

Special feature: The centre of government's readiness to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015. They encompass social, environmental and economic goals and call on all countries – upper, middle or low income – to make improvements to the lives of their citizens. Given the breadth and complexity as well as the long-term nature of the SDGs, achieving progress on their implementation requires governments to work across policy areas and levels of government to co-ordinate long-term strategies and implementation actions, and overcome obstacles such as immediate economic and social pressures crowding out longer-term strategic policy initiatives.

The centre of government (CoG) can play an important role in supporting governments getting organised to deliver on the SDGs. While line ministries might have more limited experience in driving cross-disciplinary policies, the centre usually has co-ordination expertise coupled with political sensitivity.

Results from a recent OECD survey suggest that countries recognise the role of centres of government in delivering on the SDGs. In 19 OECD countries, the centre of government is helping to steer the implementation of the SDGs either on its own or with line ministries. In 10 OECD countries, the leadership or shared leadership of the implementation is assigned to one or several line ministries, with the ministry of foreign affairs being the most common line ministry involved, followed by the ministry of development, the ministry of environment and the ministry of finance. The involvement of the ministry of foreign affairs also implies the need for the centre of government to ensure synergies between domestic and foreign affairs priorities. The decision to designate the centre of government as a key actor in the coordination of the implementation of the SDGs is also dependent on the functions allocated to the centre which vary by country (OECD, 2014).

Centres of government identify a number of significant opportunities and challenges arising from the implementation of the SDGs. Interestingly, some of the most important key challenges identified are also perceived as opportunities. In fact, 19 OECD countries consider the SDGs as a strong incentive and mandate that policies be aligned across sectors, when traditionally most centres of government find themselves only exerting a moderate influence over line ministries to encourage them to co-ordinate (OECD, 2014). Similarly, 12 OECD countries see the long-term planning horizon of the SDGs beyond electoral cycles as an opportunity.

The need to mobilise additional resources was cited as a main challenge of organising the implementation of the SDGs by eight countries. Some countries have, however, already taken steps to ensure that resources are raised and used with the maximum impact. In Norway, for example, responsibility for each of the 17 SDGs is allocated to a specific ministry that reports on progress for its respective goals in its budget proposal. This mechanism enables the SDGs to be fully integrated into the regular budget process and ministries will be accountable for results. A number of

countries link the SDGs into the performance process. In Sweden, 27 key policy priorities have been integrated into the system for performance budgeting (Shaw, 2016).

Methodology and definitions

The Survey on Planning and Co-ordinating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was answered by 28 OECD countries and 3 OECD accession countries in 2016. Respondents were predominantly senior officials in the centres of government.

The term centre of government (CoG) refers to the organisations and units that serve the chief executive (president or prime minister, and the cabinet collectively) and perform certain cross-cutting functions (strategic management, policy co-ordination, monitoring and improving performance, managing the politics of policies, and communications and accountability). The CoG includes a great variety of units across countries, such as general secretariat, cabinet office, office/ministry of the presidency, council of ministers office, etc.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals aim to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. For more information, see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

Further reading

OECD (2016), "OECD Survey on Planning and Co-ordinating the Implementation of the SDGs: First results and key issues", OECD, Paris.

OECD (2014), "Centre Stage: Driving Better Policies from the Centre of Government", OECD, Paris.

Shaw, T. (2016), "Performance budgeting practices and procedures", *OECD Journal on Budgeting*, Vol. 15/3, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Figure notes

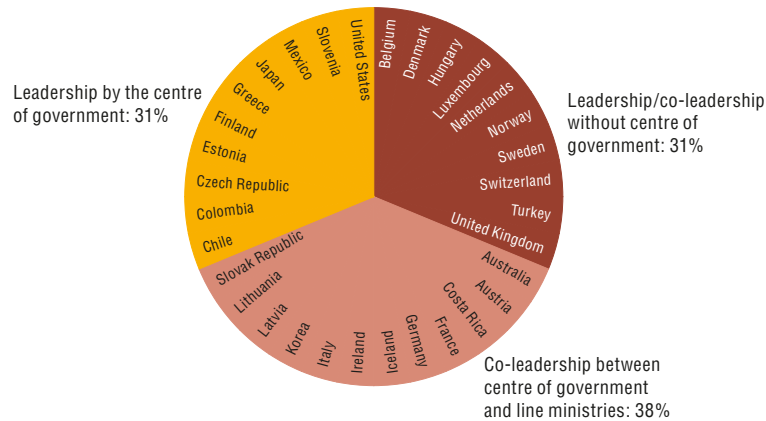
Data for Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal and Spain are not available.

4.8: Answers reflect responses to the question, "What do you see as the two most positive aspects of the process of organising the planning for implementing SDGs from the perspective of the centre of government?" Answer option "other" is not displayed. Data for Belgium and France are not available.

4.9: Answers reflect responses to the question, "What do you see as the two main challenges of organising the planning for implementation SDGs from the perspective of the centre of government?" Answer option "other" is not displayed. Data for Belgium are not available.

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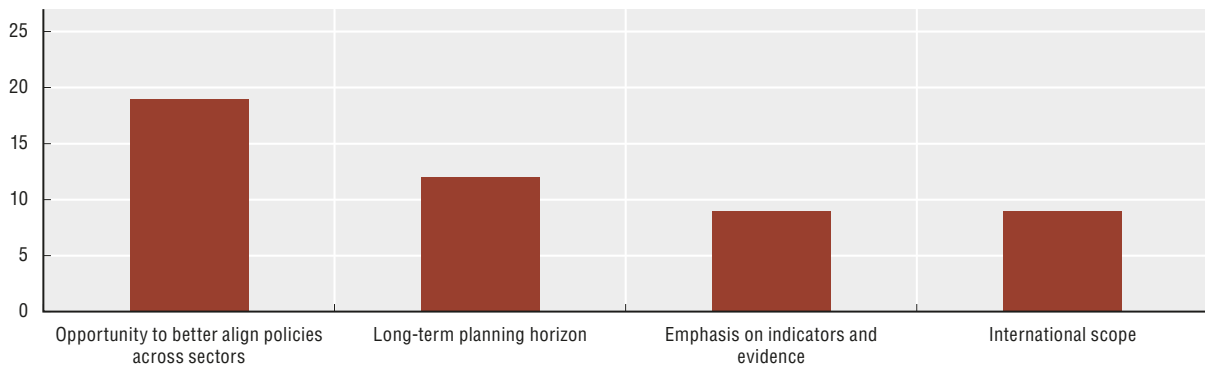
4.7. Leadership and co-leadership of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2016



Source: OECD, (2016), Survey on Planning and Co-ordinating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532637>

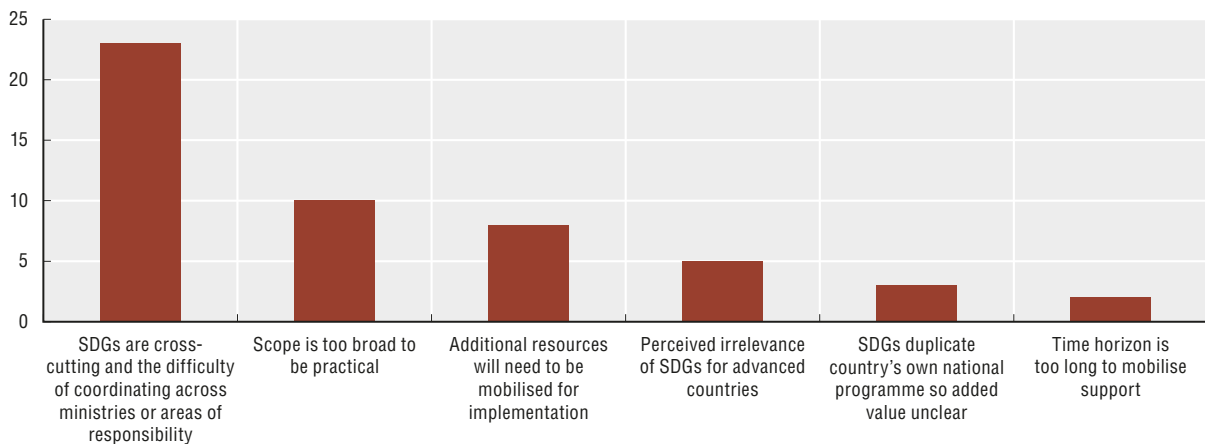
4.8. Most positive aspects of organising the planning of the implementation of the SDGs cited by centres of government, 2016



Source: OECD, (2016), Survey on Planning and Co-ordinating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532656>

4.9. Most challenging aspects of planning of the implementation of the SDGs cited by centres of government, 2016



Source: OECD, (2016), Survey on Planning and Co-ordinating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532675>



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