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## SUMMARY

**31st meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government (CoG)**  
**22-24 October 2012**  
**Lancaster House, London, United Kingdom**

Mr. Andrew Davies, Senior Counsellor ([andrew.davies@oecd.org](mailto:andrew.davies@oecd.org)) or Ms. Andrea Uhrhammer, Liaison Officer ([andrea.uhrhammer@oecd.org](mailto:andrea.uhrhammer@oecd.org)).

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**31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials from the Centres of Government (CoG)  
23-24 October 2012  
Lancaster House, London, UK**

**SUMMARY**

1. The 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials from the Centres of Government (CoG) brought together cabinet secretaries, heads of the prime minister's office and their equivalents from over 30 countries to discuss the challenges facing the centre in dealing with today's unprecedented economic and social challenges. Much of the impetus for economic recovery policies depends on strong leadership and motivation from the centre. As such, the participants offered a unique insight into current thinking on how governments are adapting to ensure effective transmission of political decisions into policy action.

2. The meeting focused on three main topics: (i) an overview of the main issues and challenges, ranging from short-term economic prospects to longer-term societal and environmental pressures, (ii) the main innovations that the centre is promoting to improve the impact of public policies in response to these challenges, and (iii) the evolving role and structure of the centre of government itself. The discussions at the meeting will feed into OECD's work programme on public governance. In particular, the OECD were asked to explore how to measure the performance of centres of government, how to embed a culture of continuous improvement within government and to undertake further work on open and transparent government. They will also feed into the newly launched OECD-wide initiative to explore "New Approaches to Economic Challenges".<sup>1</sup>

3. *Key challenges facing the centre:* Public policymaking continues to be framed by the consequences of the economic crisis. The meeting underlined the influence of immediate economic challenges (restoring growth, controlling deficits, ensuring financial market stability and dealing with unemployment) and more longer-term societal pressures (new trade patterns, energy scarcity, population ageing) on the day-to-day functioning of the centre of government. What was previously assumed to be a temporary modification of priorities is now becoming the new agenda of the centre. The general environment for policy is more than ever characterised by uncertainty and risk. The new relationship between the government and civil society is also affecting policymaking; an increasingly vocal and active civil society and the rise of social media have led citizens to expect greater speed from government, in both communication and action.

4. Countries that have already gone through major crises in the past noted that the large-scale reforms required for successful recovery take a long time to bear fruit. Many countries are, however, at a very early stage in their response (for example, the beginnings of administrative reform, public consultation on a new vision, reform of tax and benefit systems). CoG members stressed that the principal difficulty at the moment comes from finding a workable balance between long-term and short-term demands.

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<sup>1</sup> The initiative led by the OECD Secretary General will be built around an open policy dialogue, supported by new research, involving all parts of the OECD along with representatives from the OECD's diverse policy communities, spanning government, academia, social partners and business leaders.

### What centres of government think are the key policy responses to the challenges they face

Promoting private sector growth
Keeping public expenditure under control
Public sector reform to improve efficiency and service quality
Streamlined regulations, structural reforms
Adaptation of tax policies; action on evasion
Better policy coordination for complex issues
Rebuilding trust and innovative approaches to citizen engagement
EU level action to promote growth and manage fiscal instability in Euro area

5. *Innovation promoted from the centre:* Although the specifics of policy responses in these priority areas vary from country to country, some common themes emerged from the discussion: (i) there is a more universal acceptance of the need for reform (at political level and down through the civil service), (ii) policies are being implemented with more rigour (recognition of the value of monitoring and evaluation at department and cross-government level), and (iii) ensuring value for money is a prerequisite for all new policies. This often requires innovative approaches where traditional policy mechanisms have proved costly or ineffective.

6. Examples of new initiatives to achieve these objectives included: pooling of resources across departments in order to better address complex cross disciplinary issues, increased use of performance budgeting and other mechanisms based on payment by results, shared services and similar mergers of back office processes, large-scale, technology driven stakeholder consultation initiatives, mechanisms to generate innovative ideas (e.g. competitions with prizes, the application of behavioural insights etc.).

7. *Open and transparent government:* Many of the innovations involve opening government to new actors – engaging with citizens as a whole, or targeting specific groups such as the young. Some aim to inform and establish channels for feedback. Others try to bring non-government actors, such as business and user groups, etc., into the process of policy formulation and design. Some members’ experiences showed that engaging new actors was challenging and at times required an iterative process to achieve SUCCESS and ensure accountability.

8. Making government data more easily available is a critical feature of transparency, and is essential to ensuring that government works in the public interest and enables private sector initiative. Countries are making significant progress in making data available and using new channels of communication. However, challenges remain in making open government work well in practice. Governments need to make sure that the data they provide are of high quality, useable by all, and that they are the data that citizens want. In some cases, the data that citizens want may not yet be available and data collection may have to change to respond to this demand. Furthermore, there is a need to monitor how transparency is affecting the quality of policymaking.

9. *The future role of the centre:* The general model of centre-department interaction on the reform agenda appears to be co-operation, encouragement and facilitation, mixed with a little prodding and a more systematic use of reporting on progress and results. At the same time, countries noted the need to empower line ministries and avoid over centralisation (avoiding a “let the centre do it” reflex).

10. Participants agreed that the centre plays a crucial role in mobilising support for reforms linked to economic recovery. The crisis is an opportunity to push through reforms previously considered politically difficult, but there is still a need for strong leadership and motivation provided by the centre. This role raises the issue of the policy role of the centre. In some countries the centre has always had a policy formulation remit; in others, this function is being integrated, partly as a result of the crisis. Although legitimacy for reform comes from the political level, centres of government are increasingly taking the initiative in promoting a broad vision and concrete actions to promote policy reform. The balance and model will vary, but leadership from the centre is a necessary condition for successful reform.

11. The functions of centre of government still vary, but the centre has moved far beyond its “secretarial” origins. In the past, the activities of Centres of Government have tended to be inward-looking (supporting the processes of the executive branch); now they must be more open and “public-facing”, engaging and partnering with non-government bodies. The resources of the Centre have expanded to accommodate these new tasks, with policy analysis, cross-government co-ordination and communications functions being particularly strengthened. For example, the capacity of the Centre to develop independent political and economic intelligence has expanded as the need for rapid responses to economic shifts has become apparent. This is being met either with stronger training or by temporary assignment from outside. Participants noted much more flexible use of resources from across the government and from the private sector to augment the centre’s strategic capacity.

#### **Principal tasks of the Centre today**

- Mobilising commitment by the political leadership to support strategic direction of reform.
- Improving the quality of evidence used for decision making.
- Acting as a central overview and co-ordinator to ensure horizontal consistency among policies.
- Working with Ministries of Finance to reconcile policy priorities and budgetary imperatives. Designing implementation procedures and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that policies can be adjusted in the light of progress, new information, and changing circumstances.
- Promoting new and innovative approaches to policy development and delivery across the public service.
- Promoting an administrative culture that fosters cross-sectoral co-operation, resource sharing, and a systematic dialogue between different policy communities.

12. Finally, there is an overarching challenge for Centres of Government to be able to robustly measure the productivity, cost-effectiveness and performance of their own function, the rest of the public administration and the delivery of public services. In this regard, the need for robust indicators remains, or has come back to the fore.

13. The next CoG meeting will take place in Santiago, Chile in 2013. It will be an opportunity to discuss progress made in the OECD’s work programme on measuring the performance of the centre, embedding a culture of continuous improvement and on open and transparent government, and also to further examine the role of the centre in ensuring the success of reform.

## ANNEX

**Participants list: 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government  
London, United Kingdom 22-24 October 2012**

<b>Australia/Australie</b>	Dr. Ian WATT Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
<b>Austria/Autriche</b>	Mr. Manfred MATZKA Director General Federal Chancellery
<b>Belgium/Belgique</b>	Mme Françoise AUDAG-DECHAMPS Présidente du Comité de direction <i>a.i.</i> de la Chancellerie du Premier Ministre
<b>Canada</b>	Mr. Yvan ROY Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet and Counsel to the Clerk Privy Council Office  Mr. Pasquale SALVAGGIO Counsellor Permanent Delegation of Canada to the OECD
<b>Chile/Chili</b>	Mr. Claudio SEEBACH Head of Division Inter-Ministerial Coordination Division Ministry Secretary General of the Presidency  HE Mr. Raul SAEZ Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the OECD
<b>Estonia/Estonie</b>	Mr. Heiki LOOT State Secretary Head of the Government Office
<b>European Union/ Union européenne</b>	Ms. Elizabeth GOLBERG Director Secrétariat Général, European Commission
<b>Finland/Finlande</b>	Mr. Timo LANKINEN Permanent State Under-Secretary Prime Minister's Office
<b>France</b>	Mr. Jérôme FILIPPINI Directeur général de la modernisation de l'État
<b>Germany/Allemagne</b>	Mr. Matthias FREUNDLIEB Deputy Director-General Federal Chancellery

<b>Hungary/Hongrie</b>	<p>Dr. Marcell BIRO State Secretary Ministry of Public Administration and Justice</p> <p>Mr. László JOBBÁGY Deputy Head of Department of Programme Management Ministry of Public Administration and Justice</p> <p>Ms. Martina KOVÁCS Referee</p>
<b>Iceland/Islande</b>	<p>Ms. Ragnhildur ARNLJOTSDOTTIR Permanent Secretary Prime Minister's Office</p>
<b>Indonesia/Indonésie</b>	<p>Dr. Andin HADIYANTO Executive Secretary of Fiscal Policy Office, Ministry of Finance</p>
<b>Ireland/Irlande</b>	<p>Mr. Martin FRASER Secretary General to the Government and Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach</p> <p>Mr. John CALLINAN Assistant Secretary General Economic, International and Northern Ireland Division Department of the Taoiseach</p>
<b>Israel/Israël</b>	<p>Mr. Ehud PRAWER Head of Department of Policy Planning Prime Minister's Office</p>
<b>Japan/Japon</b>	<p>Mr. Makoto FUJISHIRO Deputy Director-General Government Revitalization Unit, Cabinet Office</p>
<b>Korea/Corée</b>	<p>Mr. Kyun OH Director-General Policy Planning and Co-ordination, Prime Minister's Office</p> <p>Mr. Byoung Ho LEE Deputy Director-General Policy Planning and Co-ordination, Prime Minister's Office</p> <p>Ms. Seung Ah LEE Deputy Director Prime Minister's Office</p> <p>Mr. Young Seok SEO Korea Institute of Public Administration</p>

<b>Luxembourg</b>	Mr. Jeff FETTES Adviser to the Government, 1st class Prime Minister's Office
<b>Morocco/Maroc</b>	Mr. Abdelghni LAKHDAR Economic Counselor to the Head of the Government  Ms. Fatima BARGACH Counsellor to the Head of Government on Public Establishments and Enterprises
<b>Netherlands/Pays-Bas</b>	Mrs. Marianne HORDIJK Secretary to the Cabinet Ministry of General Affairs Prime Minister's Office
<b>Norway/Norvège</b>	Mr. Einar SKANCKE Senior adviser Office of the Prime Minister
<b>Poland/Pologne</b>	Mr. Adam JASSER Undersecretary of State Secretary to the Economic Council Deputy Head of the Permanent Committee of the Council of Ministers  Ms. Ewelina STEPNIK Office of the Economic Council Chancellery of the Prime Minister
<b>Portugal</b>	Mr. José Maria SOUSA REGO Secretary-General Presidency of The Council of Ministers
<b>Slovakia/ République slovaque</b>	Mr. Jan KRAK Director-General Section of International Cooperation Office of the Government
<b>Slovenia/Slovénie</b>	Ms. Janja Garvas HOČEVAR Deputy Secretary-General of the Government
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<b>Spain/Espagne</b>	Ms. María Rosario PABLOS LÓPEZ Secretary-General of the Presidency  Ms. Valle ORDÓÑEZ CARBAJAL Co-ordinator General Secretariat of the Presidency

<b>Sweden</b>	Ms. Anna-Karin JATKO Permanent Secretary Government Offices of Sweden
<b>Switzerland/Suisse</b>	Mrs. Corina CASANOVA Federal Chancellor  M. Lorenzo CASCIONI Chef de section Planification et Stratégie Chancellerie fédérale
<b>Turkey/Turquie</b>	Mr. Efkan ALA Undersecretary of Prime Ministry Prime Ministry  Mr Ozer KONTOGLU Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry
<b>Ukraine</b>	Mr. Vyacheslav TOLKOVANOV Head of the National Agency on Civil Service
<b>United Kingdom/ Royaume-Uni</b>	The Right Honourable Francis MAUDE MP Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General  Sir Jeremy HEYWOOD Cabinet Secretary  Sir Bob KERSLAKE Head of the Civil Service  HE. Nick BRIDGE Ambassador and Permanent Representative Permanent Delegation to the OECD  Mr. Ivan ROGERS Permanent Secretary European and Global Issues Secretariat Cabinet Office  Mr. Gareth DAVIES Executive Director Government Innovation Group, Cabinet Office  Mr. David PITCHFORD Executive Director Major Projects Authority, Cabinet Office  Ms. Liz McKEOWN Deputy Director and Deputy Chief Economist Cabinet Office

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