and priority outcomes the CoG is working to accomplish. The policy document should detail how the government seeks to accomplish these objectives and include clear responsibilities for individual institutions. An example of a performance framework in a federal OECD country is the US Federal Performance Framework (Box 2.9), that presents an integrated overview of the government as a whole and could serve as inspiration for a CoG-focused performance framework in the Czech Republic. Another interesting example at the subnational level is the Scottish National Performance Framework (Box 2.9).

Box 2.9. Performance frameworks in OECD countries

United States

In the United States, a dedicated website (Performance.gov) communicates the goals and outcomes the federal government is working to accomplish, how it seeks to accomplish them and how agencies are performing. Agencies identify both short- and long-term goals to be reflected in four-year strategic plans, annual performance plans and a limited number of agency priority goals. The public can explore those goals and the progress being made to meet them on line on a central website that provides a comprehensive picture of government performance.

Based on the 2010 Government Performance and Results Modernization Act, the government-wide framework requires federal agencies to set performance goals that deliver results for the American people, establish management processes to review progress and regularly communicate the progress being achieved against those goals.

Scotland/United Kingdom

The Scottish government launched the first National Performance Framework in 2007. It set out in its purpose and outcomes its aim to measure national well-being beyond gross domestic product. Its purpose is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish by increasing sustainable economic growth. To help achieve its purpose, the framework sets out 11 “national outcomes” strictly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The framework measures Scotland's progress against the national outcomes. To do so, it uses 81 “national indicators”. These indicators measure national well-being and include a range of economic, social and environmental indicators. The framework includes an “interactive data dashboard”, which contains all the data held for each indicator.

This system aims to abolish departmental structures in the Scottish government to discourage silos and facilitate effective cross-cutting government and is based on a partnership approach across central and local government and all public services.

Sources: United States Government (n.d.^[32]); Scottish Government (2020^[33]).

Policy co-ordination and decision-making

Government-wide policy co-ordination is crucial to enable an integrated and coherent approach to public strategies and policies and ensure effective and co-ordinated implementation, especially in a context of limited financial and human resources. It is a necessary condition for better policy design, improved planning and better engagement with stakeholders to implement and evaluate complex strategies. The emergence of a growing number of horizontal and multidimensional challenges for governments, such as climate change, gender issues, inequality or recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, has also reinforced these co-ordination needs from the CoG. The trend toward the multiplication of administrative structures at the national and local levels also calls for governments to increase co-ordination capacities and instruments (OECD, 2020^[1]).

Through its central position, its proximity to the Prime Minister and its capacity to mobilise, the CoG plays a key role in steering the government agenda, co-ordinating public policies, and ensuring consistency on cross-cutting issues such as digitalisation or sustainable development. The CoG plays an important high-level co-ordination role in OECD countries to share the government's general orientations and ensure public policies are aligned with the government's programme and priorities, to harmonise cross-cutting national policies and sectoral policies, and to resolve potential difficulties or conflicts before Cabinet meetings. The CoG's co-ordination function also makes it possible to overcome the effects of silos between public institutions and ensure the coherence of initiatives carried out by the whole administration at all stages of the public policy development cycle, from their preparation to their implementation and evaluation. This is an essential function of the CoG in two-thirds of OECD countries, which must enable the implementation of the government's objectives and priorities by the entire administration and all public institutions (OECD, 2018^[2]).

The institutionalisation of strong decision-making and co-ordination mechanisms within the government makes it possible to strengthen the coherence of public policies. Cabinet meetings are the major decision-making instrument and ensure high-level alignment within the government. CoGs use a number of other instruments and mechanisms to strengthen and sustain interministerial co-ordination, particularly interministerial committees and various groups of high-level advisors led by the centre. In OECD countries, the CoG is also highly involved in organising cross-government policy co-ordination committees, including at the ministerial level (OECD, 2018^[10]). More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents reported organising meetings of ministers, confirming the CoG's close proximity to and involvement with the wider executive. Depending on the country and the governance system, these co-ordination mechanisms can take different forms and involve different levels of interlocutors (ministers, secretaries of state, directors of administration) (OECD, 2018^[2]).

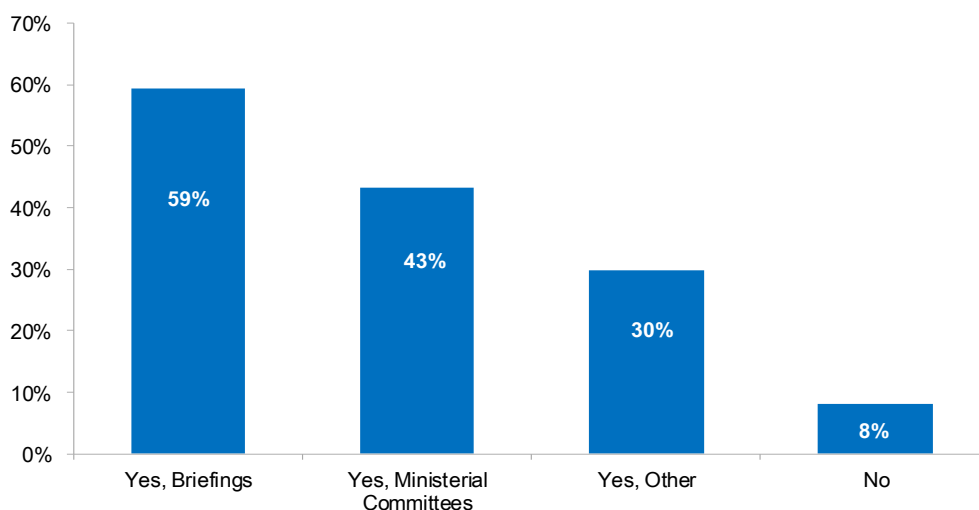
The Czech Republic has established a number of interministerial co-ordination instruments, particularly interministerial committees and public advisory bodies linked to the CoG or line ministries to support policy co-ordination and coherence in different fields. A dozen of these committees are under the responsibility of the CoG, covering strategic issues, horizontal challenges or minorities, including the National Security Council, the Government Legislative Council or the Committee for EU.

Various interministerial working groups are formally established under a specific ministry, in which different ministries are represented. They help advance priorities over time that only concern specific line ministries, or are not core to the present government's agenda but can also represent an attempt to overcome the absence of a governing role of the CoG and a manifestation of persistent strong departmentalism (silo mentality). Different ministries and entities the OECD met all pointed to the lack of co-ordination and alignment across policies and strategies and to the remaining silos in the administration. Further restoring and increasing the OG's capacities and instruments to co-ordinate decision-making and policies can help strengthen the steering and consistency of policies and strategies in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic has clear decision-making procedures and tools

In most OECD countries, Cabinet meetings are the principal forum for policy deliberation and decision-making (OECD, 2018^[31]). Most systems also involve committees of ministers, state secretaries and advisors to prepare and transmit advice to the Cabinet or the head of government. The centre plays an important role in preparing these meetings by verifying the quality of advice and supporting information, helping resolve disputes, and ensuring that any required procedures (consultation, RIA, articulation of financial and legal implications) are followed (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. The centre of government’s responsibility for co-ordinating the discussion of agenda items prior to discussion by the Cabinet in OECD countries



Source: OECD (2018^[10]).

The Czech Republic has robust decision-making instruments and mechanisms that align with other OECD countries’ practices. Regular government meetings and well-defined rules of procedures to submit documents to Cabinet are firmly established, led from the centre and routinely used by the whole of government. Their preparation and the process of submitting, commenting on and reviewing documents are supported by an electronic library, eKLEP. A number of public working and advisory bodies are also involved in preparing, reviewing and submitting documents for the government meetings.

Cabinet meetings are held on a weekly basis and preparations are underpinned by the Rules of Procedures

Government meetings are the key government decision-making instrument. They are held weekly, usually on Wednesdays, and are headed by the Prime Minister. They are prepared and supported by the OG, which is one of the OG’s key functions, as stated on the official government website. The Government Agenda Department within the OG is more specifically in charge of preparing and disseminating the agenda, supporting the organisation and logistics of the meeting, and circulating the proceedings of the meeting. Proceedings are published on the OG’s website and are publicly accessible.

The role, preparations and conduct of the government meetings are thoroughly defined by the Rules of Procedure approved by Government Resolution No. 610 of 16 September 1998 and amended several times (most recently by Government Resolution No. 145 of 2 March 2022). The government usually takes decisions based on written material submitted to it by a member of the government (exceptionally, if the

matter is urgent and cannot be postponed, the information can be given verbally). The material is submitted for opinion (“comment points”) through the electronic library, eKLEP, through which all government entities, local governments, interministerial advisory and working bodies, and other public institutions can submit materials for the government meeting. “The party presenting material for government meetings shall be a member of the government or, in cases laid down by law, the president of the Czech Statistical Office, the governor of the Czech National Bank or the ombudsman. Additional procedures are also planned for specific cases and documents” (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998^[7]). The comment points serve to communicate the opinions to the party presenting the material. Before being submitted to the government, each document for a government meeting shall be presented for opinion to all ministers, the Deputy Prime Minister and the director of the OG, as well as to the governor of the Czech National Bank if the matter is within its competences.

The Rules of Procedure include detailed organisational provisions and a schedule for documents in preparation for the government meeting, and plan for exceptions and different cases depending on the nature (legislative, non-legislative) of the document. For instance, the time limit for an opinion is ten working days, unless the party sending the material for an opinion sets a longer time limit. One week before the weekly government meeting, submitted proposals are included in the preparation of the revised programme that is signed by the Prime Minister. The programme is then published on the Thursday of the week before the meeting and edited on Monday according to ministries’ requests before the government meeting on Wednesday (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998^[7]).

The Rules of Procedure also aim to help resolve conflicts and disagreements. When two strategies conflict, or there is a disagreement on a crucial comment, discrepancies should be found and resolved through the interagency commenting process. Meetings can be held between the ministries involved at the initiative of the one submitting the materials, usually those at deputy minister or state secretary level (Government of the Czech Republic, 1998^[7]). If conflicts are not settled through this process, the issue is taken to the government, but this rarely happens as most conflicts are settled during the interagency commenting process, under the chairperson of the OG.

The OG supervises and supports the implementation of the Rules of Procedure and is one of the “commenting agencies” during the inter-departmental commenting procedure before the document is submitted to the government meeting. The various departments and sections of the OG can submit comments. All comment points have the same weight in the process and all “essential” comments have to be settled. Different departments in the OG play a specific role in preparing the Cabinet meetings. While the Department of the Government Agenda focuses on logistical and organisational aspects and on the agenda preparation, the Department for Legislation is tasked with reviewing the documents’ legal content and conformity. The legal review and quality control of items for the Cabinet meeting is a typical role of CoGs in OECD countries (OECD, 2018^[2]). In the Czech Republic, this review is also carried out by the Government Legislative Council under the OG.

The Government Legislative Council also plays an important role in the procedure and its opinion is accorded significant weight. Legislative materials follow a specific procedure as they need to receive the opinion of the Government Legislative Council (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022^[34]). It has been reported to the OECD that, in practice, documents that receive a negative opinion from the Government Legislative Council are usually not submitted to the government meeting by the entity that proposed them. Hence, the mechanism proves to be effective.

Sixteen councils contribute to the decision-making process in the Czech Republic on various topics and with different attributions

Decision-making processes in the Czech Republic are supported by 16 interministerial councils that can submit materials in the preparatory procedures for the Cabinet meeting and participate in the interagency commenting procedure. The councils contribute to decision-making on a vast array of topics and with

different attributions. Most have limited powers, as they only provide recommendations to line ministries about strategies. They can produce their own strategies and submit comments, but are not decision-making bodies on documents and their capacity to influence the reform agenda is limited. The councils' role and functioning will be further described later in this chapter.

Additional instruments exist to support whole-of-government co-ordination

In addition to councils and the Rules of Procedure, the Czech government has developed a number of additional formal and information instruments to foster co-ordination, including on cross-cutting topics. Interviews carried out for this review underlined that the development of some of them also corresponded to a need to compensate for the decreasing co-ordination role of the OG observed over recent years in the Czech Republic that encouraged ministries and agencies to co-ordinate directly among themselves to ensure a minimum level of co-ordination.

Informal and ad hoc co-ordination has helped support the overall functioning of the administration

With the decrease in co-ordination instances in the Czech Republic, informal co-ordination and exchanges have increased across the government driven by initiatives from units and individuals in different ministries. They have helped maintain the overall co-ordination of key activities, implementing some functions and overcoming institutional “silos”. These mechanisms and exchanges have proven crucial to support the functioning of the administration, especially in a context of the weak co-ordination from the centre. For instance, the Strategic Unit of the MORD has played a key role in strategic planning, continued to facilitate the working group on the national strategy registry and supported co-ordination across ministries on strategic documents, providing methodology and guidance. The RIA team of the OG has also offered support and advice on implementing RIAs in different ministries.

Informal and *ad hoc* exchanges among senior advisors and experts are common practices in OECD countries. They contribute to the overall co-ordination and support genuine exchanges across the administration, but should not supersede formal co-ordination and decision-making processes. In some instances, countries have even organised informal Cabinet meetings, such as the evening sessions in Finland, to support dialogue and continued co-ordination besides formal decision-making processes.

The horizontal priority on digitalisation is being transferred and managed by the Office of the Government and will be supported by the new Digital and Information Agency; this could be considered for a limited series of cross-cutting priorities

The emergence of an increasing number of cross-cutting challenges requires alignment and steering from the centre, particularly embracing the digital and green transitions. The CoG is well-placed to steer and co-ordinate those initiatives with its convening power and its traditional co-ordination role. CoGs in OECD countries play a crucial role in cross-ministerial initiatives, by leading them (in 80% of cases) and providing support and facilitation (70%). CoGs do not have the capacity, nor are they intended to steer all cross-cutting priorities; they usually focus on a limited set of priorities. Over half of CoGs surveyed by the OECD cited digital transformation as one of the top three priorities managed from the centre (OECD, 2018^[21]), and 32% of OECD countries have established dedicated bodies within their CoG tasked with leading the climate portfolio overall.

In the Czech Republic, digitalisation is a horizontal priority that is currently being covered by different ministries at different levels, including the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance. Digitalisation has moved to the OG through the creation of a position of Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and a dedicated department, supported by the Digital and Information Agency that was established in January 2023 under Amendment No. 471/2022 to Act No. 12/2020. This development could help the

Czech Republic develop a consistent strategy and better co-ordinate the digitalisation of the country and of the government. The OG can thus develop its ability to provide strategic steering and co-ordination of such a cross-cutting topic for the whole of government while the different ministries can continue to carry out certain activities and maintain their related capacities. The United Kingdom is undergoing an effective digital transformation through a central unit and co-ordination networks (Box 2.10).

Another example of addressing cross-cutting topics has been the establishment of the interministerial Steering Committee on the Energy Crisis led by the OG to articulate a whole-of-government response. This is an example of the government's agility to handle and steer from the centre an immediate, horizontal challenge.

This approach to digitalisation and the energy crisis could also be considered for a limited set of other cross-cutting topics that are considered priorities by the government. Considering the challenges linked to decarbonising the economy in the Czech Republic, a similar approach could be followed for climate change and sustainable development currently led exclusively by the Ministry of the Environment and the Council of Sustainable Development with limited convening power, as outlined above.

Box 2.10. United Kingdom: Effective digital transformation through a central unit and co-ordination networks

With its ambitious digital strategy (UK Digital Strategy) established in 2013, the United Kingdom ranks in the top 5 of the OECD Digital Government ranking 2019. The government issued a new cross-governmental Digital Strategy in 2022.

The Governmental Digital Service: The central driving force behind the national digital strategy

The United Kingdom has opted for centralised governance of its national digitalisation strategy (with the aim of becoming “digital by default”), placing responsibility for the digital portfolio within the Cabinet Office with the creation of a dedicated digitalisation unit, the Governmental Digital Service (GDS), since 2011.

The GDS operates as a central team within the Cabinet Office with the role of a specialised and mandated agency to implement the digital strategy and the strategic co-ordination and monitoring of government initiatives. To ensure cross-departmental co-operation, the GDS is led by the Ministerial Group on Government Digital Technology, with heads of digital, data and technology from central government departments. It is also advised by the GDS Advisory Board, the Data Steering Group, and the Privacy and Consumer Advisory Group.

The UK government, therefore, relies on a key competent authority at the centre of government (GDS) with a strong mandate. At the same time, government departments are empowered to implement their digital strategies, with standards and transformation programmes set, supported and monitored centrally by GDS teams.

Steering networks: The Technology and Digital Leaders Network and the Data Leaders Network

For effective implementation and co-ordination, the GDS chairs two major ongoing co-ordination networks:

1. the Technology and Digital Leaders Network (2017) is made up of digital and technology leaders from key government departments, as well as leaders from each of the devolved administrations
2. the Data Leaders Network (2015) aims to ensure that departments' approach to data use and management delivers the government's policy and operational objectives.

Sources: OECD (2019^[35]); Ozols and Nielsen (2018^[36]); UK National Audit Office (2017^[37]).

The centre of government lacks instruments to identify government priorities and translate them into co-ordinated operational plans and actions, thus hampering their implementation

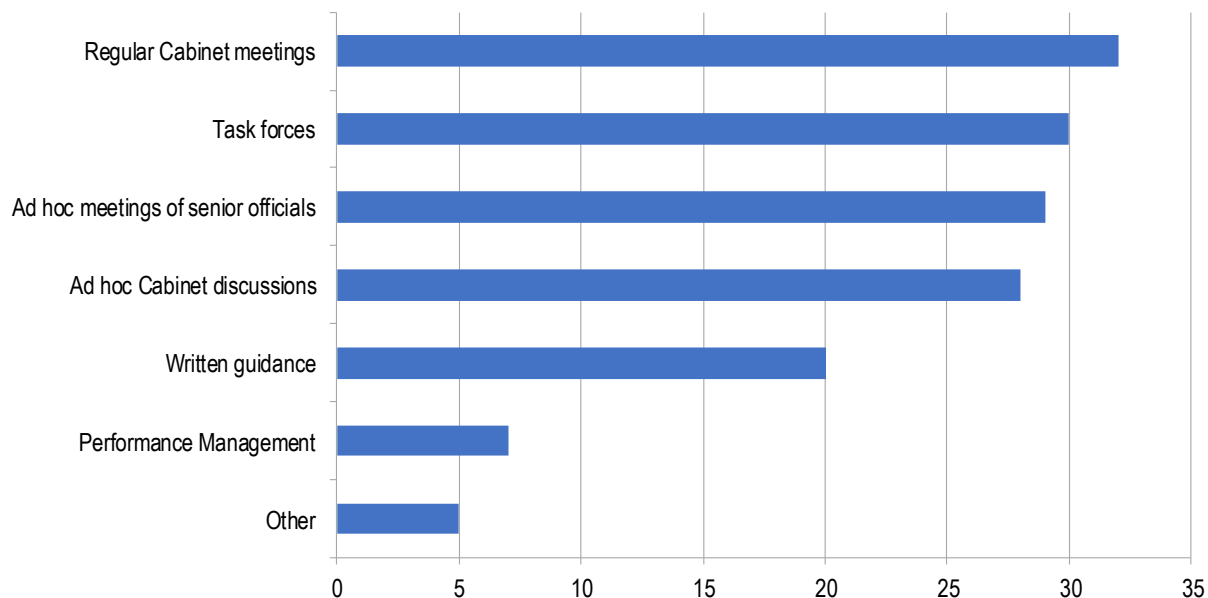
CoGs in OECD countries play a key role in driving priorities and ensuring they are translated into ministerial programmes and actions. The CoG uses interministerial co-ordination bodies to steer priorities; influence the strategies, policies and measures developed by ministries; and ensure consistency with the government programme. In the Czech Republic, the OG lacks key instruments and processes to identify and steer priorities, such as formal meetings to discuss plans and priorities in preparation for the Cabinet meeting, a government action plan to translate the policy statement into action, a policy development framework (including indicators and follow-up mechanisms), and human capabilities to steer the implementation of priorities and lead the co-ordination of the programmes and plans prepared by ministries besides the government meeting (OECD, 2018_[10]).

There is a lack of recurrent, formal meetings to prepare government meetings; most preparations go through the Rules of Procedure

The preparation of the government meeting agenda follows a formal and structured procedure that remains very logistical and organisational in nature. In most OECD countries, the CoG drives and co-ordinates the agenda of government meetings, bringing a strategic perspective in addition to the organisational matters. For instance, in Canada, the CoG (Privy Council Office) checks the consistency of submitted documents and items with government priorities and discusses them during interministerial Cabinet committees before the Cabinet meeting. The OG could take more of a leading role in defining priorities and strategic topics and documents to be addressed at the government meeting, based on a review of documents submitted through the Rules of Procedure and other government priority policies and measures.

There are currently no formal interministerial meetings in the Czech Republic to prepare the government meetings. Consequently, most of the preparations for the government meetings go through the Rules of Procedure, which remain very formal and driven by the review of written documents. Most of the existing interministerial councils focus on one specific theme or area, but the Czech Republic does not have systematic interministerial meetings to prepare the government meeting on a weekly basis. A significant number of OECD countries have established formal interministerial mechanisms to discuss key priorities and materials and ensure policy co-ordination in preparation for the Cabinet meeting, ranging from task forces and *ad hoc* meetings to written guidance (Figure 2.4). In 80% of OECD countries, the CoG is responsible for organising pre-Cabinet meetings of senior ministry officials, usually state secretaries. This helps anticipate issues, resolve conflicts and ensure that the Cabinet meeting is focused on decision-making. It enables better co-ordination and discussions, in addition to formal comments. For instance, Spain has a weekly meeting of secretaries in preparation for the Cabinet meeting.

Figure 2.4. Main policy co-ordination instruments used by the centre of government in OECD countries



Note: Number of OECD member and partner countries using the instrument.

Source: OECD (2018_[10]).

The Policy Statement is insufficiently translated into operational plans and monitored

The Policy Statement of the Government is the key strategic document prepared by the government. CoGs in many OECD countries prepare an operational plan to implement the government programme on a yearly or multiannual basis that will help them support the achievement of the measures by the whole-of-government and monitor progress. In the Czech Republic, the Policy Statement is not translated into a detailed annual operation plan designed and monitored by the OG. Instead, two different work plans are prepared following a bottom-up approach. The OG provides a template and the impulse to draft these documents but has reported limited capabilities to design it based on the government's priorities or to challenge it. In the OG, the Government Legislative Department prepares the annual legislative work plan that is filled in by ministries according to their work programme for the year. The same logic is followed for the preparation of a non-legislative annual work plan. However, there is limited review against the consistency with the Policy Statement and the government programme, and limited challenges directed towards ministries. The OG lacks capacity to steer this work and monitor the implementation of both plans during the year, leading to gaps and inconsistencies in achieving the government's priorities.

The government meeting and its preparations are key for ensuring alignment and consistency with the Policy Statement. Before documents are added to the government meeting agenda, they follow the Rules of Procedure, which include a review by the OG that allows for the consistency review. However, according to the Rules of Procedures, the OG does not have a privileged final role in reviewing it against the coherence of the Policy Statement and cannot reject items. This is a crucial role of the CoG in other OECD countries, with 95% of them reviewing that items submitted to Cabinet meetings are aligned with the government programme, and 40% of them being able to reject items and return them to line ministries on this basis (OECD, 2018_[10]).

The CoG has limited capacity to steer, monitor or the support delivery of the government's priorities

The OG has neither reported any specific instrument or mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Policy Statement nor of government policy priorities on a regular basis, nor to support its delivery, such as a dedicated unit or a dashboard. More than 75% of CoGs in OECD countries monitor the implementation of strategic priorities and ensure that line ministries' proposals are linked to the government's overarching priorities. For that purpose, a number of them have set up dashboards with key performance indicators led from the centre, specific units within the CoG, and interministerial bodies to steer and deliver the priorities and measures of the government programme. More than 60% of them report having a specific unit or team in charge of focusing and tracking progress on the implementation of policy priorities (OECD, 2018^[2]).

While the legislative and non-legislative work plans could provide a basis for an operational follow-up of the implementation of recommendations, they are not used for that purpose. They would also need to be designed and developed in connection with the Policy Statement's priorities and measures, highlighting through which vehicle and plans they would be implemented by the responsible line ministries.

A number of OECD countries have developed capacities to steer and support the delivery of government priorities, moving from a "monitoring" to a proactive "delivery" approach. For instance, the United Kingdom has established a delivery unit in the Prime Minister's Office and in the CoG and set up the Declaration on Government Reform (Box 2.11). It also established outcome delivery plans discussed earlier in this chapter, which set out each government department's priority outcomes and the department's strategy for achieving them (see Box 2.4).

Box 2.11. The United Kingdom's ability to steer and support the delivery of government priorities

The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit

The UK Delivery Unit was established in 2001 within the Prime Minister's Office to accelerate the improvement of and access to public services nationwide. This unit, known as the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU), was developed to implement, monitor and deliver the government's policy priorities, particularly in priority areas such as health, education, security and transport. As a result of the PMDU's work, most of the UK government's policy priorities, from access to public transport to crime rates, have improved significantly. The success of the UK experience is partly due to the strong political will and resources that the PMDU has been given, as well as the clarity of the policy objectives to be implemented. The establishment of quarterly meetings and regular updates have also contributed, ensuring effective co-ordination and regular dialogue between the PMDU and other relevant government departments. To enable close and informed monitoring of priority measures and their impact, the PMDU has designed specific performance indicators related to the government's priorities.

Due to political and organisational changes within the Cabinet Office over the years, the PMDU was disbanded in 2010. A year later, it was replaced by a new structure, the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit, with a similar mandate but a different approach, more focused on supporting the implementation of priority policies and less interventionist in nature. The unit has recently been using outcome delivery plans to ensure that priorities are aligned and implemented by line ministries, with dashboards to report and communicate the results.

Declaration on Government Reform

Public administration reform is one important area covered by the current delivery structure in the UK government. The Declaration on Government Reform outlines how the civil service and ministers will reform the public administration together to deliver better services and policies for citizens.

The declaration sets our priorities for reform in three areas:

1. people – ensuring that the right people are working in the right places with the right incentives
2. performance – modernising the operation of government, being clear-eyed about its priorities, and objective in their evaluation of what is and is not working
3. partnership – strengthening the bond between ministers and officials, always operating as one team from policy through to delivery, and between the central government and institutions outside it.

The declaration was officially signed by each minister to ensure buy-in.

Sources: Gold (2017^[38]); Centre for Public Impact (2016^[39]); World Bank (2010^[40]); Harrison (2016^[41]); Government of the United Kingdom (2021^[42]).

Priorities are followed by advisors to the Prime Minister, who are experts on some subjects but are not in charge of steering the implementation of priorities

The Government Programme includes a wide range of measures the government must implement and represent a commitment to voters and coalition parties. In the Czech Republic, advisors to the Prime Minister have been assigned different themes and areas of expertise. However, they rather act as idea providers and are not part of the machinery of government, with limited interactions with ministries. Advisors do not follow the design and implementation of key measures linked to the Government Programme with individual ministries in charge of the topic. This leaves gaps in the alignment between the Government Programme, priorities identified by the OG and programmes developed by ministries. Thematic experts in most CoGs usually closely follow and support the translation of government strategic priorities in line ministries, but this is not the case in the Czech Republic. This results in a lack of guidance and steering on government priorities.

There is a lack of guidance or support capacities from the CoG on policy and regulatory development

Through their central location and co-ordination role, CoGs are uniquely placed to set standards on policy and strategic documents and provide guidance and capacity to line ministries to ensure these quality standards are met. In 91% of OECD countries, CoGs are responsible for ensuring items presented to Cabinet are aligned with certain standards of quality in a format that clearly defines the different options and their implications (OECD, 2018^[10]). In Ireland and Norway, for example, the CoG has issued various guidelines with standards and good practices for policy development, including consultation requirements. In the Czech Republic, there is an overall lack of such a framing guidance from the CoG.

There is a general lack of policy development guidance or support in the CoG, leading to proposals of varying quality

In the Czech Republic, the MORD prepares guidelines and methodologies for developing documents. The Methodology for Preparing Public Strategies mentioned above, for example, could be more user-friendly and detailed, and its use is further supported by the CoG for the whole of government. Ministries report limited guidance or support for policy development from the CoG and develop policies according to their own standards. This affects the consistency of the policy proposals submitted and results in proposals of varying quality. One frequently mentioned element for improving the use of policy development tools, instruments and methodologies is the need to easily access information and documents.

A common way of sharing guidance on policy development in different departments takes place through training, coaching and mentoring from colleagues and line managers, in addition to formal guidance tools and a handbook. In particular, Strateduka is a training course available for the public administration focusing on developing competencies in strategic planning and management, supported by the MORD. The course covers the design, preparation and implementation of strategies with experience sharing from practitioners (Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, 2020^[43]). Providing peer exchange and learning opportunities both within departments and between departments through mentoring and informal networks of policymakers can also foster knowledge about policy development; cross-pollination of tools, instruments and methodologies; and share best practices on what has worked well. To create more opportunities for on-the-job learning, adequate overlap with previous post holders and policy development manuals from previous incumbents could also be useful. In addition, there should be better use of evidence in policy development and a stronger link to evaluation. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (see Box 2.6) plays a prominent role in building an evidence-based and data-driven culture in Ireland.

There is pressure for more efficiency through “systematisation” processes in the public administration and the Office of the Government that might conflict with the need to strengthen functions and capacities

The Czech Republic needs to strengthen functions and capacities in the OG and in the public administration at large, particularly on co-ordination, strategic planning activities, and strategic and analytical capabilities. Nevertheless, as reflected in the Policy Statement of the Government and confirmed by fact-finding mission participants, there is pressure to increase the efficiency of the public administration, with an objective to reduce the size of the civil service. This results in frequent “systemisation” processes, the latest of which have taken place since April 2022. While the systematisation process consists of the expression of HR needs from ministries regarding financial constraints and aims to improve efficiency, it has, in practice, been linked to staff reductions. This could potentially conflict with the existing need for additional capacities and resources and will require a fine-tuned identification and prioritisation of the needs and of the planned reductions to ensure it helps improve the efficiency of the administration and increase its capacity to perform its key functions and prepare robust, evidence-based strategies, policies and regulations. The Economic Council of the Government has recently proposed new proposals on streamlining the civil service with a focus on reducing the number of civil servants.

Government councils

Policy advisory bodies and systems can support a better evidence-based and co-ordinated approach into policymaking systems and help break down administrative silos. Arm’s-length policy advisory bodies play a special role in the policy advisory system, underpinning the knowledge infrastructure around governments. Often close enough to government to be up to date on ongoing policy challenges, they have

the potential to act as knowledge brokers entrusted with the capacity to provide neutral and independent findings and policy advice that can fit into the policy cycle and help maintain trust in public institutions.

OECD countries have established a wide range of these bodies with different timespans and structures, usually providing them with clear mandates, roles and compositions. The challenge of striking a balance between their autonomy and their connection and integration into policymaking processes is a crucial one in OECD countries and can also be applied in the Czech Republic (OECD, 2017^[44]). OECD countries also frequently use working groups and committees as co-ordination instruments. A total of 63% of the CoG respondents to the OECD questionnaire resort to working groups to deal with policy co-ordination with line ministries and agencies. Working groups are most commonly established through laws, decrees or other normative acts to focus on particular issues or problems, sometimes with concrete deadlines for developing studies or solutions to challenges. They are usually comprised of several different ministries and institutions. In several countries, the working group is given a specific mandate with target deliverables and a deadline to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that it fulfils its original objectives. Integrating committees and working groups into the decision-making process is also essential to ensure that their policy documents, suggestions and recommendations are taken into account and examined.

The Czech Republic has established advisory and working groups under the OG and line ministries. Their purpose is to support the activities of the government in the area in which they operate and assist in interministerial work and co-ordination.

Government councils are established policy instruments for co-ordination in the Czech Republic and address horizontal or sectoral themes

The Czech Republic has 16 councils, some of them under the Office of the Government or line ministries

The Czech Republic has created 16 councils under the OG and a number of advisory and working bodies under line ministries. Most of these were originally created in the OG, but some were recently relocated under line ministries. The Legislative Council of the Government, the State Security Council and the Government Council for Human Rights and the Government Council for Gender Equality (Box 2.12) are some of the key councils that remain under the OG, among many others. These councils differ widely in nature as some are tasked with horizontal themes (legislative, EU affairs, ethics, information society) while others are focused on specific groups. They can help steer and co-ordinate cross-cutting issues from the centre and ensure strategic alignment, but also provide visibility and representation to some minorities and help them address specific issues. Other advisory and working bodies have also been established under line ministries in charge of a specific policy area. An example is the Council of Public Administration. These bodies address horizontal themes, with the responsibility for the ministry in charge of the council to mobilise other ministries, or sectoral themes, such as the Government Council for Energy and Raw Materials Strategy.

The Czech government has established formal Rules of Procedure for their functioning and the establishment of new structures that consist mainly of standard model documents. The working and advisory bodies' activities are governed by their statute, Rules of Procedure or other binding documents. According to Government Resolution No. 175 of 20 February 2002, members of the government are obliged to create statutes and Rules of Procedure based on model (standardised) documents when establishing new working or advisory bodies. According to the government resolution, as amended by Government Resolution No. 189 of 21 March 2018, chairpersons of working or advisory bodies are obliged to regularly publish annual reports on the activities of the working or advisory body (Government of the Czech Republic, 2018^[45]).

Box 2.12. The Government Council for Gender Equality

Established by a Government Resolution, the Government Council for Gender Equality is the permanent advisory body in gender equality attached to the Office of the Government. Its mandate entails, among others, identifying current problems in this area, coordinating the main directions of ministerial policies in gender equality; discussing and recommending the key conceptual directions of the government's progress in promoting gender equality, especially through the processing of proposals for policies, measures and initiatives on gender equality, to the Government; and, monitoring the implementation of strategic documents and evaluating then effectiveness of measures taken towards the achievement of gender equality.

The Council gathers high-level and cross-governmental representation to coordinate the horizontal and cross-cutting priority area of advancing gender equality. The Chair of the Council is the member of the Government (i.e., Cabinet Member) responsible for the gender equality agenda – currently the Prime Minister. Members of the Council, including two vice-chairs, are also appointed and dismissed by the Chair. This comprises of the representatives of the line ministries, ideally at the level of the Deputy Ministers, or, in certain cases a State Secretary (upon the proposal of the relevant Ministers), of other central organs (e.g., the Czech Statistical Office, the Public Defender of Human Rights), of non-governmental sector, and experts. The Gender Equality Department located in the Office of Government serves as its Secretariat.

The Council can also establish committees dealing with specific issues regarding its area of competence (e.g., domestic and gender-based violence, gender equality in the job market) as well as working groups as needed to deal with specific issues.

Sources: (OECD, Forthcoming^[46]); (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022^[47])

Councils carry out different functions and have been established under different legislative bases, leading to different levels of effectiveness and clarity on their roles and objectives

There are considerable differences in functions and powers among the existing councils and advisory and working bodies in the Czech Republic. These differences are due to the variety of themes that they cover, some being horizontal, others sectoral, still others relate to the issues faced by specific sub-groups (such as the Roma minority) and the promotion of their interests. This creates large discrepancies in their role and composition, with a focus on expertise in some cases or on representation in others, particularly for the councils related to minorities under the OG and its Department of Human Rights and Protection of Minorities. These councils are examined in more detail in Chapter 1.

These differences across councils also partly stem from the differences in legislative bases, leading to different levels of effectiveness and clarity of the councils' roles and objectives. For example, the Legislative Council is established by law (Government of the Czech Republic, 1969^[3]). It is an apolitical entity as its members are experts such as lawyers, academia, etc., representing themselves in the council, not their profession. This contributes to the council's prestige and power, bringing expertise to provide legal advice and review for the government. The other councils are established mostly by decree and are composed of ministers, deputy ministers and other senior officials, as well as representatives of civil society, some of which represent specific interests and are more politically driven bodies.

All these bodies have been established as permanent bodies and remain in place when the government changes, making the overall policy advisory system stable. There have been some revisions and transfers of councils in the recent past. However, councils do not change or are not dissolved in line with government

priorities or when their mandate has been fulfilled. This creates a proliferation of bodies. The typology between permanent and *ad hoc* bodies is very common in OECD countries. The Czech Republic could consider distinguishing between those with a clear, timely objective, for instance preparing a strategy or helping the government reach certain objectives linked to its programme, and permanent bodies that support horizontal co-ordination over the long run. While they publish annual reports, reviews of the efficiency and usefulness of these bodies over time are not carried out on a regular basis (OECD, 2017^[44]).

Numerous government councils and bodies do not fulfil a policy co-ordination role and are not currently fora to debate and agree upon policy priorities and key actions

Most government councils and bodies do not fulfil the role of interministerial policy co-ordination and alignment on transversal issues and are currently not the fora where policy priorities and key actions are debated and agreed upon. Most of them are tasked with preparing and commenting on strategies, discussing activities on the related topics, and following the implementation of strategies, but do not support high-level decision-making or policy action in their own fields. Their capacity to influence the government agenda is limited. In addition, as reported during interviews, most councils meet two to five times a year, but some do not meet on a regular basis and have not met in more than six months. A number of them have been reported to be more discussion fora than active co-ordination bodies where key policies and measures are aligned, and their integration into decision-making processes is limited in practice. Their composition results in a lack of legitimacy or expertise to co-ordinate and support decision-making. Part of the issue comes from the fact that member organisations, particularly ministries, sometimes send lower level officials than expected who, in some councils, such as the councils under the OG's Department of Human Rights and Protection of Minorities, cannot take decisions at the council level. In particular, it was reported during interviews that representatives of ministries sent to replace the usual high-level participant (minister or deputy minister) often do not have voting rights, i.e. are not invested with the power to vote in the council on behalf of the minister, making it impossible to take decisions during these meetings.

When used properly, government working and advisory bodies could contribute extensively to improving policy co-ordination, enhancing the visibility and whole-of-government ownership of key policy actions, and consolidating and aligning sectoral strategies.

Councils are differently integrated into the policy and decision-making processes

Councils have different roles and are differently integrated into the policy and decision-making processes, with a strong role played in particular by the Legislative Council and the Committee for EU Affairs. For example, the Legislative Council has the mandate to receive all proposals and its chair is responsible for co-ordinating the preparation and drafting of regulations. The Legislative Council also has the power to return draft laws to ministries to adjust the shortcomings. Although it does not have formal decision-making power, when the council issues a statement, the government usually takes it into consideration and revises documents and positions accordingly. The Committee for EU Affairs determines positions for the administration and the members of the Cabinet *vis-à-vis* the policies in the Council of the European Union. The committee prepares the meeting to co-ordinate with line ministries and the OG and prepares the Prime Minister's mandate for the European Council. It has proven efficient in preparing the Czech Republic's co-ordinated strategies and positions for the EU.

A number of other councils and advisory and working bodies can submit their strategies and documents for review and provide comments on the materials submitted by others through the government's interagency comment procedure. Their participation in strategic discussions and in the core preparations of the government agenda remains limited. Their key issues and priorities are not always reflected in the Policy Statement or in key horizontal strategic documents. While they can submit and comment on documents through the government Rules of Procedure, their influence appears to be very often limited in this process. Few of them have the capacity to put items on the government agenda and have sometimes

limited convening power and connection to the centre when they are not under the OG. A number of them also face a lack of prioritisation and interest from the centre when their work does not correspond to the centre's stated policy and strategic priorities. Most bodies suffer from insufficient access to high-level policymakers to transform strategies and actions agreed upon by the body into priority policies and measures.

Involving the centre in the committee or appointing interlocutors for each council in the OG could help put their topics under the scrutiny and supervision of the centre, which could help move their topics up on the government's agenda. Box 2.13 discusses the example of the Irish National Economic and Social Council, a strategic council supported by the CoG with a specific work programme. Better integrating committees into the decision-making process leading to the Cabinet meeting is also crucial. Canada provides an example of how interministerial committees can play an important role in the decision-making process (Box 2.14). While the OG does not have the capacity to steer and support all topics and councils – nor should it – it needs to be empowered to lead and co-ordinate those that correspond to the government's key priorities, under the chairpersonship of the Prime Minister. This could mean reconsidering the location of some councils and ensuring that the OG has the capacity and structures to carry out this role.

Box 2.13. The Irish National Economic and Social Council

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established in 1973 and advises the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) on strategic policy issues relating to Ireland's sustainable economic, social and environmental development. The members of the NESC are representatives of business and employers' organisations, trade unions, agricultural and farming organisations, community and voluntary organisations, and environmental organisations, as well as heads of government departments and independent experts. The composition of the NESC means that it plays an important and unique role in bringing different perspectives from civil society to the government. This helps the NESC to analyse the challenges facing Irish society and develop a shared understanding among its members of how to tackle these challenges. The NESC meetings are chaired by the secretary general of the Department of the Taoiseach. At each meeting, the NESC discusses reports drafted by the NESC secretariat. The NESC's work programme is decided on a three-year basis, by the NESC, with inputs from the Department of the Taoiseach.

Source: OECD (n.d.^[22]).

Box 2.14. Cabinet committees in Canada

Cabinet committees in Canada play a crucial role in reviewing and preparing materials for Cabinet meetings. They carry out most of the Cabinet's day-to-day work and review proposals in their field before submission to Cabinet. There are currently ten such committees, some of which are permanent and others which are related to government priorities or current events (Cabinet Committee on Government Agenda, Results and Communications; Treasury Board; Cabinet Committee on Operations; Cabinet Committee on the Economy and the Environment; Cabinet Committee on Reconciliation; Cabinet Committee on Health and Social Affairs; Cabinet Committee on International Affairs and Public Security; Cabinet Committee on Federal Response to Coronavirus [COVID-19]; Cabinet Sub-Committee on Litigation Management; Incident Response Group). They have their own membership and areas of responsibility, which are determined by the Prime Minister (with the exception

of the Treasury Board, whose terms of reference and membership are established by law). One of the committees' tasks is to consider policy proposals submitted to them, then circulate their recommendations to the Cabinet, which ratifies the recommendations.

The Cabinet Committee on Agenda, Results and Communications is responsible for dealing with major issues of national unity and the government's strategic agenda. It also monitors progress against the government's priorities, co-ordinates the implementation of the government's overall action plan and considers strategic communications.

Source: Prime Minister of Canada (2021^[48]).

The location of the councils leads to inconsistencies in their focus, especially on horizontal priorities assigned to line ministries

The location of the councils also has an influence on their activities and their integration into decision-making processes. Locating councils whose work is related to the Prime Minister's priorities in the CoG allows interministerial co-ordination and steering from the centre and benefits from its convening power. This also sends a signal to ministries regarding the importance of the issue for the government. However, CoGs also need to keep the focus on leading a limited number of councils that correspond to the government's priorities. Differences in where the councils are located lead to inconsistencies in their focus and importance. The Committee for EU Affairs' position in the OG helps its steering and co-ordination role on EU affairs across the government and ensures it has the required convening power and capacity. However, when councils located in a line ministry are tasked with horizontal priorities, steering, co-ordinating and implementation strategies can be challenging, with a lack of convening power or capacity from the ministry. An example of this is the Council for Sustainable Development: according to stakeholders met with during the fact-finding mission, this council's influence has gradually diminished since 2018 when it was moved from the OG to the Ministry of the Environment. Its convening power has decreased as it is no longer located in the centre, and is further away from the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Its role in strategic planning is also weaker, as the strategy for and topic of sustainable development is mostly seen from a green lens while the Czech Republic's key strategic document, Czech Republic 2030, focuses on the country's sustainable development as a broad, far-reaching concept. It also undermines the climate change priority and the need for the Czech Republic to decarbonise the economy by not putting it on top of the government agenda and under the supervision of the OG.

Councils that are not located under line ministries must be strongly integrated into decision-making processes through regular exchanges and participation of the OG, such as advisors to the Prime Minister, to ensure political support and alignment with the government's priorities.

There is no standard for the frequency of meetings and levels of attendance

The frequency of meetings and levels of attendance vary considerably across councils. For example, the Committee for EU Affairs meets every week at the working level and once a month at the Cabinet level, while the Council for Public Administration only has five meetings per year. Other councils report fewer meetings. This has an impact on the councils' influence and activities, and their capacity to align on documents, comment on others and take decisions.

Some OECD countries are working on defining clear rules related to the number of meetings and annual attendance to streamline and harmonise the councils' activities. There are no such rules in the Czech Republic. France cancels committees that have not met over the past two years and has established strict rules under which a new committee can only be established if another one is dissolved.

Most councils lack the necessary capacities to fulfil their mandate on strategy and policy development

Most councils are tasked with developing, co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of strategies in their respective fields by the Prime Minister through decree. Draft strategies are very often prepared by the ministry chairing the council, and in some instances collaboratively by members of the council.

The resources available vary considerably across councils. Most councils do not have the capacity to develop strategies or key policy documents by themselves due to a small secretariat and support staff. Their role in designing policies and strategies is unclear and seems to vary considerably across councils, with most lacking capacity or expertise. Guidelines on policy and strategy development could further support the councils' activities in that regard. For example, while the Committee for EU Affairs is composed of approximately 40 staff, the Government Council for National Minorities in the OG or the Council for Public Administration have few staff members in their secretariat. A mapping of councils' current resources and practices would allow comparing and revising their resources according to their work programme.

Most councils have working groups that can support their work at a technical level on sub-topics or on specific strategies. These working groups usually support the development, co-ordination and monitoring of strategies, and evaluate documents to be approved by the council. Working groups are set up to deal with current tasks within the remit of committees or specific issues within the competence of the council. It was often reported to the OECD during interviews that these outputs, particularly the monitoring and evaluation activities, rarely led to corrective actions or updates to the plan, making them rather formal exercises.

The high number of councils and their permanent nature mean that an important amount of human and financial resources are mobilised to co-ordinate on all topics covered. The absence of general monitoring of their activities contributes to the variety of practices as well as uncertainties regarding the efficiency of some of the councils and their relevance over time in light of their recent achievements and the importance of the topic they cover on the government's agenda.

The Government Council for Public Administration lacks effectiveness in steering public administration reforms

The council's mandate is clearly established and includes several working groups, including one focused on public administration reform

The Government Council for Public Administration, chaired by the Minister of the Interior, was established by Government Resolution No. 680 of 27 August 2014 and its activities are regulated by its statute. The Department for Strategic Development and Coordination of Public Administration of the Ministry of the Interior serves as its secretariat. The council's composition brings together central, regional and local governments. It consists of the president of the council, who is always the minister of the interior, and the executive vice-president of the council, the deputy minister of the interior, whose section includes public administration issues. The council also comprises a representative from the MORD, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, at least at the level of deputy ministers, as well as a representative from the OG; the Office for Personal Data Protection; a unit from the Ministry of the Interior, which is the guarantor of the state service; the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic; the Association of Local Governments of the Czech Republic; the Association for Rural Renewal of the Czech Republic; the Association of Secretaries of Municipal Authorities of the Czech Republic; and the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic.

In its activities, the council provides the government with information and knowledge to support decision-making on the development, organisation and competence of the public administration to better integrate and co-ordinate departmental and national projects, processes and methods in the field of public

administration. The council is notably in charge of monitoring the implementation of the PAR Strategy 2030 and supporting the joint model of public administration. It issues an annual report on the fulfilment of the strategy and its action plan. Evaluation reports are prepared every two years on the previous public administration reform strategy. These documents are publicly available and precisely monitor the different objectives and tasks implemented (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021^[49]).

The Government Council for Public Administration lacks decision-making and steering power on public administration reforms and design

By law, the Government Council for Public Administration is responsible for crucial agendas like the joint model of public administration and the PAR 2030. It should steer, support and monitor public reform initiatives and actions across the government and help align public administration reform plans and measures.

However, the council does not use its full potential in practice, resulting in a lack of decision-making and steering power on public administration reform and design. By mandate, it can also make proposals to the government for decision, but in practice it does not act in this capacity. The council monitors the implementation of the PAR 2030 through a dedicated working group but exerts limited influence on its members to actively support and implement the agenda and also has limited influence on the reform priorities of the OG, despite the importance of governance and public administration reforms to meet the goals of the government programme. The Permanent Advisory Council for State Modernization in Chile is a successful example of a similar council (Box 2.15).

Box 2.15. Chile: The Permanent Advisory Council for State Modernization

The Permanent Advisory Council for State Modernization was created by supreme decree and is administratively dependent on the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency. This body includes 12 councillors and a president, all appointed by the president of Chile and with recognised experience in public and/or private management. The councillors are representatives from the government, municipalities, academia, civil society organisations, think tanks and the private sector. The council also has an executive secretary serving as a permanent contact between the council and the State Modernisation Secretariat. The council advises the president of Chile in the analysis and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes related to the state modernisation reform. Acting as an advisory body, this council provides a long-term vision and contributes to a sense of urgency and continuity to the modernisation process. The advisory body also functions as a co-ordinating body that aligns other government advisory entities whose objectives are directly related to state modernisation and public management.

Source: Government of Chile (2022^[50]).

While a number of measures on public administration reform are included in the Policy Statement of the Government, the council has a limited role in driving and implementing those priorities in the administration, underlining a potential lack of political will. The council should use its capacity to propose decisions to the government and to the government meetings on key measures and objectives on public administration reform in general and on the PAR in particular, for instance through short policy notes. A stronger link could be established with the OG to make the council's topic and strategies a priority for the government, through a dedicated adviser in the OG and its active participation in the council. Alternatively, the council's leadership could also be at the level of the Prime Minister to ensure the highest level of endorsement and visibility. France has an Interministerial Committee on Public Transformation chaired by the Prime Minister, thus providing steering and guidance to the whole public administration. The committee is complemented

by a strategic committee with directors from the public administration and by an operational committee (French Ministry of Public Transformation and Civil Service, 2019^[51]). In addition, there is no budget allocated for implementing the PAR. Thus, each ministry has to implement it relying on existing resources and capacities, which hampers the implementation of the overall plan.

Little action is taken based on the council's monitoring report. A number of priorities or adjustments based on the results could be highlighted and submitted to the government Rules of Procedure to increase the visibility of the topics. Interdepartmental comment procedures have been used to submit strategies and materials to the Cabinet's attention and to resolve interministerial conflicts over policy issues. However, the key priorities could also be addressed, and disputes could also be solved through the Government Council for Public Administration.

Public administration reform strategy

The Czech Republic has a well-established tradition and methods for designing whole-of-government public administration reform plans. The Czech public administration reform strategy (PAR), the Client-oriented Public Administration 2030 ("KOVES"), follows the Strategic Framework for the Development of Public Administration 2014-2020.

The PAR is the main long-term reference document for administrative reform

The PAR defines clear priorities for reforming and modernising the public administration

The overarching vision of the PAR is to support a citizen-oriented public administration to increase the quality of life of its citizens (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020^[30]). Achieving the vision is conditional on the fulfilment of five strategic objectives:

1. focusing on increasing the quality and availability of services
2. establishing an efficient public administration
3. improving the functioning of the public administration system and individual institutions
4. increasing the competence of human resources
5. improving information and facilitating citizen participation.

Key topics of the PAR are, for example, drafting a new Competency Law, changing the structure of the exercise of delegated powers, creating an innovative system in public administration, and strengthening analytical capacities and decision-making based on facts and their critical evaluation (evidence-informed) (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020^[30]). The development of a new Competency Law was supposed to be a part of the First Action Plan of the PAR, but was postponed to the Second Action Plan (2024-26), showing the challenging political feasibility and sensitivity of the matter.

The PAR echoes a number of long-standing priorities for reform in the Czech Republic that have been widely recognised by different documents and interlocutors, though only few refer explicitly to the PAR, for instance on the need to update the Competency Law to revisit the different mandates and functions in the public administration, multi-level governance, and the different status of the civil service. It also embraces some of the current global challenges and priorities for government, particularly on digitalisation. The PAR's priorities align with other OECD countries' public administration reform strategies.

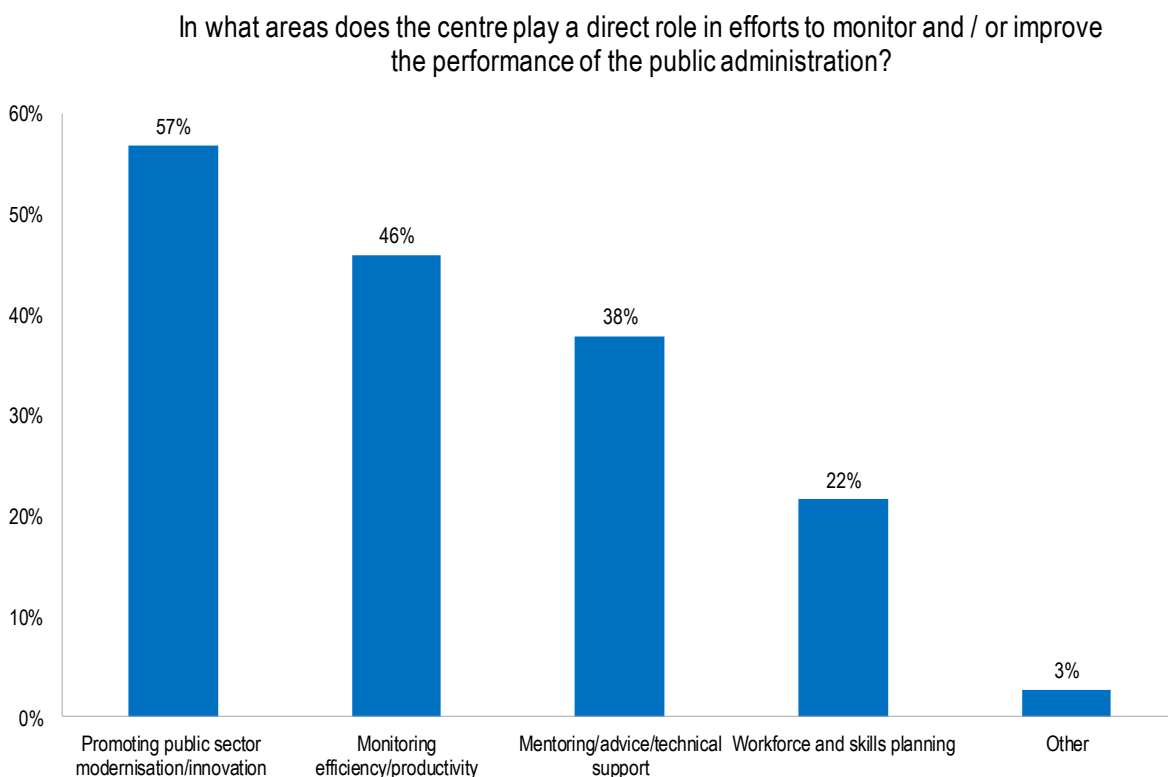
The PAR was approved by Resolution No. 562 of 25 May 2020 and is implemented in co-operation with other ministries that will implement their activities within it. The specific implementation method is determined by action plans, the first two of which will be for three years (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020^[30]). The first action plan covers the period 2021-23 and includes goals that reflect the strategic objectives of the PAR and specific activities to reach them with indicators and leading entities

(Government of the Czech Republic, 2021^[49]). The document has not been revised during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

The PAR is managed by the Ministry of the Interior and discussed in a specific working group of the Council for Public Administration

In OECD countries, the CoG plays a direct role in efforts to monitor and/or improve the performance of the public administration. While public administration reform may not be one of the centre's main responsibilities, three-quarters (75%) of respondents to the OECD survey reported being involved to some extent in designing and implementing reforms. More than half (56%) also claimed a role in promoting modernisation or innovation (Figure 2.5). The Ministry of the Interior chairs the Council for Public Administration and leads one of its working groups. The working group is the forum for discussions on the PAR and for monitoring the strategy that is then discussed by the council.

Figure 2.5. The centre of government's role in monitoring and/or improving the performance of the public administration



Source: OECD (2018^[10]).

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of the Interior has broad-ranging responsibilities in public administration and civil service management. It prepares and steers public administration reform, is responsible for the majority of the PAR strategy, as well as for co-ordination with other line ministries and other concerned bodies, for example through a joint steering committee or other forms of consultation or monitoring. This potential particularly in decision-making is only partly used and calls for more political steering and instruments.

The PAR is not directly linked to the Policy Statement of the Government and there is a lack of steering of the strategy

The Policy Statement of the Government does not refer to the PAR and only covers several of its priorities in a limited manner

The Policy Statement of the Government covers several public administration reforms, but does not explicitly refer to the PAR (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020^[30]). Despite covering several of the PAR's priorities, it does so only in a limited way. The Policy Statement of the Government covers measures on stabilising public finances, digitalisation, science and research, modernising government, environment, and the responsibility to voters and political culture.

Discrepancies in approaches, if not in priorities, can also be observed. The Policy Statement of the Government focuses on the systematisation of the administration, which is downsizing the administration; the PAR mainly focuses on increasing the effectiveness of the administration and of its internal governance, for instance including actions to reinforce co-ordination mechanisms in the public administration, increasing co-operation across levels of government and improving the implementation of strategies (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021^[49]; 2020^[30]).

A general lack of political momentum for the PAR compared to the Policy Statement of the Government is pervading the public administration

The PAR is important for creating conditions for growing prosperity in the Czech Republic and further increasing the quality of life of its population. The PAR can increase the effectiveness of public institutions, improve the quality of strategies and policies and their fulfilment, deliver better services to citizens, increase the transparency and integrity of the administration, and enhance relations between citizens and the public administration, and ultimately, their trust in the government. The administration's continuous service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with its challenges, is testimony to the importance of an efficient, transparent and modern public administration and the need to improve them further.

Decision-makers in the Czech Republic lack interest in carrying out a significant public administration reform as reforming the public administration is not considered a politically attractive topic apart from streamlining the administration. On the other hand, the Policy Statement of the Government has more political momentum because of the political relevance of its content and the fact that it is the road map of the current government while the PAR was developed under the previous government. This might require adaptations in the PAR and its action plans to better take into account the PAR's current priorities.

Bringing more visibility to the PAR in the CoG can also help build political momentum. In two-thirds of OECD countries, the CoG plays a direct role in monitoring and improving the performance of the public administration, which is not the case in the Czech Republic. While keeping the central role played by the Ministry of the Interior, more connection with the OG on the topic could result in higher political commitment and interest in reforms. This can also build on the vibrant call for PAR from non-governmental organisations and civil society that can help raise political attention and support (Czech Priority, The Aspen Institute et al., 2021^[52]).

The Council for Public Administration regularly carries out monitoring but there is a lack of delivery and monitoring for actions included in the PAR

The Ministry of the Interior has developed a monitoring mechanism and a working group to regularly monitor the PAR. The department responsible for a specific target can upload on this monitoring platform what is being implemented correctly and what is not. If there is strong disagreement, it is to be resolved on the platform.

The Ministry of the Interior publishes regular monitoring reports on the implementation of the PAR and its different action plans. The first action plan includes a series of measures that can support effective monitoring, even though most of the measures call for a qualitative measurement rather than a quantitative one and the logic is based on outputs rather than outcomes. The action plan foresees the establishment of strategic teams, methodologies and platforms; the creation of analytical capabilities in the government; and an analysis of the current competencies held by the different central government departments (Government of the Czech Republic, 2021^[49]). Detailed evaluation reports were also prepared for the previous public administration reform strategy every two years and are currently publicly available, with the list of objectives and actions completed and a detailed description.

Line ministries deliver public services included in the PAR in their respective area (education, health, etc.). Each ministry produces its own set of indicators on public services and there is no centralised monitoring unit or instrument to monitor progress. The government does not sufficiently monitor implementation, as the role of the Ministry of the Interior is limited to broad co-ordination based on the PAR and to gathering selected, general indicators on public service delivery (for instance, on digital or overall satisfaction).

The Ministry of the Interior, with the support of the Czech Point project, undertook important efforts to monitor and evaluate the performance of the administration and of public services. Key data on indicators of satisfaction, use and relevance of the Citizen's Portal; on the interactions and transparency of the administration; and on its instruments and capabilities were collected and analysed from 2018 to 2020. For example, it monitored citizens' satisfaction with services and the availability of government services on a Citizen's Portal that included 230 services in 2020 and less than 100 in 2018. Their use has been increasing sharply (Ministry of Interior; EU, 2020^[53]). The data also looked at the use of RIA by strategic planning units or the openness of the government in leveraging national and international indicators such as the Sustainable Governance Indicators. These efforts should be pursued and systematised to ensure continuous monitoring of performance and identify priority areas for action.

More specifically on services, several OECD countries have developed specific instruments to monitor public service delivery across the administration and ensure that they improve in line with public administration reforms and broader government priorities. France has developed two barometers, a barometer for government measures and results and a barometer for public services, called the Barometer Delouvrier, to monitor the performance of public services delivered by ministries and agencies (Box 2.16). The Czech Republic has tried establishing quality-of-life indicators, but encountered many methodological problems and the indicators have not yet been used. Simpler indicators that assess government results on concrete measures across the country (e.g. on the opening of classes or the number of small and medium-sized enterprises that receive digital support from the governments) or that measure citizens' satisfaction with services and the barriers they face, such as those used in the French barometers, could be used.

Box 2.16. French barometers of public action results and public services

The French minister of transformation and public service launched the barometer of public action results, *Baromètre des résultats de l'action publique*, on 13 January 2021: “Measures that change your life: The results of our action”. Responsible for co-ordinating the monitoring of all priority government reforms, the Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation (DITP) was fully mobilised to design and deploy the barometer of public action results. The objective was to enable French citizens to measure and be aware of the progress of these public policies in their daily lives.

The barometer displays the status and the concrete results of 25 priority reforms carried out by the government. These cover eight essential dimensions of everyday life for citizens:

1. ecological transition
2. employment and the economy
3. health, family and disability
4. education
5. security
6. culture
7. public services
8. housing.

With quantified data, the barometer presents the state of implementation in 2020 and the government's target for 2022 for each policy. All data are open data. The barometer will be updated regularly and enriched with new policies, so that French citizens can measure the progress of government action. It is also a real tool for accelerating the execution of reforms at the national, regional and departmental level.

The DITP will intervene over time to steer the reporting of data from the departments, in co-operation with those responsible for each priority reform in the ministries. The barometer will be updated every three months. The DITP also supports the implementation of improvement measures by line ministries to further enhance service delivery across the administration.

France is also carrying out a regular barometer (survey) of citizens, called the *Baromètre Delouvrier*, on their satisfaction with key life events, the obstacles they face and the improvement priority they perceive for public services. The barometer is implemented by an independent institute and a survey company and is supervised by the DITP.

Sources: French Ministry of Transformation and Civil Service (2021^[54]; 2022^[55]).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of active follow-up and remediation on actions that are being implemented or slowed down. This is partly due to the lack of decisions and actions taken by the Council for Public Administration to further encourage the implementation or adjustment of actions across the public administration. The Ministry of the Interior also has limited convening power, mandate and capacity to support the delivery of actions by other administrations. Some of the actions appear to go beyond the realm of the Ministry of the Interior and would need whole-of-government decision-making and steering, for instance on reinforcing strategic and analytical capabilities or mapping the competencies of the different administrations.

There is no clear role for or support of public administration reform from the Office of the Government to bring governing power and steer, support and monitor implementation

The PAR action plan assigns specific tasks to the OG, namely: consistent processing and control of RIA, the introduction of *ex post* evaluation of regulations, methodological support of RIA. In co-operation with other ministries, the OG is also co-responsible for the sustainable development assessment and unification of project management competences in state administrations and cataloguing projects.

Nevertheless, the OG's role and support for the PAR are unclear beyond regulatory policy on steering, supporting and monitoring its implementation. In OECD countries such as the United Kingdom, the CoG would be tasked with defining and steering the implementation of the PAR's activities and measures to be carried out by departments and agencies. These measures would need to be aligned with the National Reform Programme (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022^[56]) concerning the modernisation of the public administration and public service, and specific outputs to be produced and discussed with the CoG. The CoG can be a lynchpin of this effort, by helping to ensure the coherence of public policies and guaranteeing the continuity of action around major strategic objectives, between sectoral policies, between levels of intervention, between territories, and between public and private actors. It can also provide guidance on strategic documents, including on the methodologies, templates and indicators to be used.

There also seems to be limited citizen engagement mechanisms in the implementation and monitoring of the PAR, whether they are surveys and consultation, frequent feedback loops, or co-design workshops on some actions, for instance linked to new digital or in-person ways to deliver public services (see Chapter 1).

Recommendations

Strategy: Increase the centre of government's capacity and instruments to steer, align and implement strategies

Strengthen the Office of the Government's strategic co-ordination and analytical capacities through dedicated central units on strategy and supporting analytical capacities

- Re-establish and strengthen the OG's capacity to steer and co-ordinate whole-of-government strategic planning by creating a permanent strategic unit tasked with steering the whole-of-government strategic planning process, supporting the implementation of government priorities, co-ordinating the preparations of key national strategies, aligning national and sectoral strategies, providing analytical inputs to strategies on government priorities; co-ordinating the work of strategic units in line ministries (and supporting their creation when they do not exist); and progressively developing and leading whole-of government foresight activities.
- Establish a central unit to support analytical capacities across the government and consider building similar capacity in line ministries, where they do not already exist; the VAU in the area of RIAs could serve as a basis for this development and be expanded to policy analysis.
- Leverage existing formal co-ordination mechanisms and establish new ones between the OG and ministries that developed national, cross-cutting strategies to ensure consistency, using the Expert Group on Strategy or creating strategy review meetings with line ministries.

Decrease the number of strategies and consolidate the strategy development process

- Mandate the newly established strategic unit with the technical support of the MORD to take stock of existing national and sectoral strategies to identify overlapping strategies of ministries operating in the same sector, and convene actors to eliminate contradictions and address

potential gaps. This audit could be relevant in the context of a new EU financing programme that will require developing new strategies and completing existing ones.

- Task the new strategic unit with the role of consistently ensuring the coherence and alignment of strategies, including regular review of key national and sectoral strategies to ensure that they are coherent with the main national long-term strategic framework Czech Republic 2030.
- Consolidate the role of the MORD on the management of the registry, quality and methodological aspects of strategies and further promote and lead from the centre the dissemination of the methodological guidance on strategies to ensure they are used by all ministries and for all strategies (including on the use of evidence; see Chapter 3).
- Reinforce the institutional framework and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, including in the guidelines, by ensuring stakeholder and citizen engagement activities are carried out systematically; also consider using innovative mechanisms to identify new priorities and policy measures (see Chapter 1).

Systematically link policy planning with financial planning

- Systematise discussions on the costing of strategies and their measures between line ministries authoring the strategy (both budget and policy departments), the Ministry of Finance (including the budget and the upcoming spending review unit) and the OG when preparing and developing the strategy besides the commenting procedure to foster dialogue on the priorities, costing and cost effectiveness of measures; this could take the form of joint meetings and concept documents for strategies.
- Consider increasing the connection between high-level prioritisation and the budget, for instance by outlining expenditures linked to government priorities in the budget process through discussions between the CoG and the Ministry of Finance and possibly a specific document (“table of reforms” as in Sweden), and developing the practice of spending reviews to align expenditures with strategic priorities.

Adapt the Office of the Government’s role and structure to ensure better delivery of identified government priorities and horizontal challenges

- Focus the work of the Prime Minister’s Office on a limited number of whole-of-government priorities identified under the leadership of the Prime minister. The Prime Minister’s Office’s work should be focused on steering and supporting through dedicated resources, performance management structures and routines to drive their implementation, for instance with regular strategy sessions with lead ministries to track progress.
- When needed to support the delivery of these priorities, review the structure of units in the OG to ensure that they are focusing on selected, horizontal priorities; as was done with the Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and associated resources in the OG.
- Consider establishing a single operational document (an “action plan”) deriving from the Policy Statement of the Government that would translate the government’s priorities into actions with associated key performance indicators, and help monitor their implementation, combining and replacing the annual and legislative work plans. Based on this document, consider establishing a road map for each ministry on measures to be implemented in line with government priorities.

Further enshrine the role of the OG on steering and co-ordinating strategic planning activities in the Competency Law

- Support the PAR's plans to amend the Competency Law throughout its implementation, and take this opportunity to better enshrine, assert and define the role of the OG in strategic planning and co-ordination activities as well as that of the MORD.
- Consider clarifying and revising mandates and responsibilities in several areas, including on new topics such as digitalisation and citizen participation.

Co-ordination: Develop the co-ordination role in the Office of the Government

Increase policy co-ordination and the monitoring role of the Office of the Government

- Ensure that the OG has a challenge and review role of the consistency with the Policy Statement of the Government and the government priorities of the documents submitted to the interagency commenting procedures and to the government meeting. It should also have the authority to return items, mirroring the OG's review role on legal conformity.
- Enable and encourage mobility assignments of staff from ministries in CoG institutions to work on specific priorities, foster learning and exchange of information, promoting co-ordination and occasionally meeting short-term labour demands.
- Establish institutional responsibility for monitoring and evaluation in the OG by setting up a monitoring unit or tasking an existing unit with the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Policy Statement of the Government.

Councils: Streamline and empower the government councils

Map the councils and streamline their mandate with clear roles and deliverables

- Conduct an assessment of the use and effectiveness of existing councils and advisory and working groups by undertaking a mapping exercise which includes their composition, mandate, objectives and costs, and consulting all relevant stakeholders – such as council and working group members, experts, public officials and civil society representatives – throughout the process; periodically conduct such a review of the activities of selected councils on a rotating basis to ensure their functioning is effective and they respond to current priorities.
- Further define outcomes and deliverables expected by councils and update their mandate accordingly; identify which councils or bodies do not meet at least once a year or do not produce outcomes and consider abolishing them and merging those that overlap.
- Re-establish the steering and co-ordination of councils on horizontal themes and priorities under the Office of the Government; consider relocating some councils on horizontal priorities for the government under the OG, particularly the Council for Sustainable Development; and establish the appropriate structures and resources to steer, support and monitor the corresponding agenda.
- Consider moving councils that are not priorities on the government agenda or not cross-cutting under the stewardship of line ministries, to help focus the OG on a few priorities.

Better integrate councils into decision-making processes

- Appoint a representative/focal point in the OG for each council and body that concerns a government priority to ensure buy-in and support from the centre when needed and raise to

the attention of the CoG and potentially the Prime Minister key points for decisions produced by the body.

- Ensure that the participants of the different councils have the relevant voting rights and delegations in the absence of ministers to increase buy-in and ownership, for instance by simplifying the process or extending voting rights to any appointed participant.

Council for Public Administration and the PAR: Increase the steering capacity to drive the implementation of the PAR

Strengthen the role of the Council for Public Administration to steer the PAR

- Enforce the mandate of the council to steer and support actions on public administration reforms and initiatives across the administration, and exert decision-making powers on activities that are within its realm; including by setting a decision-oriented agenda and organising regular reporting from the chair of the council to the Prime Minister for decision-making.
- Prepare an annual meeting of the council chaired by the Prime Minister to provide guidance and decisions, underline priorities, and endorse key actions on public administration reforms and the work of the council.

Better connect the PAR and the Policy Statement of the Government

- Appoint a high-level representative/focal point in the OG to follow and support public administration reforms and the council's work, and organise regular discussions with the Ministry of the Interior on the links between the PAR and the Policy Statement of the Government; update the PAR's action plans accordingly (e.g. on the VAU).
- Consider preparing reports on the public administration reform strategy and needs prior to elections and the preparations of the Policy Statement of the Government for candidates to increase awareness and information on the state and developments in light of the example of long-term insights briefings in New Zealand (see Box 3.2); this practice could be generalised to other parts of the administration.

Support the strategy's implementation and ensure better ownership and steering

- Report on the implementation of the PAR to the OG, selecting key measures for decision and information, and preparing an executive dashboard to be introduced to the Prime Minister.
- Develop the Ministry of the Interior's capacity (e.g. task force) and provide it with the mandate to support line ministries and other agencies in implementing specific provisions of the PAR.
- Assign a budget for implementing the PAR that can be used by the Ministry of the Interior and line ministries on specific objectives and measures.

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Note

¹ “Tasks connected with the professional, organizational and technical security of the activities of the government of the Czech Republic, its bodies, members of the government who are not entrusted with the management of the ministry or another office, and bodies which are provided for in a special law or so decided by the Government, are performed by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.”



From:

OECD Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic

Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/41fd9e5c-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2023), "Centre-of-government-led Co-ordination Capacity in the Czech Republic", in *OECD Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic: Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/8edd0ef8-en>

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