Achieving Policy Coherence: A Central Role for Central Governments

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POLICY ANALYSIS EXERCISE

Achieving Policy Coherence:
A Central Role for Central Governments

MAY 2023

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CLIENT
ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)
THE PRINCIPLE OF THE ONENESS OF HUMANKIND IS NOT AN EXPRESSION OF VAGUE AND PIOUS HOPE.

IT ASKS NOT MERELY FOR COOPERATION AMONG PEOPLE AND NATIONS.

IT CALLS FOR A COMPLETE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT SUSTAIN SOCIETY.
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This policy analysis exercise (PAE) is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

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I hope this effort can contribute to the meaningful ongoing work of the OECD and others who are setting a high standard for coherence in decision-making across governments.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analysis aims to help governments to achieve greater degrees of coherence in policy development.

Systemic policy issues that cut across the entire machinery of government expose gaps in coordination and leadership from the centres of governments. This analysis highlights the need for better decision-making processes and identifies tools for policymakers to resolve systemic policy issues, with a particular focus on the role and functions of the centres of government (CoGs), i.e., the support structure serving the executive head of government.

The challenge of coherence can be largely attributed to a policy development process that mirrors rigid government structures. The myriad policy issues that cut across the whole of government challenge the core organisational structure of public administrations. Those structures, for most OECD nations, are strikingly similar to what they were a century ago: line ministries organised in vertical siloes with limited crossover. These structural arrangements are fundamentally insufficient to address systemic policy issues, such as the green transition, health pandemics, and the management of artificial intelligence.

Existing literature on policy coherence stresses the importance of systemically aligning policy objectives, activities, and outcomes across government ministries. The goal is to promote mutually reinforcing policies.

Unfortunately, there is little to indicate the how: how governments should measure policy coherence, how they can make progress towards more coherent policymaking, and how to establish mechanisms for achieving coherent cross-government policy. Addressing and answering these questions for OECD member states is the goal of this paper.

This analysis draws on original data from OECD countries gathered by the OECD Unit of Public Governance Reviews to identify four key principles crucial to achieving higher degrees of policy coherence in the policy development process, as well as a mechanism for applying them:

1. **Stewarding the Vision**

   **CLARITY OF PURPOSE, VISION, AND PRIORITIES IN FOSTERING COHERENCE AMONG POLICIES**

   **When everything is important, nothing is.** At the simplest level, coherence implies that a government’s stated priorities, internal functioning, and resulting outcomes do not contradict each other. The work of CoGs, therefore, is to continually try to align its ambitions with outcomes. But reaching such a level of coherence requires a great deal of clarity of vision. To attribute the lack of congruence between aims and outcomes to the absence of sincerity is inadequate; the inconsistencies that appear in policy outcomes often reflect a lack of clarity about what is most important. A highly developed clarity of vision is essential if a government is to bring together the various elements in its framework for action. For this reason, clarity about purpose, vision and priorities is the first and most fundamental step to enhance the degree of coherence in coordination and policy development. Too often coherence is treated as a talking point or public relations exercise. Rather, it should be the north star of a government’s decision-making framework.
2. Linking Intent to Impact

**IMAPCT-FOCUSED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

**Change is not a project one group does for another.** To affect sustainable and meaningful change, policy must respond to the needs of the people and communities it aims to serve. Knowledge that is generated on the ground and within the communities impacted by government policies must first be distilled. They can then be applied to improve the development and implementation of policy, drawing on stakeholders as partners, not recipients, in the policymaking and delivery process. Governments are having to redefine the relationship between themselves and their citizens in significant ways. At its most conceptual, institutions give structure to collective endeavours and allocate resources for the needs and wellbeing of individuals. Individuals are impacted, but can also play a critical role in carrying out governments’ plans. This requires a relationship where governments are responsive to the people they impact—at home and abroad. For policies to have their intended impacts, governments must ensure public involvement at every stage of the policy cycle—from diagnosis, to design, to delivery. Doing so may achieve the twofold aim: not only can it improve the quality of government policymaking, but it can transform the culture of government to include citizens as partners in shaping policy.

3. Investing in Innovation

**EXPERIMENTATION, BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS, COLLABORATION HUBS, AND VIRTUAL LABS**

**Systemic problems need new solutions.** Governments today face many more issues than they did a few decades ago. Equally important for coherence, many of the most salient issues require coordination that cuts across traditional bureaucratic government entities. These two factors both challenge centres of government and require them to be increasingly nimble. In a world confronted with challenges such as climate change, geopolitical fragmentation, and rising forces of social disruption, governments must invest in a culture that encourages innovation. Policy responses must be methodical but not rigid, creative but not haphazard, decisive but not hasty, careful but not controlling. In the final analysis, it is not technique but dedication to learning, consistent action and unity of purpose which will bring about progress.

4. Cultivating a Long-Term Outlook

**SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES AND SYSTEMS THINKING FOR CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**

**Improving today by planning for tomorrow.** Coherence is much more than the rough alignment of objectives. At its best, coherence is when every activity reinforces and is reinforced by others: efforts carried out in one area contribute to the advancement of activities in others. Policymakers operate in a
context where the welfare of any one part of the world is inextricably bound to the welfare of the whole. Complications arise when governments do not understand the full range of feedback resulting from policy decisions. CoGs must steer policymakers so that they acquire the capacity to address increasingly complex challenges. Today’s policy solutions must be considered in the context of how they will improve the future, implemented by policymakers who are characterised by a shared vision, a commitment to public value, and a growing capacity to face with confidence the challenges of the future.

Analysis of the data secured through an OECD survey yielded insights on appropriate and realistic approaches governments might take to promote coherence. To move beyond generalities, I distilled a list of criteria that a government might use to assess its success. These criteria are intended to ensure that the government’s methods are grounded in practice. They include: being driven by data and theory, the likelihood of success, feasibility, originality, and generalizability. To make matters concrete and actionable, I created a checklist and decision-tree for good practice that reflects these criteria.

Policy coherence is not a panacea. This checklist alone does not solve policy challenges or ensure success. It improves but does not complete the picture of potentially relevant considerations for policymakers. Significantly, it cannot force them to take notice. Improving policy coherence requires sustained effort, commitment to long-term action, and only occasionally generates breakthrough results in the course of a single exercise. The benefits are a gradual osmosis into consciousness and culture; difficult to measure, unlikely to be attributed to policy coherence interventions, and often takes the form of the absence of something destructive rather than the presence of something constructive.

Nevertheless, a checklist and decision-tree is a low-cost, high-impact way of creating change within the policymaking cycle. The approach brings three main benefits: 1) Memory recall; 2) Setting a new standard of baseline performance; and 3) Helping unearth new opportunities. Through its use, I hope it can help governments achieve higher degrees of policy coherence.
# 3D Policy Coherence Checklist

Policy Coherence in **Diagnosis, Design & Delivery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Diagnosis</th>
<th>2. Design</th>
<th>3. Delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Is the problem affecting one of our key priorities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Is there anyone else working on the problem?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Will solving the problem now lead to better outcomes in the future?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Has systems thinking been used to check the logic of the diagnosis?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Does the solution reinforce a key priority, without unintended consequences?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Have insights from people impacted been integrated into the solution?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Have long-term impacts been considered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Have more innovative solutions been considered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Are the implementation methods coherent with the outcomes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Are people on the ground participating and partnering in the solution’s delivery?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Will solving this issue benefit other government agencies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Have more innovative implementation methods been considered?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This checklist has been designed to assist policymakers to achieve higher degrees of policy coherence across the policy development process, by assessing progress against it.

Figure 1.1: 3D Checklist
BACKGROUND

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental organization with 38 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It provides a setting where governments can compare experiences, seek answers to common challenges, identify good practices, and develop high standards for economic policy. They are particularly known for their reliable source of evidence-based policy analysis and data.

The Public Governance Reviews (PGR) Unit sits within the OECD and provides a 360° view on government performance, through identifying strengths and where to improve performance, sustainability, and delivery of public value. Furthermore, it provides recommendations on improving the capacities a country’s central public administration, offering evidence-base in support to help make the case for reform, and assessing implementation strategies to drive reform agenda to success.

The PGR Unit’s mission is to identify governments’ strengths and areas of improvement in delivering public value. It does this by providing recommendations on strategy setting and steering, implementation strategies, good practices, and capacity building. Their work helps governments to maximize benefits across policy areas, balance domestic objectives with international priorities, assess long-term impacts of policies, with the aim of addressing complex, whole-of-government challenges. The building blocks of a public governance review is strategy setting and steering, implementing the strategy across central government, linking the sub-national level to the strategy, partnerships with civil society, ensuring healthy democracies and capacity building across the public administration.

This Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) has been written in parallel to drafting a chapter for a Compendium on strategic decision-making at the centres of government (CoG). The CoG refers to the support structure serving at the highest levels of the executive branch of government, namely of the executive and council of ministers. The CoG helps the head of government and ministers to make good decisions by ensuring they receive evidence-informed, coordinated and coherent advice. They also co-ordinate the various players in the policy process, and help ensure the quality and capability of the policy system. Finally, they help set the tone—what CoGs consider ‘important’ will be considered important throughout the machinery of government. The data that has informed this PAE is primary research conducted with the support of the PGR, drawing on the insights of the OECD Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-Making at the Centre of Government. This Expert Group is composed of senior officials and experts in charge of strategic planning, coordination, and delivery at the centre of government.

The Compendium — Steering from the Centre of Government in Times of Complexity: Compendium of Practices”, forthcoming in April 2024 — gathers insights from OECD member countries on their decision-making, priority setting and policy development practices, with a particular focus on the role and functions of the CoG. The compendium will help policymakers, heads of agencies and ministries, and relevant stakeholders answer key questions on the role of the CoG and the resources needed for a robust planning process, among others. The compendium will also identify key critical success factors that could inform the development of principles. The aim is to identify synergies, commonalities, and themes to create a set of principles and standards for strategic decision-making. The compendium and its insights will be disseminated across all 38 OECD countries and 6 additional accession countries. This PAE constitutes the first articulation of insights that hopes to contribute to the compendium on how CoGs can achieve higher degrees of policy coherence in their policy development process.
INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY COHERENCE

Current systemic policy issues—such as the green transition, the COVID-19 pandemic, migration, or regulating artificial intelligence—are requiring governments to develop policy responses spanning across different sectors, institutions, and timeframes, considering international commitments as well as subnational exigencies. Key policy issues cannot be addressed through siloed approaches, as their effects usually spread over other policy areas, often unintentionally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed gaps in co-ordination and leadership from the centre, and has highlighted the need for better decision-making processes and tools for policymakers. CoGs are in a unique position to co-ordinate action across cross-cutting and complex policy issues and to strengthen overall capacity for developing good policies. In parallel, such action serves to strengthen governments’ clarity of vision, strategy, and capacity to navigate complex priorities. How the CoG performs this role and its relationship with the rest of government is a crucial factor in driving good public outcomes.

Måns Nilsson’s widely cited essay on the subject of policy coherence defines it as “the systematic reduction of conflicting policy objectives, activities and outcomes across government ministries, and the promotion of mutually reinforcing policies.” This definition is consistent with the interpretation of policy coherence that I provide below. Unfortunately, Nilsson does not indicate how to measure policy coherence, how to determine if it has been achieved, its key barriers, and which are the most effective mechanisms for achieving it. Answering these questions for OECD nations is the goal of this PAE.

Given that there is little guidance from the literature and individual nations do not offer data on how they promote or fail to promote policy coherence, it was essential to learn about how the nations of the OECD actually go about addressing these central issues. To this end, an OECD survey submitted to them contained detailed questions regarding these issues.

On the basis of data from 13 OECD member states, this analysis gathers insights on their priorities and policy development practices, with a particular focus on the role and functions of CoGs, in order to distil
key messages and best practices on coordinating and enhancing coherent policy development, with the aim of supporting better decision-making from the centre of government.

This analysis seeks to determine how effectively OECD countries are meeting this challenge of achieving greater degrees of policy coherence. It will focus on the specific components of CoG responsibilities that are and are not being met, and identify best practices and steps governments can take to coordinate and enhance coherent policy development.

To address this question, this analysis first identifies the scope of change it aims to tackle, the extent of the challenge, the specific gaps in CoG functioning based on data from 13 OECD member states, and case studies on best practices that respond to those gaps. Finally, this analysis identifies four key principles crucial to achieving higher degrees of coherence in the policy development process within and amongst the various ministries and agencies of government, as well as a mechanism for applying them.

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**Why Policy Coherence Matters**

**Policy Coherence in Hindsight: US trade policy decimated Haitian rice industry**

In 2010, former President Bill Clinton publicly apologized to Haiti for implementing a trade policy that forced Haiti to remove tariffs on imported subsidized U.S. rice. The move was meant to benefit US farmers holding excess rice as well as “provide food to poor countries to relieve them of the burden of producing their own food so that they can leap directly into the industrial era.” Instead, the policy decimated the rice farming industry, and eroded Haiti’s capacity to be self-sufficient. The policy has had long-term effects in Haiti, whose number of food insecure has tripled since 2016, and today has one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world. Nearly 50% of Haitians do not have enough to eat, and 1.8 million face emergency levels of food insecurity. Haiti’s heavy dependence on food imports, which account for 83% of rice consumed, makes the country vulnerable to inflation and price volatility in international markets.

Source: Democracy Now News Broadcasting (2016); World Food Programme (2023)

**Policy Coherence in Foresight: Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence is undergoing a boom. With that comes significant challenges to the functioning of government. With new technology, means and ends can be confused as the technological development proceeds at breakneck speed in a manner often decoupled from values and broader questions of purpose. Any tool can be used productively or destructively. But the most serious consequences of technology use are often subtle. Rapidly adopting new technology without reflecting on possible impacts has in the past upended longstanding social and cultural patterns, displacing meaning and purpose. It can embed values in ways we do not intend, such as: placing primacy on efficiency, making it more likely to miss negative externalities; and promoting a reductionist approach to problem solving, which can lead to atomistic rather than systematic approaches to addressing complexity. Without foresight, technology itself can become a bearer or even disruptor of values—with individuals and communities adapting to technology rather than using it to achieve social goals. This pattern, known as reverse adaptation, where technology structures human activity, illustrate that the choices governments make about technology can be at odds with their essential purposes, especially when not fully evaluating their implications.

COHERENCE: TWO SPHERES OF CHANGE
THE SCOPE AND PREMISE OF THIS ANALYSIS OF POLICY COHERENCE

Coherence is much more than the mere lack of contradictions. At its best, coherence is when every area of activity reinforces and is reinforced by others—efforts carried out in one area, contribute to the advancement of activities in the others. Signs of this higher level of coherence are already becoming increasingly visible across OECD governments, where approaches are characterised by willingness to experiment, an ability to see where capacity lies, and trustworthiness. Likewise, knowledge that is generated on the ground within the communities impacted by policies can be distilled and inform the way policy is developed and implemented.

Some policymakers may be reticent to discuss policy coherence because the fragmented partisan nature of government contexts can make policy coherence seem an impossible ambition. But if policymakers shift their focus out from the core to the periphery—to bureaucratic culture—there are myriad possibilities in which greater degrees of coherence can be realized. It is important, then, to not be distracted by political debates in which coherence can often seem unattainable.

I therefore suggest that improving policy coherence can be discussed at two levels, which mirror the levels at which policymakers tend to operate: at the bureaucratic level, and at the level of purpose and values.

Level 1: Improving the response to pressing policy issues through bureaucracy

At one level, policy coherence can be advanced through reforms of bureaucracy, where coordination and mechanisms can improve the coherence of policy coordination and development in response to pressing social issues. At this level, the key message is to not let the ideal come in the way of the possible. There is much low-hanging fruit that can make a significant difference in improving coherence in bureaucratic affairs. At this level, it is important not to allow the challenge of creating comprehensive conditions come in the way of meaningful steps. Not everything has to be reformed, and not everything that does has to be done at once. There are easy contexts in which this can happen, and the solutions are often in the form of simple mechanisms and new habits.

Level 2: Aligning fundamental values and purpose

At another level, policy coherence means a deeper clarification and alignment of values at the centres of government, and the core non-partisan purpose a government serves. This recognizes deeper issues to do with fragmentation and the clash of political values, and addressing this dimension of incoherence requires a very different conversation. It involves addressing more foundational questions and generating new ways of thinking about the purpose of policy and government. This requires its own analysis of an entirely different nature to the question of improving bureaucratic efficiency. Unless this level is discussed, the mechanisms we put in place at the level of bureaucracy will hit a low ceiling on what they can accomplish, and progress made at the bureaucratic level can quickly be undone.

Each of these two levels require their own separate set of key messages and best practice. What this analysis seeks to discuss here primarily involves only the first level. But for real policy coherence to penetrate the functioning of government, Level 1 must eventually lead to Level 2, with an increase in spaces
in which CoGs discuss the more fundamental issues that stand in the way of true policy coherence. Advancing in our understanding of Level 2 ensures that progress made at Level 1 is preserved.

The significance of the work needed at Level 2 is not to suggest that work at Level 1 is arbitrary or facile; on the contrary, it serves as the necessary foundation on which the evaluation of purpose and values can be made. It is to make the point that the challenges are of different natures, and to recognize that true progress in achieving greater degrees of coherence at the level of bureaucracy helps us advance in our understanding that must inevitably propel us to more profound coherence at the level of purpose and values.

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**Case Study of Policy Incoherence**

**Example of Global Implications of Domestic Policies: Global North policies role in African food insecurity**

Grains from Russia and Ukraine account for 1/10th of all calories traded globally. This means that as food and fertilizer prices increased as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, more countries imposed export bans. Few African economies have purchase and storage capacity for excess food supplies, and companies that provide solutions for temporary storage facilities quickly reached capacity. Combined with climate change disruptions to local food networks and production, levels of food insecurity in Africa rose dramatically. This is in part also because damaging agricultural and trade policies—often imposed by the global north—have eroded local food production capacity and thereby crisis resilience.

One such policy is the EU Common Agricultural Policy, where excess EU wheat is exported to West Africa at a subsidized price. These EU wheat exports undercut local grain prices. This includes millet, which is more expensive to produce, although more nutritious. Unable to compete, farms go under. Because farming operates in networks in West Africa, this causes a chain reaction across the region. The outcome is that EU policies have fostered dependency of emerging economies on EU exports.

Other Global North policies have similarly fostered dependency on subsidized EU exports which has over time eroded regional resilience and agricultural production capacity, the impacts of which are felt most keenly at times of unanticipated crisis like Russia-Ukraine conflict—at which point it is too late to reverse.

Meanwhile, the EU collectively continues to be the largest donor of international aid in the world, providing more than €50bn a year to advance global development. Some of the developing countries that are impacted by subsidy programs such as CAP are also some of the largest recipients of EU aid—most notably severely food insecure countries in the global south.

*Figure 3.1* – see Appendix B for feedback loop diagram
ANALYSIS

This analysis explores how to achieve higher levels of coherence in policy development in four parts:

1) Surveying current scholarly literature on the subject
2) Applying relevant conceptual frameworks to the challenge
3) Distilling key insights from data obtained through a survey disseminated to OECD countries, and
4) Examining a few case studies to check the validity of the insights found.

1. Conceptual Frameworks

This section applies relevant conceptual frameworks to the challenge of understanding what makes the issues governments face so intractable, and why policy coherence is the necessary answer.

Applying David Snowden’s “Cynefin” framework and John D Sterman’s “Systems Thinking” framework reveals that policy coherence is critical to CoG’s functioning because the challenges that CoGs face today are shifting in two fundamental ways:

A. Increasing complexity: A shift in the nature of the challenges governments face
B. Increasing interconnection: A shift in the relationships between issues governments face

A. The increasing complexity of challenges

Governments have developed habits for how to respond to policy challenges. But these habits assume that the nature of the challenge remains unchanged over time. A conceptual framework I will use to help demonstrate how the challenges CoGs face are growing in complexity—and therefore require a different kind of response—is David Snowden’s Cynefin Framework. The framework helps identify situations and ideal corresponding responses, tailored to the category of challenge. It consists of 4 domains of situations, split into predictable and unpredictable.

“The increasing complexity of challenges

Governments have developed habits for how to respond to policy challenges. But these habits assume that the nature of the challenge remains unchanged over time. A conceptual framework I will use to help demonstrate how the challenges CoGs face are growing in complexity—and therefore require a different kind of response—is David Snowden’s Cynefin Framework. The framework helps identify situations and ideal corresponding responses, tailored to the category of challenge. It consists of 4 domains of situations, split into predictable and unpredictable.

“And it will fall out as in a complication of disease, that by applying a remedy to one sore, you will provoke another; and that which removes the one ill symptom produces others...”

– Sir Thomas More

The “obvious” domain consists of situations that are simple and require straightforward responses. Here the connection between cause and effect is clear and best practices exist. In this domain the best way to react is to sense, categorize, and response. To look at the situation, to select the best practice (like a recipe) and take action.
In the "complicated" domain, the connection between cause and effect is less clear. It requires experts or domain expertise to resolve. This domain is where there are good practices. The strategy in these situations is to sense, analyse, and respond; to gather data, find good strategy, and take action.

In the "complex" domain, the connection between cause and effect only seems clear in hindsight. This is the domain where there are only emergent practices. In these situations, the best strategy is to probe, sense, respond. To launch an experiment, observe what happens, and adjust accordingly.

Finally, "chaotic" domain, where there is no connection between cause and effect. This is the domain where there are totally novel practices. In these situations, the best strategy is to act, sense, respond. To first take action, and only then observe what happens and adjust course.

What is relevant to distil from this framework is that there are different ways to look at and approach different kinds of challenges, and that there is a distribution of perspectives. The biggest takeaway for a government context is that there are problems that are predictable—and that is why we have experts and protocols, because the problems largely remain the same. At this level, our public administration structures operate effectively. The challenge emerges when the problems are no longer predictable. When there is no clear link between cause and effect, and when there are no good practices for how to respond. Governments face such challenges more frequently today than ever before.

Increasingly, the challenges governments face—from climate change to international migration—no longer sit comfortably within the predictable domain of ‘obvious’ or even ‘complex’. They span all domains, and sometimes a single problem moves through all four. To take one example, inflation is a challenge which governments across the globe are struggling to manage:

1. **Simple and obvious**: Inflation is on the rise, and a government responds by using the familiar best practice—raising interest rates.
2. **Complicated**: Usually this works, but this time it does not. At this stage the government calls in experts and leverages knowledge to examine the problem and find a solution. The challenge is still mechanical and predictable, but no longer simple.
3. **Complex**: The government has applied best and good practices, but inflation is still rising. At this stage, the problem is no longer mechanical; it is evolving and requires new ideas for how to respond. The government mobilizes groups of stakeholders to consult and draws on collective wisdom to think through the challenge and identify a solution.
4. **Chaotic**: At this stage, banks are beginning to crash. There is a need to act fast. Clear and decisive leadership is required to navigate to safer ground.
The Cynefin Framework can help governments categorize the types of problems they encounter, so that they can better understand and manage them, tailor their responses, and know where in the system it makes most sense to intervene. More fundamentally, however, the framework helps demonstrate that the challenges CoGs are tackling are increasingly complex, and require coherent policy development processes that can respond to the rise in complexity.

B. The increasing interconnectedness of challenges

Dividing policy areas into siloes that have little to do with each other is a practice that gets in the way of achieving higher degrees of coherence. This tendency affects not only how departments interact and policies are formed, but influences how departments see themselves and their areas of responsibility. Clearly, in order to carry out all of its different responsibilities, governments must allocate resources to each policy area. There are resources allotted to foreign affairs, to agriculture, to education, etc. But to achieve a basic level of coherence, CoGs must account for the ways in which policy areas overlap and interact.

A conceptual framework I will use to help demonstrate the challenge of interconnectedness is John D Sterman’s Systems Thinking framework. Sterman’s framework suggests that it is impossible to do just one thing. Everything is connected to everything else. Sterman suggests that a key cause of unintended consequences is our tendency to misinterpret. An event-orientated worldview leads us to an event-orientated approach to problem solving. Governments try to solve problems by assessing the state of affairs and compare it to their goals. The gap between the situation desired and the situation perceived defines the problem. The system reacts to the solution.

Complications arise because governments do not understand the full range of feedback operating in the system. As one agency’s actions alter the state of the system, other agencies react to restore the balance that has been upset. Some of these actions trigger side-effects.

Side-effects are often discussed as if they were an inevitable feature of policymaking. Sterman ventures that there are no side-effects, only effects. When a governments acts, there are two effects: the ones it thought of in advance, and the ones it did not anticipate; those that were intended and beneficial, and those that fed back to undercut the policy and harmed the system. Sterman suggests that side effects are therefore not a feature of reality, but a sign that one’s understanding of the system is narrow and flawed.
Policymakers know that they need to account for the unintended impacts of their policies. However, knowing something is not the same as being constantly aware of it. Consciousness is more than knowledge. To demonstrate the difference, consider the differences between these two sets of sentences:

- Knowing policies do not always behave as anticipated
- Being aware that polices will have unintended impacts and mapping out where they might be
- Knowing that purpose stewards vision
- Being conscious that the aims, methods, approaches, and outcomes of a government all create and re-create a government’s sense of purpose
- Knowing that innovation is important
- Being aware that some issues do not yet have solutions and need investment in creativity to find
- Knowing about stakeholders
- Being conscious of the role stakeholders could play in improving policy
- Knowing that to make policy is to be thinking about the future
- Being conscious of the power of thinking long term on the way policy is made today

Applying these two frameworks helps illustrate the changing context in which governments operate, and strengthens the rationale for policy coherence as a critical strategy able to respond to the increase in policy issue complexity and inextricability.

Understanding why policy coherence is difficult to achieve can help CoGs solve for it. It warrants acknowledging that it is difficult in part because governments tend to like their silos. Structures are in place that have been historically effective in solving predictable issues. The challenge is that the issues are increasingly unpredictable and uncontained, and now call for responses of a different nature.

“When you are confronted by any complex social system…with things about it that you’re dissatisfied with and anxious to fix, you cannot just step in and set about fixing with much hope of helping. This realization is one of the sore discouragements of our century...

You cannot meddle with one part of a complex system from the outcome without the almost certain risk of setting off disastrous events that you hadn’t counted on in other, remote parts.

If you want to fix something, you are first obliged to understand…the whole system.

– Lewis Thomas, 1975

Source: Sterman (2001)
2. Literature Review

Existing academic literature provides a helpful basis for interpretations of coherence, elaborations on obstacles to it, and practical examples of it—but offers primarily theoretical solutions, and little guidance on implementation. Nonetheless, this analysis draws together some of the literature that is helpful to better understand the conditions for successful collaboration, barriers to it, and theoretical mechanisms for enhancing cross-departmental collaboration.

The purpose of this section is to map out the efforts that have attempted to address policy coherence so far, in order to identify the gaps that my analysis and recommendation must respond to in order to advance the discourse on policy coherence.

Conditions for successful collaboration

Academic literature identifies a few key conditions for successful collaboration between government agencies and department. Six of these conditions are outlined below.

- **Strong leadership**: Collaborative efforts require clear leadership, steered by those who are committed to cooperation and addressing conflicts as they arise. A key component of strong leadership is having the conviction that public value will be improved by collaboration, and understanding the factors that influence achieving objectives. This approach can be tempered with distributive leadership, since people usually only take ownership over what they help build.

- **Clear goals and priorities**: Clear goals and priorities that are shared across agencies and ministries must guide collaborative efforts. This helps to ensure that all parties are working toward the same objectives. Shared aims and objectives can motivate participating organisations to pool resources, create synergies, develop consensual strategic directions, and high levels of trust and commitment that limit the likelihood of opportunism, reduce the need for monitoring, and minimises compliance costs.

- **A culture of trust and mutual respect**: Successful collaboration requires trust and respect between agencies and ministries, as well as a willingness to share information and resources. Most academic literature agrees that creating an open and honest organisational culture that encourages participative decision making and open and clear communication is critical to overcoming barriers to collaboration.

- **Communication and information sharing**: Effective communication and information sharing are essential for collaborative efforts. This includes regular meetings, joint planning processes, and open lines of communication. Part of this work includes formulating transparent objectives and realistic expectations, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and emphasising the need for further policy work to sustain and incentivise collaboration.

- **Resources and capacity**: Collaborative efforts require adequate resources and capacity, including funding, staff, and technical expertise. Collaboration means building mechanisms such as a performance measurement system and a research base of what works.

- **Evaluation and accountability**: Collaborative efforts should be evaluated regularly to ensure that they are meeting their goals and objectives. This requires clear performance measures and joint accountability mechanisms.
Barriers to collaboration

Literature identifies a few key barriers to successful collaboration between government agencies and departments. Ten of these barriers are outlined below.

- **Silo mentality:** There is a tendency for departments to work in isolation, without sharing information or collaborating with other departments. When different government agencies and ministries work in silos, it can create barriers to collaboration due to differences in organizational structures, cultures and priorities.

- **Lack of trust:** Successful collaboration requires trust between different agencies and ministries, as well as effective communication channels. A lack of trust and communication serves as a key barrier to collaboration efforts, and makes it difficult to share information and resources.

- **Different mandates and priorities:** Different agencies and ministries may have different mandates and priorities, which can make it difficult to align efforts and collaborate effectively. Worst case, some departments may have competing goals, making it difficult to find common ground.

- **Resource constraints:** Constraint of resources, including budget and staffing limitations, can make it difficult to collaborate. CoGs have also highlighted one key barrier being access to data.

- **Bureaucracy and red tape:** Political and bureaucratic factors, such as turf battles, power struggles, and differing political ideologies can create barriers to collaboration. Complex rules and regulations can make it difficult to share resources or collaborate effectively. Political pressure or interference can also disrupt collaboration.

- **Lack of leadership and coordination:** Collaboration efforts can be limited without strong and effective leadership to coordinate activity across the whole of government.

- **Limited conviction:** There is limited evidence to demonstrate conclusively that collaboration per se enhances outcomes. This is because many of the anticipated benefits of collaboration (like achievement of positive social outcomes or improvement in inter-organisational relationships) are difficult to measure, and evaluation is often focused on process, conducted over too short a period to pick up the long-term changes that would demonstrate the benefits of collaboration, and values short term results (such as political polling results).

- **Legal and regulatory barriers:** Regulatory frameworks can create barriers to collaboration, such as restrictions on information sharing or conflict regulations. Privacy acts may limit the exchange of information across government agencies and countries, and government agencies have a propensity to shift responsibility to other departments or withdraw from collaboration due to differences between priorities and policies.

- **Resistance to change:** Resistance to new ideas, processes and technologies can limit efforts to achieve collaboration. This has knock-on impacts on investment in innovation and new ways of thinking about collaboration.

- **Lack of incentives:** There may be few incentives for departments to collaborate, particularly if it requires additional resources or staff time. There is also a barrier of added complexity. While governments may in principle be open to collaborate for better outcomes, working in partnerships also adds to the complexity of accountability arrangements.
Finally, literature identifies some theoretical mechanisms for successful collaboration between government agencies and departments. A few of these mechanisms are outlined below.

- **Developing a cross-government policy framework**: This can help ensure that policies are mutually reinforcing, and that they are aligned with the government’s priorities.\textsuperscript{xi}

- **Creating inter-ministerial committees or task forces**: These can help to coordinate policies across different government departments and ensure that they are aligned with overall government objectives.\textsuperscript{xii}

- **Using integrated policy assessments**: This can help to identify potential trade-offs and synergies between different policy areas and ensure that policies are coherent.\textsuperscript{xiii}

- **Implementing joint policy development processes**: This involves collaboration between different government departments to develop policies that are mutually reinforcing.\textsuperscript{xiv}

- **Engaging stakeholders**: Governments can engage stakeholders to ensure that policies are developed with a holistic understanding of the issues and challenges faced by different groups.\textsuperscript{xlv}

- **Enhancing the policy evaluation process**: This can help to identify whether policies are achieving their intended outcomes and whether there are any unintended consequences.\textsuperscript{xlv}

- **Improving data sharing and analysis**: This can help ensure that policies are evidence-based and that decision-making is informed by the best available data.\textsuperscript{xlvii} Documenting can be a key component of data sharing. For many policy challenges, there is a need for government entities at different levels to coordinate their policy responses and implementation strategies. A central repository of public policy documents can be developed as a semantic interoperability resource for government organizations for consistent description and documentation of public policies to enable efficient discovery, cross-referencing and analysis of policy documents.\textsuperscript{xviii}

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**Case Study: New Zealand**

The State Services Commission of New Zealand found systemic challenges to coherence across government priorities and action stemming from: co-ordination problems, frequent structural changes, variable standards of planning, risk aversion, inappropriate specification of outputs, high compliance costs, unequal power and influence, unclear responsibilities and relationships, inadequate expertise and experience of the staff, insufficiencies in the area of performance evaluation, and reluctance to assert a strong leadership role.

The Ministry of Social Development identified the following risk factors that it believes have the potential to impede collaboration, include that government agencies may: fail to display a commitment of time; lack clear accountabilities, ongoing communications and willingness to work together in a system-wide way; take a silo approach to service delivery; differ from each other in respect of values and priorities; and find it difficult to develop reporting and monitoring requirements. It furthermore found a culture of secrecy hampering government agencies, differing funding processes among government agencies resulting in confusion and inequities, and a diversity of regional boundaries across government agencies.

*Source: State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development (2003); Dovey (2003)*  

Figure 4.1

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• **Legal Requirement**: This involves putting in place formal legal or administrative requirements to ensure collaboration between government agencies. In regions like Europe, collaboration is underpinned by an extensive range of legal requirements.xlviii

• **Budgeting**: The national budget is sometimes the first document in which all of a government’s priorities are compiled in one place. In the US, collaborative means for federal agencies to collaborate on mechanism such as Pay for Success using interagency groups to implement programs and share information.xlix

• **Joint Management**: This involves having different ministries brought together to jointly manage certain projects, especially those dealing with cross-sectional impacts (i.e., phasing-in green technologies that consider the entire energy system). It can also involve joint management beyond formal government agencies, to include stakeholders from the private and public sector, academia, and civil society, to avoid policy inconsistency.li

• **Reward and Incentives**: Government agencies should succeed in fostering an ethos of collaboration and define it as part of their core business by encouraging and rewarding collaborative activity, allowing adequate time and resources to support collaborative initiatives, and undertaking further policy work to promote a collaborative culture.

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**Case Study: New Zealand**

The Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand identified that it needs to “have processes that are fit for purpose”. This condition, which seems to have the potential to contribute to removing the barriers to collaboration, means that it is necessary for participating organisations to: identify and use the “right meeting processes” (informal as well as formal); undergo the requisite training to run meetings in an effective way; and share the authority to make decisions at the meetings.

The Ministry advanced the idea that joined-up funding can play a significant role in overcoming the barriers to collaboration in New Zealand. It found that joined-up funding may get government agencies to: work more closely together by making them jointly fund a specialised service to meet a specific need; set up a single funding pool jointly managed by a collective body; and jointly develop service criteria, performance assessment frameworks, and monitoring and evaluation requirements, and closer working relationships characterized by interdependence and trust.

*Source: State Services Commission and Ministry of Social Development (2003); Dovey (2003)*

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### 3. Survey

Existing academic literature provides a helpful basis of obstacles to coherence, conditions it depends on, and theoretical mechanisms for achieving it—but misses the evaluation of which mechanisms work in practice, and how to implement them. To understand the *how*—how OECD countries are meeting this challenge, and what tools and methods are used to take coherence forward—countries had to be asked directly, to complement the basis provided by existing literature. The OECD disseminated a survey among CoG policymakers at each of the 38 OECD country governments. The goal of the survey was to understand how governments promote policy coherence, in order to learn about specific components of CoG
responsibilities that are and are not being met, and identify key steps governments can take to coordinate and enhance coherent policy development.

The survey was prepared by the OECD Unit of Public Governance Reviews and was composed of 29 primary questions, with over 300 sub-questions. It goes into considerable detail and has been thoughtfully designed to deal with questions of policy coherence. Each question is specifically targeted at getting to the heart of how governments promote policy coherence, and where they may fall short.

A number of countries have been delayed in returning their completed surveys. Thirteen OECD country responses have been received so far, with the rest expected in the coming months. This analysis has therefore been careful not to draw inferences from a partial response rate in order to guard against selection bias. When the additional data arrives, further inferences can be made and, subject to University guidelines, an updated copy of this report will be provided. Until then, I will avoid making conclusions about OECD countries in general. Instead, this analysis will provide important insights into what the components of policy coherence are, and identify patterns for the 13 countries whose detailed data I already have. Looking across more than 10 countries provides insights that I would not be able to find if I only examined one or two countries.

It has not been possible to provide any cross-national analysis, due to the importance of preserving the anonymity of country data.

Survey Results Analysis

Data from thirteen OECD member states provide insight into how CoGs drive cohesive action in coordinating and enhancing coherent policy. Delivering on this ambition requires considering how CoGs define their priorities; which areas of policymaking are CoG’s prime responsibility; the nature of support extended by CoGs to line ministries and agencies; main challenges faced by CoGs; ways in which CoGs support reviewing policy proposals; and mechanisms CoGs leverage to support policy coordination and coherence—in order to enable collective, cohesive action at all levels towards impactful and resilient public outcomes.

The following sections look into each of these CoG functions in more detail, outlining common challenges, good practices, lessons learned, and success factors, while respectful of the different institutional contexts and cultures. They highlight different institutional arrangements, practices, coordination mechanisms and processes put in place for leading strategic planning processes in order to achieve strategic objectives and address horizontal priorities.

Summary of key insights

1. CoGs focus on leading and coordinating, and less on engagement, data, and systems thinking
2. CoGs’ support to agencies is inward looking and misses innovation, stakeholders, and training
3. CoGs are strong technically but face a major challenge in operationalising long-term policy issues
4. CoGs’ review of policy meets quality standards but consistently lacks a viable implementation plan
5. CoGs are strong in the use of taskforces and expert groups, but weak in hubs, forums, and innovation
1. **Areas of prime responsibility for CoGs**

To ensure policy coherence in the policy coordination and policy development process, the CoG needs to lead in many areas across the policy coordination and policy development process. In reality, however, CoGs tend to focus primarily on a few areas and miss others.

The survey gathered data on two different sets of key responsibilities CoGs carry out: one set for setting the vision, priorities, and strategic planning (Figure 6.1), and another set for coordinating and enhancing policy (Figure 6.2).

In terms of **setting the vision, priorities, and strategic planning**, the survey results reveal that the three areas CoGs lead on are formulating a long-term vision for government, coordination of the development of strategic documents, plans and instruments, and setting standards, requirements, or guidance for line ministries or agencies. The area CoGs lead the least on is the development of strategic documents, plans and instruments.

In terms of **coordinating and enhancing policy development**, the survey results revealed that the key area of responsibility for CoGs is stewarding or leading cross-cutting and key priorities. Three other areas of responsibility that commonly lie with CoGs are ensuring alignment between policy options and government priorities, ensuring that policy options do not contradict each other, and coordinating implementation across government agencies.

Areas of responsibility that tend to have remarkably little CoG involvement include engaging external stakeholders, engaging with political actors, leveraging data and evidence, setting standards, and integrating strategic foresight approaches. **Not a single CoG leads on integrating systems-thinking approaches in policy development** (see Figure 6.2; see Appendix C for fuller representation of results).

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**Key Responsibilities in Setting the Vision, Priorities & Strategic Planning**

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that selected the following key areas of responsibility they lead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoG leads</th>
<th>Line Ministry leads</th>
<th>Shared lead</th>
<th>Varies greatly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulating a long-term vision</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy plans coordination</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting standards for Line Ministries</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of strategic priorities</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandating strategic plan development in cross-cutting areas</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting priorities</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Futures thinking, foresight, modelling</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability for delivering strategic priorities</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing cross-cutting strategic plans</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy plans development</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart: In response to the question: ‘For each of the below activities regarding setting the vision, priorities, and strategic planning, please indicate who has the primary responsibility?’ • Source: Original research, conducted with the Unit of Public Governance Reviews, OECD • Created with Datawrapper
Key Responsibilities in Coordinating & Enhancing Policy Development

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that selected the following key areas of responsibility regarding coordinating and enhancing policy:

- **Stewarding cross-cutting priorities**: 69% CoG leads, 31% Line Ministry leads, 15% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Ensuring alignment**: 46% CoG leads, 31% Line Ministry leads, 15% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Avoiding contradiction**: 46% CoG leads, 38% Line Ministry leads, 15% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Coordinating priority implementation**: 46% CoG leads, 23% Line Ministry leads, 15% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Engaging external stakeholders**: 46% CoG leads, 31% Line Ministry leads, 31% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Engaging political actors**: 31% CoG leads, 31% Line Ministry leads, 31% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Leveraging data/evidence**: 46% CoG leads, 15% Line Ministry leads, 23% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Setting standards for data use**: 23% CoG leads, 23% Line Ministry leads, 23% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Integrating strategic foresight approaches**: 46% CoG leads, 15% Line Ministry leads, 23% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A
- **Integrating systems-thinking approaches**: 31% CoG leads, 23% Line Ministry leads, 23% Shared lead, 8% Varies greatly, 8% N/A

Chart: In response to the question: "For each of the below activities regarding setting the vision, priorities, and strategic planning, please indicate who has the primary responsibility." • Source: Original Research, conducted with the Unit of Public Governance Reviews at the OECD • Created with Datawrapper
2. Support CoGs extend to line ministries and other agencies in the development of policy

Centres of Government extend substantial support to the review of and feedback on draft policies, and ad-hoc support to ministries on providing input into strategy documents, plans or instruments. Some support is also extended to the communication of specific government priorities that need to be developed, and providing policy development frameworks or standards.

Little support is extended, however, to external consultations, capacity building to support policy innovation, guidance on legislative procedures, and training to support policy development.

These insights appear to indicate that support is extended primarily at a high level, appearing at the phase of priority setting at the beginning, review at the end, and ad-hoc support in between. But critical components that ensure coherence within the policy development process tend to be less well supported, including stakeholder engagement, capacity building to support innovation, training, and proper guidance.

It is possible, however, that ad-hoc support and policy development frameworks are examples of continual support throughout the policy development process. Some policy development frameworks — e.g., the UK framework on open policy making — are structured cyclically, meaning support is organised to follow the policy development cycle as it happens over time. While the data shows areas such as training, innovation capacity building and external consultations as less supported, some of these areas may in fact benefit from being executed ‘closer to the ground’. Whether or not CoGs provide support in these areas directly, however, CoGs will need to ensure that these other important areas of support are also delivered.
3. **Main areas of challenge for CoG in coordination and enhancing policy development**

There are relatively few factors CoGs characterize as major challenges in respect of coordination and enhancing policy development, with the distinct exception of one: operationalising long-term policy issues, such as climate change and aging populations. This appears to be a significant challenge across several CoGs.

CoGs are more likely to indicate moderate challenges. Three are shared by more than 50% of the respondents: the prioritisation and trade-offs between different policy issues, gaining clarity on vision and priorities, and ensuring adequate horizontal engagement with other government departments.

Setting quality standards for policy development is a common minor challenge, and three issues were noted by several countries as not being a challenge. These include limited involvement in critical government decisions, engaging with political actors on policy proposals, and providing practical tools and instruments for policy development.

These findings indicate that most CoGs are good at the technical aspects of policy development, consulting at the political level, and having opportunities to engage in decision making. However, a real challenge of policy coherence for CoGs is at the level of strategy, prioritization, and operationalising long-term policy issues. Because strategy, priority setting, and long-term issues set the standard and lay the foundation for the more technical aspects of policy development, this exposes a critical challenge that needs more focused resource investment.
Major and Moderate Challenges Among CoGs

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that indicate the following as major or moderate challenges in coordinating and enhancing policy development:

- **Prioritisation and trade-offs between policy issues**: Major challenge 31%, Moderate challenge 62%, Minor challenge 8%, Not a challenge 0%
- **Operationalising long term policy issues**: Major challenge 46%, Moderate challenge 31%, Minor challenge 23%, Not a challenge 0%
- **Overlapping mandates/unclear responsibilities**: Major challenge 15%, Moderate challenge 38%, Minor challenge 31%, Not a challenge 15%
- **Gaining clarity on vision and priorities**: Major challenge 0%, Moderate challenge 54%, Minor challenge 23%, Not a challenge 23%
- **Ensuring adequate horizontal engagement**: Major challenge 0%, Moderate challenge 54%, Minor challenge 38%, Not a challenge 0%
- **Integrating contemporary methods**: Major challenge 15%, Moderate challenge 31%, Minor challenge 38%, Not a challenge 0%

*In response to the question: “To what extent are the following factors a challenge for the CoG in respect to coordination and enhancing policy development?”*

Source: Original research, conducted with the Unit of Public Reviews, OECD • Created with Datawrapper

Less Challenging Areas Among CoGs

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that indicate the following as minor or not a challenges in coordinating and enhancing policy development:

- **Lack of formal coordination/explicit mechanisms**: Major challenge 15%, Moderate challenge 15%, Minor challenge 38%, Not a challenge 31%
- **Providing guidance/stewardship on policy**: Major challenge 0%, Moderate challenge 31%, Minor challenge 38%, Not a challenge 31%
- **Setting quality standards for policy**: Major challenge 8%, Moderate challenge 23%, Minor challenge 46%, Not a challenge 15%
- **Engaging political actors on policy proposals**: Major challenge 8%, Moderate challenge 31%, Minor challenge 15%, Not a challenge 38%
- **Engaging external stakeholders**: Major challenge 8%, Moderate challenge 31%, Minor challenge 38%, Not a challenge 15%
- **Limited involvement in critical decisions**: Major challenge 0%, Moderate challenge 38%, Minor challenge 15%, Not a challenge 38%

*In response to the question: “To what extent are the following factors a challenge for the CoG in respect to coordination and enhancing policy development?”*

Source: Original research, conducted with the Unit of Public Reviews, OECD • Created with Datawrapper
4. Priorities for CoGs when reviewing policy proposals

There are a series of competing priorities CoGs must consider when reviewing draft policy proposals, legislation, or other policy documents. The two most common areas CoGs will strive to ensure are that the proposal is in line with government priorities, and that the proposed regulations meet regulatory quality standards.

Other aspects that most CoGs will give attention to are that adequate costing has been carried out, including consideration of internal reallocation; that the proposal has been subjected to an adequate consultation process; and that there are provisions for the evaluation of policies.

The one responsibility which consistently falls out of the purview of CoGs is a viable implementation plan.

We learn from this that CoGs are generally good at ensuring some of the key aspects of reviewing policy drafts, with a particular strength in priority alignment and meeting regulatory quality standards. While it is worth questioning which are the right areas CoGs are expected to prioritize, the consistently limited focus on a viable implementation plan exposes a key issue that will need greater attention if policy ambitions are to be coherent with intended outcomes.

CoG Responsibilities When Reviewing Policy Drafts

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that indicated each area as their responsibility when reviewing draft policy proposals, legislation or other policy documents.

In response to the questions: “When reviewing draft policy proposals, legislation, or other policy documents, which aspects does the CoG ensure?”

Source: Original research, conducted with the Unit of Public Reviews, OECD • Created with Datawrapper
5. Mechanisms leveraged by CoG to support policy coordination and coherence

CoGs are increasingly searching for enabling mechanisms that can be leveraged to support policy coordination and coherence. The two mechanisms CoGs most heavily rely upon are the use of interdepartmental taskforces, as well as expert groups or advisory groups. Meanwhile, CoGs make very limited use of mechanisms such as collaboration hubs, citizen assemblies or other citizen forums, and innovation labs or virtual innovation spaces, and no use at all of progress made on audit indicators.

There has been moderate use of systems approaches and methods, as well as leveraging their unique role and relationship with parliament and elected officials, but this has been limited.

We glean from this that CoGs are strong or at least familiar in the use of bodies that can provide advice or counsel. However, CoGs have made much less use of more novel approaches, particularly within collaboration, stakeholder sourcing, and innovation, which, though less prevalent, could be important factors in strengthening coherence.

![Mechanisms for Coherence and Coordination](image)

*In response to the question: “What enabling mechanisms does the CoG leverage to support coordination and coherence?”*

Source: Original Primary Research, conducted with the Unit of Public Governance Reviews, OECD • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 6.6
Patterns in Areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement Among CoGs

The data reveals that CoGs have a set of strengths that serve them well in their efforts to strengthen coordination and enhancing coherent policy development. Some of the strengths in the particular include:

- Leading on stewarding and coordinating as key responsibilities
- Offering support to line ministries and agencies in feedback on draft policies and ad-hoc support
- Technical aspects of policy development are not a challenge
- Reviewing policy to meet quality standards
- Using enabling mechanisms such as taskforces and expert groups

Overall, the pattern reveals that CoGs tend to be technically strong, particularly good at high level steering, coordinatting their own support structures as needed through advisory groups and taskforces, and support line ministries and agencies in reviewing policy and provide ad-hoc support more generally.

The data also reveals that CoGs have a set of areas that need strengthening if meaningful progress towards more coordinated and coherent policy development is to be made. Some of the weaknesses exposed in particular are as follows:

- Taking a lead on engagement, data, and systems thinking
- Greater support of line ministries in stakeholder engagement, training, and innovation
- Main challenges are within strategy, prioritization, and long-term issues
- Review of policy consistently lacks a viable implementation plan
- Mechanisms utilized miss collaboration hubs, citizen forums and innovation lab focus

Overall, the pattern reveals that CoGs tend to struggle with giving enough attention to stakeholder engagement, data, systems thinking, innovation, training, and a long-term focus that includes attention to viable implementation plans and creative and innovative mechanisms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading on technicalities</td>
<td>Stakeholder engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-level steering</td>
<td>Leveraging data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating own support structures</td>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating internal support</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting policy review</td>
<td>Long-term focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing ad-hoc support</td>
<td>Innovative mechanisms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.7
Takeaway

While CoGs have many strengths, there are clear trending gaps in strategy, long-term focus, systems-thinking, innovation, data, and stakeholder engagement. There is some experimentation with systems approaches and new ways of engaging with parliament, but the data reveals that not enough is being done and there is a clear need for more. In order to future-proof the policymaking process, governments need to devote more resources than currently allotted to these areas.

In analysing the trends revealed by the survey data, four broad areas for further improvement if policy coherence is to be realized begin to emerge. These can be characterised as: 1) stewarding the vision, 2) stakeholder engagement, 3) innovation, and 4) cultivating a long-term outlook.

To provide CoGs with examples of what strengthening these areas can look like and draw out best practices for doing so, the next section of this analysis will provide an overview of a few case studies from governments that have devoted more resources to each of these four areas. These case studies will demonstrate how strengthening these areas drives CoGs to achieve more coordinated and coherent policy development.
4. CASE STUDIES

To check the validity of the insights I have found in the above analysis of the survey data, I examine here a few case studies of government interventions. These interventions correspond with the four broad areas my analysis identified which must improve if policy coherence is to be realized, namely: 1) stewarding the vision, 2) stakeholder engagement, 3) innovation, and 4) cultivating a long-term outlook. The aim of this section is to demonstrate through a survey of case studies how devoting more resources to these areas can drive CoGs to achieve more coordinated and coherent policy development.

1) **Stewarding the vision**

Question addressed: How are governments deciding where to focus their resources? Why does identifying priorities from the centre improve coherence?

CASE STUDY: **Breaking Down Policy Silos in Belgium**

The ‘Comprehensive Approach’ strategy, designed jointly by the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry for Development Cooperation and the Ministry of Defence, sets out a coherent approach to Belgian foreign policy. Conscious that complex situations generally raise challenges of very different natures (political, social, ecological, economic, military, security), the Comprehensive Approach embeds development goals within diplomacy, defence and the rule of law. The strategy builds on the approach already developed for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and helps to progressively break down the different policy silos.

An example is Belgium’s contribution to peace and stability in Iraq and in the Sahel, where permanent dialogue, evaluation and adjustment of Belgium’s approach required all departments concerned to collectively set the overarching priorities and adjust mutual efforts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs adjusted its internal organisational structure in light of synergies and created a department competent for environment and climate that covers both development and multilateral aspects of this theme.


CASE STUDY: **Fostering Culture Change in Service of Policy Coherence in Greece**

The General Secretariat of the Government (GSG), in co-operation with the National School of Public Administration and Local Government, organised a three-day seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to train senior public employees on the international, European and national dimensions of the SDGs.

Another seminar organised by the Better Regulation Office of the GSG sought to highlight the importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic, and environmental) in the ‘better regulation’ tools.

Through these educational and training seminars, senior officials from line ministries and local and regional administrations become fully aware of the vision, principles and core priorities of the 2030 Agenda. The initiative also helped to build a network of senior policy makers across sectors and government levels with shared responsibility and commitment to policy coherence and SDGs.

2) Stakeholder engagement

Question addressed: How does authentic, consistent, and efficient stakeholder engagement improve coherence?

CASE STUDY: Systematic & Participatory Review Enhance Stakeholder Engagement and Coherence in Finland

Finland relies on a wide range of sources to build its evidence base and inform policy. These include scientific panels, think-tanks, research institutions, citizen engagement and an active civil society. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda is being reported on annually to the parliament as part of the government’s annual report. From 2017 onwards, each branch of government provides information on steps taken to advance the 2030 Agenda. The Development Policy Committee, which monitors and assesses implementation of Finland’s international development commitments, plays a key role in the follow-up and review of the global dimension of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finland is also developing a national follow-up system that enables stakeholder participation. Finland has in this way put in place the key building blocks for ensuring a coherent implementation of the SDGs going forward.


CASE STUDY: Public servants challenging the status quo in Portugal

The “Right to Challenge” within the Government of Portugal enables public servants to signal and intervene when they identify a problem or gap in the government’s approach to a problem or a specific legislative issue. Once the problem is identified, public servants are supported in developing experimental projects to develop an innovative solution to the problem or gap. The “right to challenge” mechanism enables a temporary suspension of existing legal regimes for the duration of the project to enable creative solutions to be developed.

The Right to Challenge provides public servants with the autonomy to take action and disrupt the status quo when processes, legislation and policies are mismatched with modern contexts. Moreover, it offers a cultural shift in what is perceived as possible.

Source: OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (2022), Innovation Playbook; OPSI (2022)
3) Innovation

Question addressed: What role does innovation play in improving coherence? How can the formation of strategic planning teams serve as markers for a CoG’s innovative capacity?

CASE STUDY: Spreading Public Value Innovation in Denmark

Many innovative solutions exist within and across governments; however, it is often difficult to systematise the diffusion of innovation because potential innovators lack the tools to help them replicate good ideas. To overcome this, the National Centre for Public Sector Innovation in Denmark has developed Spreading Innovation, a step-by-step guide to help replicate innovations in new contexts.


In Denmark, the Frikommuneforsøg (Free Municipality Experiments) is an example of government creating time and space for experimentation at the municipal level. The initiative exempted participating municipalities from state regulations, allowing them “freedom to experiment, test and pilot new solutions and approaches the best fit their municipal contexts”.

Source: OECD (2021); OPSI (2022)

CASE STUDY: Cross-ministerial collaboration for coherent environmental policies in Lithuania

Integrated approaches minimise adverse environmental impacts and maximise eco-efficiency. In Lithuania, different governmental institutions co-ordinate their actions in order to increase awareness and ensure the integration of environmental aspects into the implementation measures in their respective policies. Lithuania has implemented an integrated system of pollution prevention and control which includes water, air and soil protection and waste management measures. Environment and health considerations must be considered as part of an environmental impact assessment of a proposed economic activity before implementation. This set-up prevents environmental deterioration and ensures inclusive and representative decision making on at local, regional and national levels.


CASE STUDY: Bottom-up Approach on the Future in the Netherlands

The Dutch Province of Fryslan developed the “Blue Delta” mission to address rising sea levels. The process was kick-started by a photograph taken from Space in 2018, which illustrated the vulnerability of this coastal region of the Netherlands to climate change. The Province held a dialogue on the future of the region, which focused on the topics of circular economy, water technology and management, and local communities. It launched a series of bottom-up projects and co-operated with a University to develop an evaluation method to assess new projects against the SDGs and other eco-indicators related to the mission. The province has placed emphasis on engaging with broad parts of the population during the initial development stage, and ongoing adjustment and evaluation of the mission. The province also used an innovative approach to stimulate co-operation at the regional level. It convened an “innovation roundtable” with experts, project owners and idea holders to forge connections between related projects. It also redirected funding from concrete projects to the early phase ideation stage of project development and helped start-ups to use festivals as a testbed for their products. It was particularly important to follow through on every ideation meeting and present clear concepts for the next stage of implementation.

4) Operating with a long-term outlook

Question addressed: Why is a long-term vision relevant and how can it help governments navigate short and long-term pressures? Why does sailing by sight only work with a reliable compass?

CASE STUDY: A participatory follow-up and review system for sustainable development in Finland

Finland’s national follow-up and review system is anchored in the eight objectives of its long-term strategic framework. Policy making is linked to the eight objectives via ten indicator baskets, which in turn consist of four to five indicators and are connected to more than one objective. The baskets serve as the framework for discussing interpretations and highlights entities that are relevant in terms of political decision making.

The indicators in each basket are reviewed, interpreted and updated once a year by relevant authorities. The purpose is to assess the significance of the change in the indicator value from the perspective of sustainable development. This is followed by a public, multi-stakeholder dialogue where anyone can present different interpretations and introduce new information. This process helps to inform policy development.

An open discussion takes place on the Prime Minister’s Office sustainable development website on a rolling basis to discuss a different basket each month. After the update of all baskets, the National Council on Sustainable Development and the Prime Minister’s Office organise an annual event on the state and future of sustainable development in Finland. The event coincides with the parliament discussion on the government’s annual report to the parliament.


CASE STUDY: Revision of Strategic Framework on Sustainable Development in Czech Republic

In 2015, the government of Czech Republic tasked the prime minister with revising its national Strategic Framework on Sustainable Development. The aim was to formulate key priority areas and long-term objectives for sustainable development and wellbeing, and identify opportunities and threats as well as global megatrends influencing the development of the Czech Republic.

In mid-2015, the prime minister invited all government advisory bodies and major CSO networks to submit proposals for the country’s long-term development. Inputs were collected through the Database of Strategies, a special application created for this occasion operated by the Ministry of Regional Development. By October, 49 organisations and institutes had provided 172 inputs.

The Government Council for Sustainable Development team edited and evaluated the inputs. The National Network for Foresight, consisting of six academic institutions and think tanks focused on strategic management and foresight, supposed their work. On the basis of the analysis using the DELPHI method, relevant inputs were selected and using similar added keywords clustered inputs into six areas. The selected areas were presented to the Sustainable Development Forum in consulted with relevant committees.

A nearly two-year process of drafting of the Czech Republic 2030 strategy followed. This involved organisation of six roundtables (one for each key area), organisation of eight regional roundtables, two public hearings, consultations in both chambers of parliament and numerous consultations with experts across different sectors. Overall, around 500 experts and 100 different organisations participated in the process to make the outcomes as future-proof as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

Systemic policy issues that span the entire machinery of government have exposed gaps in co-ordination and leadership from the centres of governments. Little is currently known about how to measure policy coherence, how to determine if it has been achieved, and which are the most effective mechanisms for achieving it. This challenge is becoming more urgent as a myriad cross-cutting policy issues increasingly challenge the core organisational structure of public administrations.

CoGs are uniquely positioned to identify and manage trade-offs, but the methodological framework for this is as yet underdeveloped. Political prioritization can gain in coherence and legitimacy when supported by procedural and methodical frameworks deployed by CoGs.

Drawing on the above analysis, articulated below are four key principles crucial to achieving higher levels of coherence in the policy development process. The recommendations—derived from common challenges, good practices, and lessons learned among CoGs—respond to the four key areas of CoG functioning that need to improve in order to achieving higher degrees of policy coherence.

Lastly, I distilled a list of criteria that a CoG might use to assess its success. To make matters concrete and actionable, I created a checklist for good practice and a decision tree that reflects these criteria as a mechanism by which CoGs can strengthen policy coherence using methods grounded in practice to achieve strategic objectives and address horizontal priorities.
1. Stewarding the Vision

CLARITY OF PURPOSE, VISION, AND PRIORITIES IN FOSTERING COHERENCE AMONG POLICIES

**When everything is important, nothing is.**

At the simplest level, coherence implies that a government’s stated priorities, internal functioning, and resulting outcomes do not contradict each other. The work of CoGs, therefore, is to continually try to align its ambitions with outcomes. As simple as this may sound, reaching such a level of coherence requires a great deal of clarity of vision. To simply attribute the lack of congruence between aims and outcomes to the absence of sincerity is inadequate. Often, the inconsistencies that appear in policy outcomes reflect the lack of clarity of what is most important.

The conceptual framework that governs how a government goes about coordinating and developing its policies contains many elements. Some elements can be described as immutable, such as the welfare of its citizens or the right to life and freedom, while others evolve over time—including many of the strategies, methods, and approaches for translating a government’s vision into reality.

However, what binds the elements of the conceptual framework together is the overall purpose that a government chooses for itself, and which its people have elected it to fulfil. **Strategy-driven priority-setting is crucial for governing effectively within a resource-constrained context.** A developed clarity of vision is essential if a government is to bring together the various elements in its framework for action.

For this reason, clarity about purpose, vision and priorities is the first and most fundamental step to enhance the degree of coherence in coordination and policy development. Too often, coherence is treated as a talking point or as a public relations exercise. Rather, it should be the north star of a government’s decision-making framework.

**CASE STUDY: Romania**

The Government of Romania has strong goals and plans that are tied to some of most complex national and global challenges. However, Romania’s goals and plans regularly shift based on frequent cabinet shuffles and changes in political leadership. As a result, **government priorities are often focused on politically beneficial goals with a short-term focus.** This is a common challenge across countries.

**CASE STUDY: Japan**

In 2016, the government established a new body composed of all cabinet ministers and led by the prime minister to promote cooperation among ministries. It acts as **a control tower to ensure a whole-of-government approach** to SDG implementation. In 2017, they adopted the **SDG Action Plan** which focused on 3 overarching goals. By setting three cross-cutting priorities, the CoG recognised their indivisibility and the need for integrated implementation approaches. The action plan also provided a range of government projects that are categorised by 8 priority areas, alongside implementation guiding principles. The inter-ministerial co-ordination of government goals at the highest level backed by a concrete action plan provides a strong basis for policy coherence.

*Source: SDG UN (2017), OECD (2017)*
2. Linking Intent to Impact

IMAPCT-FOCUSED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Change is not a project one group does for another.

To affect sustainable and meaningful change, policy must respond to the needs of the people and communities it aims to serve, not to the agencies conducting policy. The knowledge that is generated on the ground and within the communities that are impacted by the policies governments devise must first be distilled. They can then be applied to improve the development and implementation of policy.

Governments are having to redefine the relationship between themselves and their citizens in significant ways. The relationship between individuals and institutions is a reciprocal one. At its most conceptual, institutions give structure to collective endeavours and allocate resources for the needs and wellbeing of individuals. Individuals are impacted, but can also play a critical role in carrying out governments’ plans. This requires a relationship where governments are more transparent, accountable, and responsive to the people they impact—at home and abroad. For policies to have their intended impacts, governments must ensure public involvement at every stage of the policy cycle—from diagnosis, to design, to delivery. Doing so may achieve the twofold aim: not only can it improve the quality of government policymaking, but it can transform the culture of government to include citizens as partners in shaping policy.

This introduces broader questions. How can individuals and communities be empowered to make meaningful contributions to policy? How do citizens and stakeholders move from being passive recipients of policy to active agents in constructively shaping patterns of policy development? Clearly, raising the capacity for stakeholder engagement is critical to effective policy development. This requires creating grassroots, participatory mechanisms that foster a dynamic process of learning. It involves creating consultative spaces where stakeholders can evaluate the needs, options, and impacts of policies. The challenge is how to expand the spaces where ordinary citizens can play a role in making choices early on about policies that will affect them. In short, for intent to link to impact, governments need to create opportunities for reflection and engagement at all levels.

CASE STUDY: Brazil

The City of São Paulo has developed Agents of Open Government, a platform for peer-to-peer learning, where private citizens with useful skills are given support to develop courses for government employees, civil society groups and communities in all corners of São Paulo.


CASE STUDY: Romania

Romania began an initiative in response to a need to increase the operational capacity of non-governmental organisations in response to COVID-19. The initiative was led by the General Secretariat and enabled collaboration across sectors by directly placing public sector volunteers into non-profit organisations. From 2020–2022, the programme brought together stakeholders from across ministries alongside local public authorities to support the operational capacity of approximately 50 non-profit organisations. This initiative helped encourage collaboration across levels of government and improved outcomes to local communities.

Source: Secretary General of the Government of Romania
3. Investing in Innovation

**EXPERIMENTATION, BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS, COLLABORATION HUBS, AND VIRTUAL LABS**

**Systemic problems need new solutions.**

Governments face many more issues than they did a few decades ago. Equally important for coherence, many of the most salient issues require efforts that cut across traditional bureaucratic government entities. These two factors both challenge centres of government and require them to be more nimble. In a world confronted with such problems as climate change, dealing with artificial intelligence, and rising forces of social disruption, CoGs will need to create a culture that encourages innovation. In the end, it is not technique but dedication to learning, systematic action, and a strong sense of purpose that will enable progress.

Innovation in government means finding better ways to improve public outcomes. It involves overcoming outdated structures and modes of thinking and embracing new ideas. Governments must transform the way they work to meet the enormous potential of innovation in government. 

Innovative approaches—including experimentation and leveraging behavioural insights—can enhance governments’ capacity to respond to rapidly changing environments. Using collaboration hubs and virtual innovation labs—spaces where citizens can be activated to be partners in innovation—can generate more robust solutions. For innovative approaches or solutions to have lasting impact, they must be embedded as part of existing systems and mechanisms of government.

**CASE STUDY: Germany, Austria, Switzerland**

The Innovation Compass/Recorder was developed by a cross-sector network in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It supports governments to **share good practices across institutions and borders and identify enabling factors for public sector innovation**. The Compass builds on statistical surveys and reflective self-assessments from the Scandinavian region. Countries have committed themselves to the goals of evidence-based, impact-oriented and forward-looking government and administrative action. So far, important framework conditions have been created in order to achieve these goals, such as outcome orientation, e-government and government partnerships.

**CASE STUDY: Estonia and Finland**

The Governments of Estonia and Finland are exchanging data across borders through an X-Road Trust Federation. The countries had already developed and implemented their own national data exchange layers based on the X-Road technology. The two instances of the X Roads platform now communicate with each other in the first international interoperability ecosystem of its kind, **facilitating the real-time availability of information** on population and businesses in the face of increasing trans-border economic activity.

Source: OECD, Innovative capacity of governments: A systemic framework (2022)
Improving today by planning for tomorrow.

Coherence is much more than the rough alignment of objectives. At its best, coherence is when every activity reinforces and is reinforced by others: efforts carried out in one area, contribute to the advancement of activities in others. This culture of mutual support must be forward looking: what can one agency do today that will help another tomorrow. Only by recognizing the dynamics implicit in efforts to support one another can governments ensure that policies are reinforcing in both the short and long run.

To make policy is to be thinking about the future. When designing policy, policymakers must estimate future benefits as well as adverse impacts—not only domestically, but also internationally. Policymakers operate in a context where the welfare of any one part of the world is inextricably bound to the welfare of the whole. Complications arise when governments do not understand the full range of feedback resulting from policy decisions. As one agency’s actions alter the state of the system, other agencies react to restore the balance that has been upset. Some of these actions trigger unintended impacts.

Policymakers can draw on tools that build capacity to coordinate their efforts and anticipate the needs of the future, visualise all its possibilities, and mitigate these unintended adverse impacts. Strategic planning can be used to identify short and long-term priorities, and laying out present and future actions for achieving them. Strategic foresight helps policymakers explore multiple futures to inform decision-making, through horizon scanning, megatrend analysis, scenario planning and visioning.

Decisions about the future must be made in an integral way, considering both ideal and practical concerns, social and economic progress. CoGs must steer policymakers so that they acquire the capacity to address increasingly complex challenges. Today’s policy solutions must be considered in the context of how they will improve the future, implemented by policymakers who are characterised by a shared vision, a commitment to public value, and a growing capacity to face with confidence the challenges of the future.

CASE STUDY: Romania

An outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania has been the sustained longer-term investments in the healthcare system, supported by an innovative approach to multi-year contract procurement.

This includes financing investments designed to strengthen the Romanian healthcare sector and to improve preparedness and responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic and similar threats. The project concerns the modernisation of healthcare infrastructure and equipment in several Romanian hospitals.

The project is expected to substantially improve the quality of public medical services offered to citizens, in a way that invests in the future while also responding to the current pressures the Romanian healthcare system is under.

These recommendations are important. But like so much else, they only matter if they are implemented. How do governments implement them, and measure progress as they do? More broadly: How do CoGs get from where they currently are to where they aspire to be? There are, as has been explored, a wide range of possible interventions. In light of this analysis and the four areas I have identified that need strengthening—clarity of vision, stakeholder engagement, innovation, and a long-term outlook—I propose a powerfully simple one: a checklist.

Rationale

Policymakers know that policy coherence is important. But when following their own parochial interests, it is easy to get lost. When worrying about the day-to-day series of tasks and especially when responding to crises, it can be difficult to step back and consider the broader picture. If policymakers are scrambling to respond to inflation and unemployment, they may be less concerned with the implications for outing banks with low interest rates. Policy coherence in this way can be considered a public good: the benefits extend to the whole of government and all the stakeholders impacted by the policies it produces. As a result, policy coherence also suffers somewhat from ‘the tragedy of the commons’, due to uncoordinated actions of self-interest. Everyone would benefit from policy coherence, but few take responsibility for building it. A checklist which can indicate how effective policymakers are in ensuring coherence will therefore be pivotal to helping CoGs enable policymakers at all levels take part in building a more coherent policy development process.

Methodology

Analysis of the data secured through the OECD survey yielded insights on appropriate and realistic approaches CoGs might take to promote coherence. I distilled a list of criteria that a CoG might use to assess its success. These criteria are intended to ensure that the CoG’s methods are grounded in practice. To make matters concrete and actionable, I created a checklist for good practice that reflects these criteria.

The criteria

A. Driven by data and theory: The questions we are answering emerged from the data and literature review. They direct attention to the key areas where interventions have the most significant impact on coherence.

B. Likelihood of success: The checklist is structured according to three areas that suffer from policy incoherence: diagnosis, design, and delivery. Within these, the checklist asks targeted questions related to the four areas in which CoGs need improvement: stewarding the vision, linking intent to impact, investing in innovation, and cultivating a long-term outlook. Each area is important, because progress in one can be undone if another falls short.

C. Feasibility: The checklist has been designed to be answered in ‘yes’/’no’ responses, to make the process of moving through the questions as straightforward as possible. This serves both as an opportunity to
check for blind spots. If most questions are answered ‘Yes,’ countries can move forward with greater confidence but also with greater cognisance of what policy coherence looks like. If most questions are answered ‘No,’ some simple initial steps are proposed for improvement. This approach both provides an opportunity to check for blind spots, and offers some initial steps for strengthening coherence. To ensure that governments also know how to proceed in the event that they select ‘No’, the decision-tree offers a more detailed roadmap for steps that can be taken to move forward.

D. Originality: The checklist touches on some fundamental questions, but it also creates room for innovation and original methods that have recently come to the fore. Given their promise, those methods merit some degree of experimentation.

E. Generalizability: The checklist uses specific questions. But those questions are sufficiently general that they can apply across the governments of OECD nations.

A checklist is helpful in helping policymakers identify how they are doing in ensuring policy coherence, and where they may fall short. But a checklist is less helpful in indicating what policymakers should do if they fail to check a box. To address this, I have developed a decision tree (Figure 7.1) that follows the same conceptual structure to the checklist but provides more detail on how to respond at each level. This gives policymakers a more robust roadmap for how to take the steps needed to achieve higher levels of coherence.

Theory of Change

A word about why checklists are so effective. The theory of change that underpins this checklist is that most policymakers agree that policy coherence is important and more of it is needed—consensus is there. But the mechanisms for achieving it are not, and siloed government structures which are hard to change disincentivize cross-government co-ordination. Strengthening policy coherence must therefore be integrated as a formal part of the functioning of the policymaking process, and through it gradually penetrate at the level of culture. And tracing is essential to ensure compliance. Checklists have been used to revolutionize other fields, including urgent medical care. The power of a checklist is that it provides an extraordinarily simple roadmap to extraordinary complexity—and this applies to the realm of policy as well.

Benefits

This checklist and decision-tree approach brings three main benefits:

1. Memory recall: In the midst of managing a range of priorities and procedural complexities, it helps policymakers remember the basics that should be considered in the policymaking process.
2. Setting a new standard of baseline performance: It provides easy-to-apply standards identifying what is important in developing new policies.
3. Discovering complementarity: It helps to unearth new opportunities and synergies that would otherwise remain hidden.

Use

In terms of use, it is my recommendation that this checklist be made an integral part of the process that must be presented along with a policy proposal. Doing so will ensure that policymakers are held accountable for taking this significant step in creating a more coherent government response to the increasingly complex and unpredictable challenges that will arise.
To usher in the change at the level of culture, it is also my recommendation that some version of the checklist be shared with ministers and heads of agencies. Doing so will help share the responsibility of ensuring coherence. Ministers can choose to post the checklist in every office so that policymakers are reminded of policy coherence at all times. But more fundamentally, ministers can be invited to hold CoGs accountable. It is clear that people only take ownership over what they help create. Ensuring the checklist is followed will allow ministers to help create a more coherent government to deliver public value for a future that will only grow more complex.

Having line ministries and CoGs work on this together will help them identify where missing capacities are for being able to check off the various items of the checklist. How can you check for long-term impacts? What innovative models can be used? Identifying needs also leads to greater investment in finding solutions.

We are too comfortable doing things as they have always been done. Line ministry structures being as they were 100 years ago is a testimony to this fact. Policymakers cannot afford to wait another 100 years to discover more effective ways to deliver public value as they enter an era of increased complexity and novel exigencies to which governments will be called upon to respond. The governments best prepared will be best rewarded.

**Limitations**

The checklist and framework offered here are not intended as a panacea. Guidelines build awareness among those who are interested in improving their policy development process. For that group, the guidelines establish a set of best practices to be followed and will be followed. However, there is no sanction structure for those who are not interested in using the guidelines. This limits its effectiveness.

Nor are the checklist (Figure 1.1) and below decision tree (Figure 7.1) intended to be static. There are many questions that governments may need to ask and many ways in which governments may need to improve. Some governments may operate in such fragmented ways that CoGs may find even more incisive interventions are needed. It is my recommendation, therefore, that CoGs and ministries refine these questions according to their experiences, needs, and lessons learned.

Some may be sceptical of the benefits, or of adding another seeming layer of bureaucracy to the already complex policymaking process. Many policymakers will hardly be receptive to filling out yet another piece of paper. If there is reticence to using the checklist, start by gathering data on their own rates at which

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**CASE STUDY: Checklists in Healthcare**

“Intensive care succeeds only when doctors hold the odds of doing harm low enough for the odds of doing good to prevail. This is the reality of intensive care: at any point, doctors are as apt to harm as they are to heal.”

So, how to manage all this complexity? The solution that the medical profession has favored is specialization. Super-specialist have taken the time to practice one narrow thing until they can do it better than anyone who has not.

Specialists have two advantages over generalists: greater knowledge of the details that matter and an ability to handle the complexities of the job. There are degrees of complexity, however, and intensive-care medicine has grown so far beyond ordinary complexity that avoiding daily mistakes is proving impossible even for specialists.

In the I.C.U., this posed a distinctive challenge: what do you do when expertise is not enough?

Peter Pronovost made a checklist. And in one year and in one hospital, that checklist prevented forty-three infections and eight deaths, and saved two million dollars in costs.

Pronovost was hardly the first person in medicine to use a checklist. But he is among the first to recognize its power to save lives and take advantage of the breadth of its possibilities.

policy falls short: when a policy has an impact they did not intend; when a better solution comes along shortly after; when they double counted or undid work someone else had just finished doing. My expectation is the data will surprise governments, and a checklist will seem an easy and logical thing to try. In some cases, it may be beneficial to use incentives such as small bonus payments for participating.

All policymaking has steps that are worth putting on a checklist and reviewing routinely. The question that remains unanswered is whether government culture will embrace the opportunity.

CoGs have the means to make some of the most complex and high-impact work they do—in policy design, delivery, and implementation—more effective. But the prospect pushes against the traditional culture of government, with its central belief that in situations of high risk and complexity what is needed is expertise. Checklists and standard operating procedures feel like exactly the opposite, which may rankle some. It is absurd, however, to suppose that checklists will do away with the need for creativity and improvisation. Society is too intricate for that: good policymaking will not be able to dispense with experts. Yet it should also be ready to accept the virtues of clear processes.

For those looking for mechanisms to improve policy coherence in their policy development process, using this checklist (Figure 1.1) and decision tree (Figure 7.1) can serve as powerful first steps in a discourse that lacks frameworks for action.

To make good decisions, policymakers must think through what the implications of decisions are. Each decision generates a range of impacts. To be sure that none of those impacts are adverse, governments need structured ways of thinking them through with others. This framework will help CoGs to do just that.
Decision Tree for Ensuring Policy Coherence Across Government

Clarity of Purpose

- Does the problem affect key department priorities?
  - Yes
  - No
    - Is the priority consistent with the whole-of-government priorities?
      - Yes
      - No
        - Unless there is a compelling reason, let it be for now
          - Yes
          - No
    - Have potential contradictions with existing policies been considered?
      - Yes
      - No
        - Consider better aligned solutions before proceeding
          - Yes
          - No
            - Have methods that can benefit multiple priorities been considered?
              - Yes
              - No
                - Consider better aligned methods before proceeding
                  - Yes
                  - No
    - Does the solution reinforce one of our key priorities?
      - Yes
      - No
        - Consider solutions that can achieve progress on several fronts
          - Yes
          - No

Linking to Impact

- Are we the only government agency affected by the problem?
  - Yes
  - No
    - Are we the only ones working on solving the problem?
      - Yes
      - No
        - Coordinate with them before proceeding
          - Yes
          - No
            - Have insights from people on the ground been integrated into the solution?
              - Yes
              - No
                - Engage directly with those impacted by the solution before proceeding
                  - Yes
                  - No
                    - Will solving this problem be of benefit to other government agencies?
                      - Yes
                      - No
                        - Run the method by those impacted before proceeding
                          - Yes
                          - No
      - Yes
      - No
    - Unleash data on the ground to drive the decision, let it be for now
      - Yes
      - No

Long-term Vision

- Will solving this problem lead to better outcomes in the future?
  - Yes
  - No
    - Is the implementation method coherent with our key priorities?
      - Yes
      - No
        - Consider solutions that can achieve progress on several fronts
          - Yes
          - No
- Have long-term impacts been considered (benefits and adverse)?
  - Yes
  - No
- Check assumptions against feedback before proceeding
  - Yes
  - No
- Use modelling to anticipate long-term impacts before proceeding
  - Yes
  - No
- Use agile methods to refine the methods throughout
  - Yes
  - No

Investing in Innovation

- Has systems thinking been used to check the logic of the diagnosis?
  - Yes
  - No
- Set clear targets to monitor performance against before proceeding
  - Yes
  - No
- Have more innovative solutions been considered?
  - Yes
  - No
- Use modelling to anticipate long-term impacts before proceeding
  - Yes
  - No
- Use agile methods to refine the methods throughout
  - Yes
  - No
- Build capacity through innovation labs and collab hubs
  - Yes
  - No
- Build capacity through citizen forums and assemblies
  - Yes
  - No

Figure 7.1
LOOKING AHEAD

This analysis has provided a starting point for CoGs looking to improve their decision making through increasingly coordinated and purposeful responses to issues that span the whole of government. It has identified four key areas that need strengthening—stewarding the vision, linking intent to impact, investing in innovation, and cultivating a long-term outlook. Lastly, it has provided a concrete mechanism for making progress on these four key areas, within the policymaking cycle of diagnosis, design, and delivery.

The purpose of this analysis is not to provide simple answers to the complex questions being raised here. The purpose is to set out a few recommendations that may assist CoGs in their effort to make the different aspects of policy development increasingly complementary.

Looking ahead, the need for higher levels of coherence in policy development will only grow more acute. Policymakers have seen the consequences of decisions that lack coherence. In this moment, when innovation is developing at breakneck speed, policy coherence will only become more critical. As we move into the unchartered territory of artificial intelligence, global pandemics, and climate change, every government department will have to confront overlapping questions related to purpose and function. The alternative to a coordinated and coherent response is to be overrun by such challenges, or to attempt to ignore them and be left behind. Strengthening the quality of policy development through clear methods of policy coherence is a powerful first step in enabling governments to achieve their goals in a way that is future proof and purpose driven.

Above all, CoGs must work to ensure that policy responses to these intersectional challenges are methodical but not rigid, creative but not arbitrary, decisive but not rash, careful but not controlling. Because in the final analysis, it is not technique but dedication to learning, systematic action, and unity of purpose that will create more coherent policy.
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Icon: Vision Icon image: This icon has been designed using images from Flaticon.com. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons/goal" title="goal icons". Created by Uniconlabs

Icon: Impact Icon image: This icon has been designed using images from Flaticon.com. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons/emergency" title="emergency icons". Created by Uniconlabs

Icon: Innovation Icon image: This icon has been designed using images from Flaticon.com. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons/project" title="project icons". Created by dDara

Icon: Long-term Icon image: This icon has been designed using images from Flaticon.com. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons/roadmap" title="roadmap icons". Created by Parzival’ 1997

Icon: Checklist Icon image: This icon has been designed using images from Flaticon.com. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons/goal" title="goal icons". Created by Uniconlabs


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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Research Selection

Improving the effectiveness of government in providing public value is a primary interest of mine. I selected the OECD as my organization of choice for this policy analysis exercise because I had an interest in finding an agency that treated policy coherence as a key area of focus, and not as an afterthought.

As a function of choosing the OECD as my client, the research selection of this analysis is focused on OECD member states. This provides valuable insights into a category of governments that has much institutional strength and experience, and is in some ways at the forefront of the policy coherence challenge. At the same time, it also has implications for my results in that the insights generated can only be generalized to countries of similar socio-economic circumstances.

The institutional contexts my insights are most relevant to are countries that share similar characteristics to the 13 OECD member countries from which the data has been sourced. The insights gleaned from this research can therefore only be applied to countries with similar socio-economic realities. However, some of the principles may still have broader relevance to CoGs even in dissimilar socio-economic contexts.

There are many aspects of policy coherence that could be explored—from navigating, influencing, and working with the political layer of government, to anticipating and managing future crises. However this research is focused specifically on setting the vision, strategic planning, and prioritisation, as well as coordinating and enhancing policy development.

When discussing the policy development cycle, I focused on diagnosis, design and delivery, with the understanding that there are several additional layers within and across these three, such as monitoring and evaluation, which underpin all three stages.

Research Design

1. Conceptual Frameworks

I applied out some key conceptual frameworks to the challenge of understanding what makes the issues governments face so intractable, and why policy coherence is the necessary answer. The frameworks were useful in mapping out the challenge and its context. The broader aim was to better understand what kind of a mechanism could be developed to better enable governments to improve their policy coherence, knowing that a clear articulation of the problem was indispensable to a clear articulation of a solution.

2. Literature Review

Based on the conceptual frameworks identified, I conducted an extensive literature review that summarizes key insights from academic literature, intergovernmental reports, and country cases on three main areas:

1) Barriers to collaboration
2) Conditions for successful collaboration
3) Mechanisms for achieving and enhancing collaboration
The purpose of this section was to understand the framing of the challenge and the efforts that have been attempted to address policy coherence so far, in order to identify the gaps that my analysis and recommendation must respond to in order to advance the discourse on policy coherence.

3. Survey results

To understand the how—how OECD countries are meeting this challenge, and what tools and methods are used to take coherence forward—countries needed to be asked directly, to complement the basis provided by existing literature. Given the critical role CoGs play by being singularly positioned to ensure coherence across government policymaking, a survey was sent by the OECD Unit of Public Governance Reviews to CoG policymakers at each of the 38 OECD country governments. The survey was designed to collect information directly from the CoGs about their decision-making, priority setting, and policy development practices, with a particular focus on the role and functions of the CoG. The goal of the survey was to understand how governments promote policy coherence, in order to learn about specific components of CoG responsibilities that are and are not being met, and identify key steps governments can take to coordinate and enhance coherent policy development.

The survey is composed of 29 primary questions, with 300 sub-questions. It goes into considerable detail and has been thoughtfully designed to deal with questions of policy coherence. Each question is specifically targeted at getting to the heart of how governments promote policy coherence, and where they may fall short.

It has not been possible to provide any cross-national analysis or to disclose the names of the OECD countries whose data I have, due to the OECD having asked me to preserve the anonymity of country data. This is in order to ensure candid responses from member states, which has benefited the quality of the data.

4. Follow-up with survey respondents

Upon receiving the survey results from each OECD country, I reviewed all the raw data and performed data cleaning and checking. This was done meticulously and according to a detailed checklist to consider the logical coherence between answers, and I combed through the data from each country to check for any anomalies and inconsistencies. I then drafted a follow-up response to each government individually with a set of questions for clarification to better understand their responses, clarify points of confusion, and go deeper on certain areas of particular insight. Once the governments responded (via the OECD Unit of Public Reviews) the dataset was updated with the new information and adjustments, ensuring that the quality of the data is high and the internal logic sound.

5. High-level meeting with CoG policymakers in April in Paris

After concluding my research, I will attend a round-table discussion in April in Paris to meet with the OECD Expert Group with representatives from some of the 38 OECD member governments. During this meeting I understand I will have the opportunity to present my findings and help facilitate a discussion on how the various experiences can culminate in a set of principles and standards. A key focus of this meeting will be implementation, ensuring that the insights generated here find expression in practice.
Outcomes

My analysis generated a set of five outcomes:

1. **Literature Review** that identifies –
   - a. Barriers to collaboration
   - b. Conditions for successful collaboration
   - c. Mechanisms for achieving and enhancing collaboration
2. **Data** and graphs that identifies –
   - a. Common challenges across countries
   - b. Key lessons from OECD member states
   - c. Critical success factors for coherent decision-making
3. **Case studies** with cross-cutting example from OECD governments
4. A distillation of **4 recommendations of key areas to address** to improve policy coherence across governments, and corresponding best practices on how to action them
5. A **checklist** of conditions and measures that can improve coherence in decision-making and a **decision tree** to serve as a roadmap for governments to do so.

Criteria for the Recommendations

Analysis of the data secured through the survey yielded insights on appropriate and realistic approaches CoGs might take to promote coherence. I distilled a list of criteria that a CoG might use to assess its success. These criteria are intended to ensure that the CoG’s methods are grounded in practice. To make matters concrete and actionable, I created a checklist for good practice that reflects these criteria.

The criteria

A. **Driven by data and theory**: The questions we are answering emerged from the data and literature review. They direct attention to the key areas where interventions have the most significant impact on coherence.

B. **Likelihood of success**: The checklist is structured according to three areas that suffer from policy incoherence: diagnosis, design, and delivery. Within these, the checklist asks targeted questions related to the four areas in which CoGs need to improve: stewarding the vision, linking intent to impact, investing in innovation, and cultivating a long-term outlook. Each area is important, because progress made in one can be undone if another falls short.

C. **Feasibility**: The checklist has been designed to be answered in ‘yes’/’no’ responses, to make the process of moving through the questions as straightforward as possible. This serves both as an opportunity to check for blind spots. If most questions are answered ‘Yes,’ countries can move forward with greater confidence but also with greater cognisance of what policy coherence looks like. If most questions are answered ‘No,’ some simple initial steps are proposed for improvement. This approach both provides an opportunity to check for blind spots, and offers some initial steps for strengthening coherence.

D. **Originality**: The checklist touches on some fundamental questions, but it also creates room for innovation and original methods that have recently come to the fore. Given their promise, those methods merit some degree of experimentation.

E. **Generalizability**: The checklist uses specific questions. But those questions are sufficiently general that they can apply across the governments of OECD nations.
Uncertainties and Biases

A number of countries have been delayed in returning their completed surveys. This is due both to delays on the part of CoGs, and due to OECD regulatory and verification checks of the survey that took longer than normal and pushed the distribution of the survey back by a month. Thirteen OECD country responses have been received, with the rest expected in the coming months. This analysis has therefore been careful not to draw inferences from a partial response rate in order to guard against selection bias. When the additional data arrives, further inferences can be made and, subject to University guidelines, an updated copy of this report will be provided. Until then, I have avoided making conclusions about OECD countries in general. Instead, this analysis provides important insights into what the components of policy coherence are, and identify patterns for the 13 countries whose detailed data I already have. Looking across more than 10 countries provides insights that I would not be able to find if I only examined one or two countries.

The responses from the 13 countries pose an interesting combination of biases that have been carefully considered. Because being able to respond to the survey requires a degree of existing coherence, this—as well as a desire to show off areas of strength—means the dataset is likely to contain countries that are more advanced in their policy coherence efforts. At the same time, it is plausible that some countries responded because they have identified policy coherence as an area of weakness that they hope to receive more guidance on. The outcome of this combination of the two biases is difficult to predict, but it seems plausible that they balance each other out to some degree.

Limitations

What is offered in this analysis is not a panacea.

Guidelines build awareness among those who are interested in improving their policy development process. For that group, the guidelines establish a set of best practices to be followed and will be followed. However, there is no sanction structure for those who are not interested in using the guidelines. This limits its effectiveness.

Nor are the checklist (Figure 1.1) and below decision tree (Figure 7.1) intended to be static. There are many questions that governments may need to ask and many ways in which governments may need to improve. Some governments may operate in such fragmented ways that CoGs may find even more incisive interventions are needed. It is my recommendation, therefore, that CoGs and ministries refine these questions according to their experiences, needs, and lessons learned.

Some may be sceptical of the benefits, or of adding another seeming layer of bureaucracy to the already complex policymaking process. Many policymakers will hardly be receptive to filling out yet another piece of paper. If there is reticence to using the checklist, start by gathering data on their own rates at which policy falls short: when a policy has an impact they did not intend; when a better solution comes along shortly after; when they double counted or undid work someone else had just finished doing. My expectation is the data will surprise governments, and a checklist will seem an easy and logical thing to try. In some cases, it may be beneficial to use incentives such as small bonus payments for participating.
All policymaking has steps that are worth putting on a checklist and reviewing routinely. The question that remains unanswered is whether government culture will embrace the opportunity.

CoGs have the means to make some of the most complex and high-impact work they do—in policy design, delivery, and implementation—more effective. But the prospect pushes against the traditional culture of government, with its conviction that in situations of high risk and complexity what is needed is expertise. Checklists and standard procedures feel like exactly the opposite, which may rankle some. It is absurd, however, to suppose that checklists will do away with the need for creativity and improvisation. Society is too intricate: good policymaking will not be able to dispense with experts. Yet it should also be ready to accept the virtues of clear processes.

Next Steps

My goal in carrying out this analysis was to assist governments to improve their decision making through increasingly coordinated and purposeful responses to issues that span the whole of government.

The purpose of this analysis is not to provide simple answers to the complex questions being raised here. Rather, it is to set out a few recommendations that may assist CoGs in their effort to make the different aspects of policy development increasingly complementary, so that policies enhance rather than undermine each other.

It is my intention to continue to articulate a framework that assesses the intersectional impacts of policies through the lens of coherence to overcome siloed approaches to policymaking. My hope is to advise governments and policymaking institutions on how to anticipate and mitigate unintended impacts of proposed policies.

The checklist mechanism is meant to help governments identify where they are weakest and use the more detailed decision tree to zoom and see what steps they can take. The next steps for CoGs are to ensure that these insights and others like them are applied in practice, so that meaningful progress can be made to improving how policy development processes across all governments reach higher and higher degrees of coherence in delivering public value.
Elaboration on Figure 3.1 – EU Common Agricultural Policy and Aid Spend Systems Diagram

Source: Developed with MPP candidate colleague Andrew Trcinzski, 2021
Elaboration of the data under “Areas of priority for CoGs”

**Functional Priorities of Centres of Government**

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that rated each CoG function more or less a priority

- Top Priority or Significant Priority
- Somewhat or Not a Priority
- NA

In response to the question: “How much of a priority are the following functions in the CoG?”

Created with Datawrapper
More complete version of Figure 6.2

Key Responsibilities in Coordinating & Enhancing Policy Development

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that selected the following key areas of responsibility regarding coordinating and enhancing policy:

- **CoG leads**
- **Line Ministry leads**
- **Shared lead**
- **Varies greatly**
- **NA**

1. **Leading of cross-cutting and key priorities**
   - CoG leads: 69%
   - Line Ministry leads: 23%
   - Shared lead: 31%
   - Varies greatly: 15%
   - NA: 15%

2. **Development of policy options for government decisions**
   - CoG leads: 46%
   - Line Ministry leads: 38%
   - Shared lead: 15%
   - Varies greatly: 46%
   - NA: 6%

3. **Ensuring alignment policy options with government’s strategic priorities**
   - CoG leads: 46%
   - Line Ministry leads: 23%
   - Shared lead: 15%
   - Varies greatly: 46%
   - NA: 15%

4. **Review and quality assurance of policy options for cabinet decisions**
   - CoG leads: 38%
   - Line Ministry leads: 31%
   - Shared lead: 46%
   - Varies greatly: 23%
   - NA: 15%

5. **Ensuring legal conformity of policy options for cabinet decisions**
   - CoG leads: 31%
   - Line Ministry leads: 46%
   - Shared lead: 15%
   - Varies greatly: 31%
   - NA: 15%

6. **Ensuring that policy options and proposals from different ministries do not contradict each other**
   - CoG leads: 46%
   - Line Ministry leads: 38%
   - Shared lead: 23%
   - Varies greatly: 15%
   - NA: 15%

7. **Coordinating implementation of government priorities across government agencies**
   - CoG leads: 31%
   - Line Ministry leads: 46%
   - Shared lead: 15%
   - Varies greatly: 46%
   - NA: 15%

8. **Engaging external stakeholders (e.g. citizens, academics and other non-governmental parties)**
   - CoG leads: 31%
   - Line Ministry leads: 31%
   - Shared lead: 23%
   - Varies greatly: 46%
   - NA: 15%

9. **Engaging with political actors during the policy development process**
   - CoG leads: 31%
   - Line Ministry leads: 31%
   - Shared lead: 23%
   - Varies greatly: 46%
   - NA: 15%

10. **Leveraging data/evidence across government to input into policy development**
    - CoG leads: 31%
    - Line Ministry leads: 46%
    - Shared lead: 15%
    - Varies greatly: 23%
    - NA: 15%

11. **Setting standards for good use of data in policy development**
    - CoG leads: 31%
    - Line Ministry leads: 46%
    - Shared lead: 15%
    - Varies greatly: 23%
    - NA: 15%

12. **Integrating strategic foresight approaches or knowledge in policy development**
    - CoG leads: 31%
    - Line Ministry leads: 46%
    - Shared lead: 15%
    - Varies greatly: 23%
    - NA: 15%

13. **Integrating systems-thinking approaches in policy development**
    - CoG leads: 23%
    - Line Ministry leads: 23%
    - Shared lead: 31%
    - Varies greatly: 31%
    - NA: 15%

14. **Integrating information on short- and long-term risks in policy development**
    - CoG leads: 23%
    - Line Ministry leads: 15%
    - Shared lead: 38%
    - Varies greatly: 15%
    - NA: 15%

*Chart: In response to the question: "For each of the below activities regarding setting the vision, priorities, and strategic planning, please indicate who has the primary responsibility."* Source: Original Research; conducted with the Unit of Public Governance Reviews at the OECD • Created with Datawrapper
Elaboration of Figure 6.3

Top Functional Priorities for Centres of Government

This chart shows the percentage of CoGs that selected each of the following functions as a priority.

Chart: In response to the question: "How much of a priority are the following functions in the CoG?" • Created with Datawrapper
More complete version of Figure 6.4

Challenges of Coordination and Policy Development among CoGs
The extent to which the following factors a challenge for the CoG in respect to coordination and enhancing policy development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major challenge</th>
<th>Moderate challenge</th>
<th>Minor challenge</th>
<th>Not a challenge</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited involvement in critical decisions</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining clarity on vision and priorities</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of formal coordination/explicit mechanisms</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping mandates/unclear responsibilities</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritisation and trade-offs between policy issues</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalising long term policy issues</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting quality standards for policy</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging political actors on policy proposals</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging external stakeholders</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing guidance/stewardship on policy</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing practical tools and instruments</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating contemporary methods</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring adequate horizontal engagement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Trending Areas of Relative Strength and Weakness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading on stewarding and coordinating as key responsibilities</td>
<td>Taking a lead on engagement, data, and systems thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering support to line ministries and agencies in feedback on draft policies and ad-hoc support</td>
<td>Does not support line ministries in stakeholder engagement, training, and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical aspects of policy development are not a challenge</td>
<td>Main challenges are within strategy, prioritization, and long-term issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing policy to meet quality standards</td>
<td>Review of policy consistently lacks a viable implementation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using enabling mechanisms such as taskforces and expert groups</td>
<td>Mechanisms utilized miss collaboration hubs, citizen forums and innovation lab focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created with Datawrapper
## Alternative version to the checklist detailed in Figure 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity of Purpose</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the problem affecting one of our key departmental priorities?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but it could be in the future</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the key priority in question consistent with the whole-of-government priorities?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking to Impact</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there an evidence-base for the problem?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but we are using models to anticipate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, and a mechanism is being implemented</td>
<td>No, and capacity is being built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are we the only government agency affected by the problem?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and we are coordinating</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are we the only ones working on the problem?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and we are collaborating</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term Outlook</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will solving this problem now lead to better outcomes in the future?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have long-term impacts been considered (benefits and adverse consequences)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investing in Innovation</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has systems thinking been used to check the logic of the diagnosis?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and we are building capacity to do so</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, and we are building capacity through innovation labs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more innovative solutions been considered?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the option “No” was selected for more than two of these questions and there is no compelling reason why, then I recommend re-evaluating your policy development plan.
Ibid.
Ibid
Kaur (2022)