

The centre of government (CoG) refers to the organisations and units that provide direct support to the head of government (president or prime minister) and perform certain key cross-cutting functions. These functions include the strategic management of the government's priority goals (working with the relevant policy sectors to define targets and the strategies to achieve them, as well as aligning the budget with the priorities), coordinating the ministries and agencies that contribute to those goals, monitoring the implementation of priority programmes and removing obstacles when performance is lagging; managing the politics to enable the approval and implementation of those programmes, and communicating results to the public. The relevance of the CoG has increased in recent years due to a number of factors, such as the rise of multidimensional issues (e.g. competitiveness, inequality, crime) that require whole-of-government responses, the growing demand of citizens for better results in service delivery, and the need to ensure coherent policies in governments that have expanded their scope of activities and operate in a frantic 24/7 news cycle.

CoGs are critical to organise and support the head of government's decision-making process for guaranteeing the delivery of government priorities. In a similar way to OECD countries, in 2015, most presidents and prime ministers in LAC relied on a multiplicity of channels for decision making. Cabinet meetings (93% of countries) and direct bilateral contacts with ministers (80%) are the main channels used for discussing policy issues. Groups of advisors are used in 46% of the countries. The role assigned to cabinet meetings in LAC is noteworthy for a region in which most countries operate under presidential systems; traditionally, collective cabinet discussions were considered unusual in these systems.

This variety of decision-making processes implies an important challenge for CoG units, especially in terms of ensuring that all relevant stakeholders can express their views and that the head of government receives the appropriate information before reaching a decision. According to the survey respondents, the CoG coordinates the discussion about agenda items of cabinet meetings in 73% of the countries (as compared to 88% in OECD countries). In a similar proportion of LAC countries, the CoG is responsible for reviewing the items submitted for cabinet discussion.

The capacity of CoGs to return items to ministries if the procedures for preparation and presentation were not followed is generally lower in LAC countries when compared to OECD countries. For instance, while in 60% of the LAC countries items could be returned if the procedures

for preparation and presentation were not followed, this share is higher in OECD member countries, reaching 70%. The gap increases when it comes to returning items that are not in line with the government programme or when regulatory standards are not met (26.7% and 33.3% for LAC countries compared to 51.9% and 55.5% respectively in OECD countries).

In comparison to the OECD countries, the item reviews conducted by the CoGs in LAC countries are more focused on procedures than on policy content. Despite the relevant role of cabinet meetings for policy discussions in LAC countries, the comparison with OECD countries shows that the role of the CoG in the substantive review of agenda items is still limited in LAC countries.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the 2015 IDB-OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government in Latin America and the Caribbean. Fifteen countries participated in the survey. Respondents were senior officials who provide direct support and advice to heads of government and provided information for the year 2015. The OECD totals are as reflected in the Government at a Glance dataset and are based on 28 OECD countries that replied to the survey.

Typical units of the centre of government include the ministry or general secretariat of the presidency, the Office of the prime minister, and the cabinet office, but sometimes those functions may be performed by units based in other parts of the government (finance, planning, budget office, etc.). Some responses were re-coded to ensure that those units were considered part of the CoG.

Further reading

- Alessandro, M., M. Lafuente and C. Santiso (2014), *Governing to Deliver: Reinventing the Center of Government in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC., <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/6674>.
- OECD (2015), "Centre Stage: Driving Better Policies from the Centre of Government", GOV/PGC/MPM(2014)3, OECD, Paris, [http://www2.oecd.org/oeclinfo/info.aspx?app=OLIScoteEN&Ref=GOV/PGC/MPm\(2014\)3](http://www2.oecd.org/oeclinfo/info.aspx?app=OLIScoteEN&Ref=GOV/PGC/MPm(2014)3).

4.1. Channels through which the head of government discuss policy issues, 2015

	Bilateral contacts with ministers	Groups of advisors	Cabinet meetings
Argentina	●	○	●
Chile	●	●	●
Colombia	●	●	●
Guyana	○	○	●
Costa Rica	●	●	●
Guatemala	●	○	●
Haiti	●	●	○
Honduras	●	○	●
Mexico	○	●	●
Panama	●	●	●
Paraguay	●	●	●
Peru	●	○	●
Dominican Republic	●	○	●
Trinidad and Tobago	○	○	●
Uruguay	●	○	●
LAC total			
● Yes	12	7	14
○ No	3	8	1
OECD total			
● Yes	19	17	23
○ No	9	11	5

Source: OECD-IDB (2015), Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.

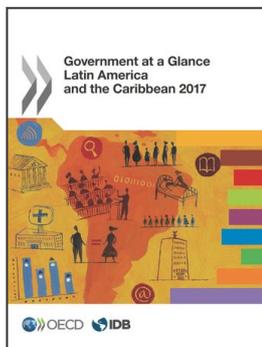
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4.2. Role of the CoG in reviewing agenda items for cabinet meetings, 2015

	Procedures have been followed	Legal conformity	Regulatory quality standards	Alignment with government plan	Consultation of stakeholders	Costing
Argentina	●	□	●	●	●	●
Chile	□	○	□	○	○	●
Colombia	○	●	●	●	●	●
Costa Rica	○	□	○	●	○	○
Dominican Republic	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guatemala	○	□	○	●	●	●
Guyana	○	○	○	○	○	○
Haiti	○	●	●	●	○	○
Honduras	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mexico	○	□	○	○	●	●
Panama	○	●	□	□	●	□
Paraguay	●	●	●	●	●	●
Peru	●	□	□	●	●	●
Trinidad and Tobago	□	□	□	□	□	□
Uruguay	○	○	□	□	○	□
LAC total						
● CoG reviews	4	5	5	8	8	8
○ CoG has authority to return items to ministry for additional work if criterion is not satisfied	9	4	5	4	6	4
□ Reviewed by another body	2	6	5	3	1	3
OECD total						
● CoG reviews	16	9	8	14	12	8
○ CoG has authority to return items to ministry for additional work if criterion is not satisfied	19	14	15	14	17	12
□ Reviewed by another body	4	14	12	5	6	17

Source: OECD-IDB (2015), Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.

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