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Steering responses  
to climate change from  
the centre of government: A  
stocktaking

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# **Steering responses to climate change from the centre of government: A stocktaking**

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# Abstract

This paper takes stock of the institutional set-ups, mechanisms and practices used by governments, and in particular centres of government, to steer climate change policy. To respond effectively to climate change, governments need decision-making and co-ordinating processes that reflect the complexity and pressing nature of the climate crisis, the multitude of stakeholders involved, and the need to balance between short-term and long-term policy objectives. With their unique positioning, centres of government in OECD Member countries often play a crucial role in providing leadership and co-ordination for climate policy. The first part of this paper identifies the institutional arrangements, mandates and skillsets of centres of government for climate-related action. The second part analyses the centre's stewardship role at different stages of the policy cycle, touching on strategic planning, co-ordination, the development of evidence-informed policies, and monitoring as well as overall efforts to "green" public administrations.

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# 1. Introduction

Climate change represents one of the greatest challenges faced by our planet. Current policies around the world are projected to result in global warming well above the 1.5°C target set out in the Paris Agreement. The Climate Action Tracker estimates a 2.7°C warming above pre-industrial levels, while the IEA's 2022 Stated Policies Scenario (STEPS) predicts a trajectory with a rise of around 2.5 °C in global average temperatures by 2100 (Climate Action Tracker, 2021<sup>[1]</sup>) (IEA, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). In response to the threats posed by climate change, governments across the OECD and beyond have renewed their efforts. Despite an increased sense of urgency and proliferation of climate commitments at national and international levels, broader systemic reforms are needed to address the multifaceted issue of climate change and translate commitments and intentions into concrete measures and observable shifts.

While appropriate decision-making, co-ordination processes and structures have been identified by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) as enabling conditions for responding to climate change (IPCC, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>), the systemic, long-term and cross-border nature of climate change represents a unique and complex challenge for traditional government practices. This challenge requires the ability to leverage multiple approaches or forms of decision-making at different times. Taking bolder action against climate change and limiting environmental degradation has seen governments at times shift towards more integrated, agile, evidence-based, and co-operative policy action to enhance political buy-in, avoid inertia, and balance short- and long-term objectives and needs. For instance, in their national communications to the UNFCCC, countries identified “improved co-ordination and cooperation between relevant institutions and agencies as key factors in facilitating the integration of climate change concerns into policymaking processes” and highlighted “the need to improve the capabilities of national climate change co-ordinators and national institutions to manage and coordinate climate change programmes” the need to in 2005 (UNFCCC, 2005<sup>[4]</sup>).

Successfully developing and implementing effective climate change policy will be facilitated by political leadership, as well as well-designed institutions, resources, services, information, and tools (OECD, 2022<sup>[5]</sup>). With climate action (including mitigation) and climate resilience increasingly perceived as top priorities, centres of governments are being called upon to employ contemporary decision-making structures to help steer these efforts horizontally across government and vertically across levels of government.

In the recent OECD Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy [\[OECD/LEGAL/0484\]](#), adherents underscored the need for innovative and whole-of-government approaches to address these urgent challenges by upskilling the civil service and ramping up public governance tools. The Action Plan on Governing Green annexed to the Declaration identifies “[...] using centres of government to effectively steer and set strategies promoting co-ordination among different government actors” as a key area for countries to strengthen their efforts to govern green.

Centres of government (CoGs) are the body or group of bodies providing support and advice to the head of the executive and the cabinet or council of ministers (OECD, 2018<sup>[6]</sup>). They generally have a systemic view of government priorities and operations, and they are often responsible for supporting governments in determining their cross-sectoral priorities. CoGs support governments in achieving their objectives and in fostering agility, resilience and trust in the public administration. They are in a unique position to steward, steer, set direction and guide climate action and strengthen climate resilience, defined as “the capacity of



human and natural systems to learn, adapt and transform response to risks induced or exacerbated by climate variability and change” (OECD, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>).

This paper presents a stocktaking of the current experiences and practices of governments, and in particular centres of government, in dealing with climate change. A stocktaking exercise highlights the different structures and set-ups used by countries as well as different mechanisms and approaches used by centres of government, including the main enablers or contextual factors that could influence the choice of approach. A stocktaking can be an important first step in describing how countries address climate change to foster knowledge-sharing and contribute to the resources that governments can draw on to learn from others and consider as they enhance their own practices related to the centre’s role in climate governance. Due to the relative novelty of most practices, the legal and political differences between jurisdictions as well as the need for additional comparative evidence and data for further evaluation, this paper does not aim to provide a normative view on the effectiveness of individual tools and measures adopted by countries.

The structure of the paper is underpinned by the framework of the OECD Compendium of Practices: Steering from the Centre of Government (forthcoming), which considers the centre of government as a system and identifies its roles in bridging the political-administrative interface, stewarding and guiding policy outcomes, as well as in acting as a stabiliser in times of crises. Box 1.1 provides more information on the framework.

The paper is structured in the following way: Chapter 1 discusses elements of the centre of government as a system, specifically, the institutional set-up and mandates for climate change policy across countries. Chapter 2 covers the role of the centre in stewarding and guiding climate change policy. This chapter is organised from a policy cycle perspective, opening with elements of visioning and planning followed by the co-ordination methods used by countries to deliver on their plans and priorities and the development of evidence-based policies. The cycle concludes with a focus on the monitoring activities led by the centre. Finally, the paper puts forward future avenues of work to support the performance of centres of government on climate change policy.

### Box 1.1. OECD Framework on the Roles of Centres of Governments

Depending on a country’s history, political system and constitution, its centre of government can assume a multitude of different functions. The OECD’s framework included in the Compendium: Steering from the Centre of Government (forthcoming) aims at classifying these different functions.

#### The centre as a bridge

Centres of government are called to act as a bridge between the political layers of government and the public administration. This occurs in various ways, including translating the political priorities into objectives, providing consistent direction to the public administration, in bridging political visions with implementing policies in practice, navigating the politics of policymaking and in managing transitions of incoming and outgoing governments. This gap is important given that climate policy is now a top priority for many governments and centres of government, and the nature of such issue requires continued trade-offs and perspectives of multiple actors.

#### The centre as a steward and guide

While the paper covers several aspects already of centre of government functions in this role, there are a range of angles that have not been covered that is important for consideration, including integrating climate strategies with other strategies, cross-border co-ordination, capacities to access and utilise data

for decision-making and when centres of government should enter and exit complex and cross-cutting issues, such as climate change.

### **The centre as a communicator**

The recent IMF survey (IMF, 2023<sup>[8]</sup>) showed that knowledge of climate issues and policies across the world are patchy, and many people still do not have opinions on supporting or opposing climate policy actions in their country. Issues that will be explored further include the centre's role in navigating influential interest groups when undertaking public communication, mis- and disinformation, supporting consistent and trusted information across government.

### **The centre as a system**

Any organisational system including the centre of government, no matter its make-up, can be considered as a complex system itself. Intentional design of a centre of government system can help support the right enabling conditions, including the right workforce, resources, data inputs and practices, in order for the centre to perform effectively, particularly for the demands of climate change.

Source: OECD Compendium of Practices: Steering from the Centre of Government (forthcoming).

## 2. The foundations for supporting climate change: Institutional and legal frameworks

### Key messages

- The institutional set-ups and structures that countries have put in place to govern climate action vary significantly and depend, among other factors, on their political system, their government priorities and the resources available.
- Centres of government could benefit from clear, cohesive and explicit mandates to achieve their climate change action, particularly around mitigation. They are particularly important in complex and transversal contexts, where several institutions, stakeholders, and portfolios are involved.
- While there is no one-size-fits-all institutional set-up to support climate change policy, structures are constantly evolving to keep up with current and future challenges.
- Skills and capabilities need to match the ambition of the function taken on by the centre of government, and thus further research around workforce skills and capabilities related to climate change would be useful.

Institutional set-ups to govern climate action vary significantly among countries and jurisdictions and are important for the understanding of a country's climate change response. This diversity does not only relate to the differences in political systems (e.g. whether a system is federal or unitary), but depends on the extent to which climate has been recognised as a political priority. While in some jurisdictions climate policy ranks high among the government's priorities, in others more immediate and competing demands (such as economic growth, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia's war in Ukraine) are the focus of policymakers. Another important element contributing to differences in institutional set-ups across countries, is the involvement of centres of government. As the body or group of bodies providing direct support and advice to the head of government, the role the centre plays in different contexts contributes to existing differences, which translate into a myriad of mandates and set-ups.

The Paris Agreement reinforced a shift in the global approach to climate policy by explicitly pointing to nation states as a key arena for action by placing the responsibility on them to commit to temperature goals and submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This has led to modifications in the institutional set-up and mandates of relevant entities to make arrangements more conducive for better outcomes, and namely to address climate change, with many centres taking a more active role.

The complexity and pressing nature of the climate crisis means that the institutional set-up to support centres of government in providing adequate and effective leadership and co-ordination is very important. This includes the "authorising environment" -- or the different sources and forms of authority allowing the

centre to perform its functions -- including an institutional structure and mandate, as well as the other key elements that support the work of the centre such as workforce capacities and skills.

This chapter provides a stocktaking, where possible, of the authorising environment, including the mandates and roles that support the activities of the centre and other government actors in developing climate change policy, followed by a stocktake of the institutional set-ups. Finally, the chapter focuses on the importance of human resources and staff to support the centre of government as its own system, allowing it to perform at a high level.

## 2.1 Defining the playing field at the centre of government: Institutional set-ups and mandates to tackle climate change

### ***Identifying the players: Centres of government and the institutional set-up for climate action***

The wide-reaching impacts of the climate crisis on nature, people and infrastructure around the world mean that relevant policies need to be co-ordinated across different ministries and levels of government. The global and complex nature of the climate crisis (together with the two other planetary crises of biodiversity loss and pollution) has at times driven the development of specific institutional arrangements focused on tackling this challenge. Governments need to be equipped to address climate change within this broader context and understand its implications across all policy areas (i.e. public health, food security, national security, migration, economics, fiscal policies etc. etc). Moreover, the emergence of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, showed the importance of a continued focus on climate action, while responding to other policy demands (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>) and underlined the need to pursue resilience, ensuring that systems can anticipate, absorb, recover and adapt to potential future shocks (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>).

Across OECD Member countries, climate-related roles sit in different bodies. A country's institutional set-up for climate action depends on several elements such as political support, the priority given to climate policy in the national agenda, and the resources available (e.g., technical, financial, human). The OECD has identified four main institutional set-ups used by governments across the OECD and beyond to govern climate action:

1. **Dedicated ministry of the environment (e.g., Ministry of Environment with lead competence on climate policy):** according to desk research, 17 out of 38 OECD Member countries have established a dedicated ministry of the environment with responsibilities over climate action (these have many names, including ministry for the ecological transition, ministry of environment and climate, etc). While climate policy has been traditionally under the realm of the Ministry of Environment, some countries have sought of combining different expertise into super ministries, since climate change has been progressively mainstreamed across all sectors and levels of government.
2. **Super ministries:** 21 out of 38 OECD Member countries have created "super ministries" that bring together several related policy portfolios (for example, climate, energy, utilities, etc.) under one institution. In some cases, governments might even bring together two ministries (for example in Denmark) that have traditionally struggled to align their respective policy areas, to increase coherence upstream. In Germany the competence on climate policy is split between the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, which is responsible for climate mitigation and the Ministry for the Environment, which is in charge of climate adaptation.
3. **Unit or leadership at the centre of government:** To mitigate the degree of fragmentation and enhance coherence around environmental policy issues, 8 OECD Member countries have decided

to mandate units or individuals from the centre of government with environmental and climate related tasks.

4. **Line ministries only:** This set-up is where a ministry is responsible for the design and implementation of climate policy, in line with the government programme and strategy (Dubash, 2021<sup>[10]</sup>).

These institutional set-ups are not mutually exclusive and can often be layered to balance their advantages and drawbacks. Among OECD countries, Canada's institutional framework cements responsibilities for climate policy in both the centre and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change; this dual structure also exists in Estonia and New Zealand (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Institutional arrangements for environmental and climate policy at the national level**

OECD Member countries

Unit or responsibility at the CoG and line ministries	Super ministry and responsibility at the CoG	Super ministry and line ministries	Dedicated Ministry of Environment and responsibility at the CoG	Dedicated Ministry of Environment and line ministries	Line Ministries only
United States	France Iceland Ireland Poland United Kingdom	Australia Austria Costa Rica Croatia Denmark Germany Greece Hungary Latvia Netherlands Portugal Slovenia Spain Sweden Switzerland Türkiye	Canada New Zealand	Belgium Chile Colombia Czech Republic Estonia Finland Israel Italy Japan Korea Lithuania Luxembourg Mexico Norway Slovak Republic	-

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The variety of institutional set-ups for climate change policy among OECD countries demonstrates that such systems can be developed to best suit a country's unique political characteristics. Ministries of environment with primary responsibility over climate change policy often benefit from sectoral and technical expertise tied to their traditional authority in the topic. However, the cross-cutting nature of contemporary climate policy necessitates political buy-in from other ministries, which may be more difficult to obtain in this set-up. On the other hand, super ministries allow for more effective cross-cutting collaboration and prioritisation by grouping several policy portfolios under a single institution.

Placing climate policy responsibilities at the centre of government has several advantages. From a political standpoint, the centre is widely understood to be devoid of purely sectoral interests unlike sectoral departments and has convening powers from its proximity to the head of government as well as co-ordination expertise. Units situated in the centre are more likely to have the authority to orient agencies' financial and technical resources for policy development and planning and have an important horizontal oversight function. While this top-down approach can be effective as it can allow mandates to be

implemented, at times it can underlying level of consensus regarding climate objectives where mandates are less clear, which can be hard to achieve in certain countries. Furthermore, countries have noted that tensions can arise when there is a lack of clarity around the role of the centre and relevant line ministries, particularly regarding command-and-control structures.

**Table 2.2. Institutional set-ups for climate change policy: Potential benefits and risks**

	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Risks</b>
<b>Dedicated ministry of the environment (e.g., Ministry of Environment with lead competence on climate policy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical expertise on climate issues as it is the historically leading institution on the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty to obtain political buy-in from other ministries</li> </ul>
<b>Super ministries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better alignment of policies and coherent implementation activities</li> <li>• Climate policy can get leverage when combined with other core portfolios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate policy might be relegated, especially in cases where the other portfolio plays a predominant role in the country's economy or context (e.g., political, social, economic) changes</li> <li>• Internal silos</li> </ul>
<b>Unit or leadership at the centre of government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political support from the highest level</li> <li>• Overarching approach to climate policy</li> <li>• Reduced fragmentation</li> <li>• Improved policy coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of resulting command-and-control structures</li> <li>• Might lack the technical expertise to lead the co-ordination and steer policy action</li> <li>• More subject to changes in government</li> </ul>
<b>Line ministries with no overarching co-ordinating or steering body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low political cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cohesiveness and long-term sustainability</li> <li>• Lack of coherent long-term vision and strategy</li> </ul>

Note: Potential benefits and risks based on the four institutional set-ups identified by the OECD.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

## **Mandates**

An authorising environment composed of clear and explicit mandates can support governments in achieving their objectives. Articulating what is expected from the different government agencies, how they should collaborate with other parties to achieve their objectives, and the resources that they have at their disposal can minimise duplication or gaps and foster a more effective performance of the relevant parties, especially when collaboration and systemic approaches is key. In relation to centres of governments and their stewardship of climate change action, mandates can be important in setting how they exercise leadership in a non-partisan way, stewarding implementation of climate change action from a whole of government perspective. Further, mandates at the centre around climate change action bring a systemic lens and thus can support policy coherence, ensuring that there is alignment across different plans.

### *Embedding climate-related mandates into the legal framework*

Countries differ in the extent to which the institutional mandates surrounding climate policy are enshrined in a legal framework. The overall majority of OECD countries (Table 2.3) have explicit institutional mandates for climate policy. In two countries (Portugal, Sweden) institutional mandates of climate-focused institutions are not explicitly included in primary legal instruments.

At one end of the spectrum, the Mexican General Law on Climate Change puts in place the core elements of an institutional system to address climate change and details how they would be articulated in practice (Averchenkova and Guzman Luna, 2018<sup>[11]</sup>). In Chile, the Climate Change Framework Law establishes a comprehensive normative and legal mandate to address climate change. It sets clear mitigation goals, such as achieving greenhouse gas emissions neutrality by 2050, and outlines adaptation mechanisms to increase resilience. Importantly, the law also defines institutional responsibilities by creating or strengthening specific governmental entities like a Ministerial Committee on Climate Change and a Climate Change Unit within the Ministry of the Environment (Government of Chile, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>). In other cases, such as France, the responsibility is assigned more broadly to “the Government” or “the Executive”. Of course, even with a legal framework in place the extent to which they place the responsibilities in the centre also varies.

**Table 2.3. Presence of Institutional Mandates for Climate Policy**

Explicit Institutional Mandate	Institutional Mandate Not Explicit in Primary Legal Text
Austria	Portugal
Australia	Sweden
Canada	
Chile	
Colombia	
Denmark	
Estonia	
Finland	
France	
Germany	
Greece	
Hungary	
Iceland	
Ireland	
Israel	
Japan	
Korea	
Luxembourg	
Mexico	
Netherlands	
New Zealand	
Norway	
Poland	
Portugal	
Spain	
Switzerland	
United Kingdom	
United States	

Source: Author's own elaboration.

### ***Supporting the set-up with the right skill sets and leadership at the CoG***

The largest resource inputs that organisational systems have is their workforce, and thus, it is imperative to consider how a workforce is enabled to undertake their role. Staff in the centre could support climate policies through various avenues, including i) by being directly involved in one or more parts of the policy process and their content, ii) by defining standards and guidelines that public officials should abide by, and

iii) by being the interface between the political sphere and the administration or between the citizens and the government, the latter of which is particularly relevant to staff responsible for implementation on the ground (Funder and Mweemba, 2019<sup>[13]</sup>) and iv) by communicating internally and externally on climate policy, which is central to climate change action (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>). Further, staff also play a key role in knowledge translation, making sense of the immense amount of evidence that is presented to support decision-making around climate change action. Senior officials in the centre of government are also required to have a certain leadership of climate and critical risks.

Some governments are placing specific focus on developing a workforce to support climate issues, yet this is not well mapped or understood. One example of a jurisdiction working on strengthening the capabilities of its workforce is the United Kingdom. There, the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GSCU) in collaboration with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are working towards embedding specific training on climate in the competency frameworks, training activities and curricula. Additionally, they have identified four levels of climate capabilities for officials across the administration. Table 2.4 lists the expected capabilities that GSCU and BEIS have recognised as critical for public officials. Another interesting example to build capacity at the subnational level can be found in Germany. As part of its Immediate Action Programme for Climate Change Adaptation, the federal government funds 100 adaptation managers (in total there are over 1 700 climate protection managers), which are situated in municipalities across the country to build capacity and support climate action at the local level (OECD, 2023<sup>[14]</sup>). In Chile, the Environmental Education and Citizen Participation Unit within Chile's Ministry of the Environment primarily aims to promote sustainable habits and behaviours among the population and provides training to both public officials and private individuals on climate change topics, as well as on adaptation and mitigation measures. Under the all-of-government Climate Action Plan in Ireland, central Departments in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications committed to undertake a review of civil service capacity and capability to deliver on climate action. The review will finalise in 2023 with recommendations to be taken forward for improving climate action delivery and implementation. Further, under the Irish Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural, including green procurement training) will be incorporated into learning and development strategies for all staff, with all senior management further mandated to complete a climate action leadership training course in 2023.

Additionally, since October 2022, the French centre of government agency, the Ministry for Public Transformation and Civil Service, with the support of the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Local Cohesion, has been tasked by the Prime Minister to train all civil servants to ecological transition stakes and challenges, by the end of the five-year mandate. The main objective is to ensure all civil servants understand environmental stakes (climate, adaptation to climate change, biodiversity, resources and environmental health) and contribute to improving the ecological performance of the public policy accordingly. Priority has been given to the training of the 25,000 managers of the French civil service, starting with the 220 Central Administrations Directors. From July 2023, an average of 1,500 government executives will be trained every month. The French government's ambition is that all civil servants should have benefited from the training by 2027.



**Table 2.4. Climate capabilities for public servants in the United Kingdom**

<b>Role in the administration</b>	<b>Expected capabilities</b>
Civil Servants (policy makers, general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the potential for policy areas to support or undermine UK climate objectives</li> <li>• Understands where to seek further advice on these interactions</li> </ul>
Civil Servants (working on climate change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced understanding of UK and international climate framework</li> <li>• Able to understand, foresee, and manage the interaction between climate and other policy goals</li> </ul>
All leaders in government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can challenge established truths about the interaction between climate and other policy priorities</li> <li>• Can communicate the whole system between climate and all policy activity</li> </ul>
Technical specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist and world-leading expertise in commercial, project delivery, climate science, law, and innovation</li> </ul>

Source: (Government of the United Kingdom, 2021<sup>[15]</sup>).

# 3. Stewarding and guiding climate action from the centre: Achieving outcomes in a complex setting

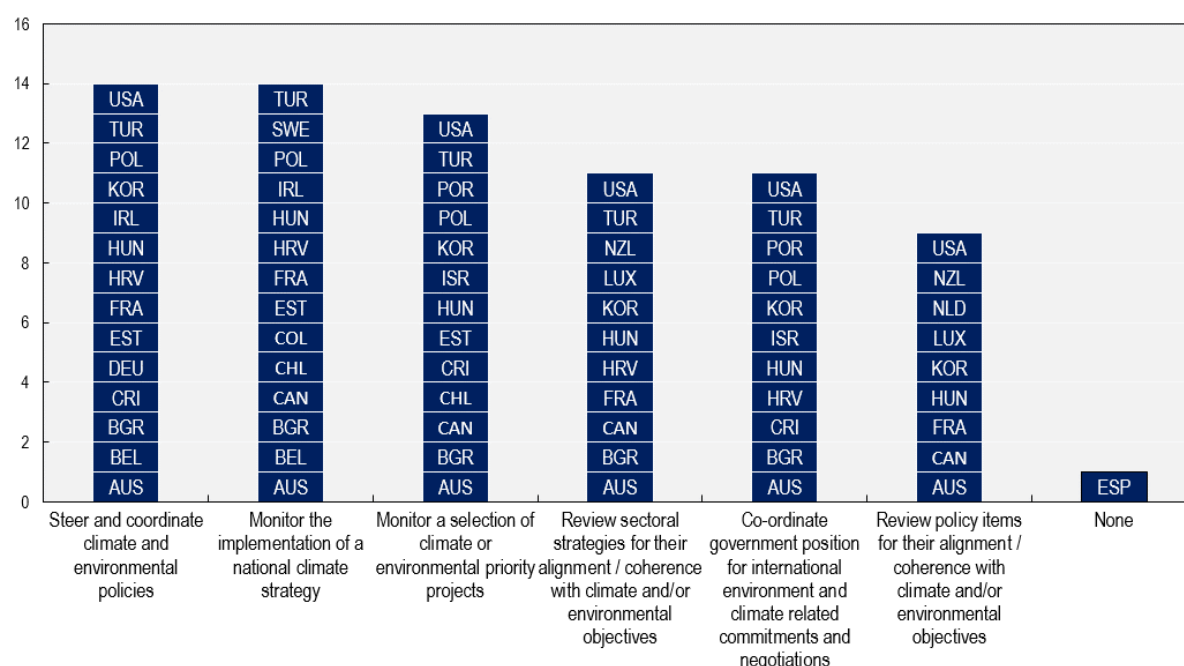
## Key messages

- Given the complexity of climate change policy and the timeframe for its development, the role of the centre of government as a steward and guide is very important.
- Survey data indicated that centres of government tend to lead the strategic planning and prioritisation exercises, which set the tone for the rest of the administration. The long-term vision and the identification of priorities can help to ensure that public resources are allocated in an efficient way and that longer-term climate change policies and initiatives are balanced with immediate priorities.
- In developing climate change policies (noting what defines good policies differs greatly across mitigation, adaption and resilience strategies), centres of government are increasingly gathering evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and sectors. Moreover, some use standards to ensure that policies and regulations from across the administration support the country's national goals.
- The most common role of centres of government in climate policy is the monitoring of national climate strategies and environmental priority projects.
- Climate change is often considered as a crisis, and as such, lessons from managing crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis can provide valuable lessons for centres of government in dealing with climate change.

As outlined in Table 2.1, 8 of the 38 OECD Member countries have explicitly given the centre of government responsibilities linked to climate action. Moreover, data from the recent OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government shows that in 44% of the surveyed countries climate, environment, and biodiversity are among their top three priorities (responsibilities, including those outside of legally binding responsibilities) of the centre in 2023 (OECD, 2023<sub>[16]</sub>).

In 14 out of 27 OECD member and partner countries, the centre steers and co-ordinates climate and environmental policies and in 11 out of 27, the centre co-ordinates the government's position for international environmental and climate commitments and negotiations (Figure 3.1). By supporting decision-makers in setting priorities and helping to ensure that line ministries, agencies, and actors in the administration as well as other stakeholders, have the right conditions to deliver on their objectives, centres of government play a role in supporting a clear and consistent vision across the administration and the right enablers to deliver on these.

Figure 3.1. The functions of the CoG in climate and environmental policy



Note: n=27; Respondents to the survey were asked “What is the centre of government's role with regards to climate and environmental policy?”  
Source: Preliminary data from (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>), Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government.

When it comes to policies related to climate change, centres of government in several OECD countries follow up on the implementation of priorities to ensure that goals are being achieved. According to data from the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government, centres of government in 52% of the countries surveyed monitor the implementation of the national climate strategy and 48% monitor a selection of climate and/or environmental policies (Figure 3.1). Facilitating this monitoring of the progress at the centre, in the delivery of policies can shed light on the effectiveness of specific actions and can help collect data to inform future policies, strategies, or activities, and can further promote accountability, although it should be noted that monitoring is often done by climate expert bodies who may be facilitated or engaged by the centre.

This chapter provides an overview of the different roles allocated in centres of government related to climate action stewardship and guidance. These roles follow the policymaking cycle and encompass 1) the definition of short- and long-term priorities and how they are operationalised through supranational, national, and sub-national plans; 2) setting in place co-ordination mechanisms; 3) guiding the development of high-quality policies; and 4) the monitoring of actions.

### 3.1 Prioritisation, long-term vision and strategic planning

The complexity of climate change policy requires coherence and intentionality both at the international and the national scale; hence policies and implementation activities aimed at delivering on climate change issues are often underpinned by supranational and national commitments. A key mechanism used by governments to optimise resources in a tight fiscal environment, is their priority setting and strategic planning processes, including defining high-level priorities and strategic plans, to focus activities. Most centres of government play some direct or indirect role on stewarding and guiding priorities and strategic

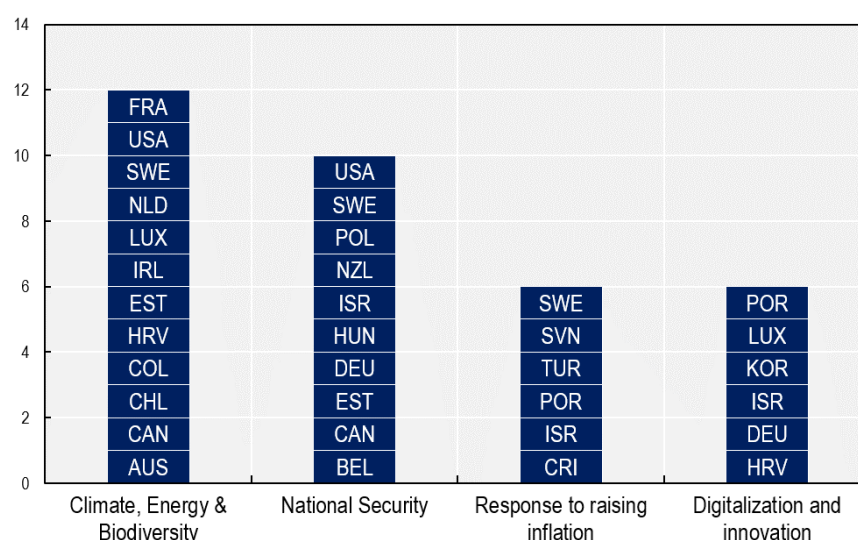
planning around climate change policy, whether it is through the articulation of policy priorities, the co-ordination across the administration, or the monitoring of implementation actions.

Strategic planning is an important tool for governments to articulate political commitments and drive action. It is also a mechanism that can be used for the co-ordination and mainstreaming of key priorities into a government work programme, such as climate change policy. As climate change represents a long-term challenge, mechanisms to support a coherent, sustainable vision and strategy that outlasts shorter-term changes and unites key stakeholders can be important.

Governments are also faced with limited financial and human resources to address policy problems and achieve their goals; prioritisation thus becomes key at the early stages of strategic planning and policy formulation (OECD, 2020<sup>[17]</sup>). Prioritisation leads to more realistic commitments, increases the likelihood of follow-through, and overall enables administrations to develop more credible plans (OECD, 2020<sup>[17]</sup>). Inadequate prioritisation of climate policy objectives in the national strategic planning process could generate issues at the operational level, potentially leading to inconsistencies or the inability to deliver satisfactory outcomes.

An aspect for the definition of priorities and the required actions to achieve them is the time horizon taken as reference. Since climate change is not always perceived as an immediate threat, there is potential for short-term priorities to prevail over longer-term efforts required to deal with climate change. This is particularly relevant in an increasingly changing and complex environment, where the centre's yearly priorities are influenced by domestic and global challenges that elected policymakers have to respond to. Figure 3.2 presents the most common priorities for centres of government in 2023, where both short- and long-term challenges coexist and may be perceived as competing with each other. Due to the required longevity of climate action, ensuring a continued focus despite changes in government is another challenge many countries face. Putting in place a long-term strategy that extends beyond a single electoral cycle allows administrations to have a guide for actions to achieve their climate goals, while dealing with short-term pressures and continue focusing on climate policymaking and implementation (OECD/IEA, 2020<sup>[18]</sup>).

**Figure 3.2. Top priorities at the centre of government, 2023**



Note: n=27; Respondents to the survey were asked "What are the top three strategic priorities that the centre of government is mandated to lead this year (2023)?"

Source: Preliminary data from (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>), Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government.

## Setting priorities to achieve climate outcomes

Embedding the concern of climate change in a government's national priorities indicates the country's support for the topic. Given the time horizon in which the climate crisis is unravelling, actions by ministries, departments and agencies should be conducive to achieve climate goals. Spelling out the national priorities and linking them to strategic planning documents can help mainstream climate objectives across the government. For instance, in the United States, the Biden-Harris Administration included tackling climate change as one of its immediate priorities, in particular by “mobilizing a whole-of-government effort to reduce climate pollution in every sector of the economy and increase resilience to climate impacts” (The White House, 2021<sup>[19]</sup>). This high-level commitment is reflected and supported by the Long-term Strategy of the United States (The United States, 2021<sup>[20]</sup>). While the former lays down the roadmap for the country on how to achieve its climate goals, the National Climate Strategy (NCS) setting out how emissions reductions will be achieved, has not yet been released (OECD, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>).

The identification of government priorities takes a variety of forms, from a small set of priorities or more informal identification of priorities to more formal and detailed government programmes. Embedding climate change policy within existing whole-of-government prioritisation and planning frameworks could signal a high degree of political commitment towards these goals, to civil servants and citizens alike. Box 3.1 showcases one of the approaches to prioritisation in the United Kingdom, where short- and long-term priorities are considered as part of the departments' planning exercises, as well as France's Delivery Unit in the *Direction Interministérielle de la Transformation Publique* (DIPT), which helps to steward prioritisation for government, including around the green transition.

### Box 3.1. Setting priorities in the United Kingdom, Chile and France

#### Outcome Delivery Plans in the United Kingdom

In 2021, the UK Government (Cabinet Office) introduced Outcome Delivery Plans, which set out how each UK government department is working towards the delivery of its priority outcomes. Each department develops an Outcome Delivery Plan that reflects both the department's short-term priorities and the government's long-term policy objectives. For instance, BEIS Outcome Delivery Plan: 2021 to 2022 points out that one of the department's goals for the year is to tackle climate change, which is in line with the UK's long-term strategy (see Box 3.2 for more details). The Plan also includes projects and programmes that the department should implement in the upcoming year as well as performance metrics.

In general, Outcome Delivery Plans set out how departments are working towards becoming more sustainable and how work contributes to the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among them climate-related objectives, and the government's equality objectives, to ensure government departments contribute to these overarching whole-of-government priorities.

#### Chile's Interministerial Co-ordination Division

The Interministerial Co-ordination Division (DCI), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, identifies tasks and public policy measures for the implementation of the Framework Law on Climate Change. Every three months, the DCI generates reports on the progress status of these tasks and commitments, which are submitted to the Presidency of the Republic and to the Technical Secretariat of the Framework Law in the Ministry of the Environment. Additionally, the DCI intervenes to resolve delays or non-compliance with sectoral ministries when requested, thereby facilitating the effective implementation of the law.

### France's Delivery Unit

Under the supervision of the Prime Minister and in the framework of the “Governmental Priority Policies”, DITP steers and supports whole-of-government prioritisation of key priorities, guides implementation and ensures the monitoring of these priorities. The 60 key priorities include a number of policies related green transition, are detailed into actionable plans with annual targets and geographical breakdown over the national territory, and a department answers regularly to the DITP for each of them.

Sources: (BEIS, 2021<sup>[22]</sup>); Information shared in the context of the OECD Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-Making at the Centre of Government.

### ***Setting long-term vision and strategies from the centre***

Long-term strategies can act as a guiding vision for the current and future administrations and towards identifying the potential trade-offs and milestones required to achieve climate policy objectives and countries to leverage new technologies and inspire other countries (Cox, 2019<sup>[23]</sup>). Moreover, spelling-out the areas in which the government (current and future administrations) will focus resources is a powerful way to shield the climate agenda from political influence and can help inform short- and medium-term plans and actions (OECD/IEA, 2020<sup>[18]</sup>). The role of the centre is important here in helping to sustain such strategies during transitions of governments.

Acknowledging the importance of having in place national strategies with a long-term outlook, the Paris Agreement included a call to countries to develop and communicate their long-term low-greenhouse gas emission (LT-LEDS) development strategies by 2020 (OECD/IEA, 2020<sup>[18]</sup>). These strategies support the countries' commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by defining a long-term vision and, in many cases, covering other topics beyond the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)<sup>1</sup>. While the formulation of these strategies is not mandatory, by the time of development of this paper, 58 countries had submitted theirs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2023<sup>[24]</sup>). Box 3.2 presents four examples of national long-term strategies that support the goals embedded in the Paris Agreement, firstly in the EU where the EC provides overall central leadership to countries, followed by three other examples where the centre have played a key role. For a comprehensive list of OECD Member countries' LT-LEDS, please refer to Annex A.

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<sup>1</sup> While the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) are national climate action plans that are mandatory under the Paris Agreement. The Long-term Strategies (LT-LEDS) provide a long-term perspective on the country's NDCs; however, they are not mandatory.

### Box 3.2. Supporting climate goals through long-term strategies

#### ***National long-term strategies in the European Union***

As of 1 January 2020, member states of the European Union (EU) are required to submit a long-term strategy (LTS) to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The LTS includes targets and milestones of greenhouse gas emission reductions and should be coherent with other national long-term objectives, planning documents, or policies, in particular the National Energy and Climate Plans 2021-2030. The development of national strategies should be underpinned by stakeholder engagement activities to encourage participation from citizens, businesses, and CSOs, among others. Once countries present their LTS to the European Commission (EC), the latter assesses whether the strategy supports the EU's objectives. Additionally, the EC can provide comments and feedback to member countries. LTS should be reviewed every 10 years, and every five years in cases where it is considered necessary. In addition to the member states' LTS, the EU has an overarching strategy for the entire block.

#### **Chile**

The Long-Term Climate Strategy (ECLP) 2050 of Chile is an instrument that sets out the general guidelines that the country will follow in a cross-cutting and integrated manner, considering a 30-year horizon, to address the challenges of climate change. Chile's Framework Law on Climate Change is designed to foster effective multi-level and inter-institutional co-ordination in managing climate change. This governance structure, which is both vertical (national and regional) and horizontal (incorporating state institutions and non-state agents), has the primary objective of avoiding duplication of efforts and enhancing synergies and ongoing collaboration. The Ministry of the Environment (MMA) plays a central role in this co-ordination, overseeing the work of other ministries and institutions through the Office of Climate Change and the Council of Ministers for Sustainability and Climate Change. Additionally, the strategy benefits from the support of the scientific community and non-state agents, ensuring well-founded decision-making and effective oversight of the policies and programs implemented.

#### **United Kingdom**

The *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener* spells-out the policies and proposals that the Government of the United Kingdom will implement in the next decades to achieve its NDC goals as well as a decarbonised economy by 2050. This strategy is overseen by the Prime Minister from the centre, with the Cabinet Committee on Climate change overseeing and monitoring the long-term strategy. Among many things, the strategy encourages the use of systems approaches to policymaking. This means that assumptions are constantly updated based on the performance of specific policies, new technological developments, among others.

#### **Mexico**

Mexico's Climate Change Mid-century (the LTS) Strategy, facilitated and signed by the centre, provides the vision, principles, goals, and main lines of action to build a climate resilient society, transition towards a low emissions development, and strengthen the linkages between these and the Paris Agreement. The Strategy contains 6 cross cutting issues that set the foundation of climate policy.



## France

Under the umbrella of the “French Strategy for Energy and Climate”, a package of 4 strategies reviewed regularly, dictate the national effort related to climate change:

- the Low Carbon National Strategy (SNBC) which describes the sectoral measures to be implemented to reach 2030 and 2050 emissions targets; the 3rd SNBC (2024-2028) will be finalized and adopted in 2024;
- the Pluriannual Energy Program (PPE) which details the evolution of the national energy system. The 3rd PPE (2024-2033) will also be adopted in 2024;
- the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC) which presents the measures intended to adapt the countries to the consequences of climate change. The 2nd PNACC will be adopted in 2024 and will rely for the first time on specific temperature scenarios.
- the Programmatic Law for Energy and Climate, which will be presented by the end of 2023 and will give the broad legislative framework and objectives for the 3 aforementioned strategies.

## Canada

Canada's long-term strategy, *Exploring Approaches for Canada's Transition to Net-Zero Emissions*, presents scenarios with different considerations to the level of electrification in the country, the use of renewable and alternative fuels, and use of technologies to capture CO<sub>2</sub>. It is coded into legislation through the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which also introduces monitoring and reporting obligations to the head of government, as well as an advisory body.

Source: (European Commission, 2023<sup>[25]</sup>); (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2022<sup>[26]</sup>); (Government of the United Kingdom, 2021<sup>[15]</sup>); (SEMARNAT-INECC, 2016<sup>[27]</sup>).

The process to develop long-term strategies is also worth exploring. Stakeholder engagement activities continue to be a key topic for governments, including in national long-term strategy for climate policies. This could be because by bringing onboard all the voices, including those of vulnerable groups, administrations may be better positioned to create strategies that reflect the national context and benefit from the knowledge from different communities, as well as foster a sense of ownership across different groups. This is something that countries around the world have recognised, and in fact, 75% of countries that have submitted their LT-LEDS reported engaging with stakeholders during the process (UNFCCC, 2022<sup>[28]</sup>). In countries such as Estonia, the centre of government undertook an extensive stakeholder and citizen consultation period to develop their long-term strategies. The engagement of different non-governmental stakeholders, e.g. of civil society organisations (CSOs) can further also contribute to ensuring continuity of climate change actions (UNFCCC, 2005<sup>[4]</sup>).

Long-term strategies also need to consider future and emerging risks, and centres often use risk assessment processes to gain insight into these, and the utilisation of foresight (discussed later in this paper) for items less well understood. For example, the UK's national governance resilience framework uses national security risks assessments and information on climate change to support long-term strategy setting, while in Switzerland, their national risk assessment considered how climate change is shifting their risk exposures across a number of domains.

### *Aligning supranational commitments to sectorial actions*

Addressing climate change also requires efforts from different levels of government, and centres of government often play a role in helping to frame and align such commitments and actions. Transforming



supranational obligations to national actions is important to avoid duplications, overlaps or voids. Misalignment of strategic objectives can result from the complex interaction between different administrative and political variables, relating to conflicting sectoral interests, contextual political priorities, as well as poorly designed co-ordination mechanisms for instance.

Table 3.1 below lists some of the supranational agreements and the corresponding strategies at the domestic level, whether their elaboration is mandatory or voluntary under the terms of the agreement.

**Table 3.1. Selection of supranational agreements or mechanisms and corresponding domestic level strategic plans**

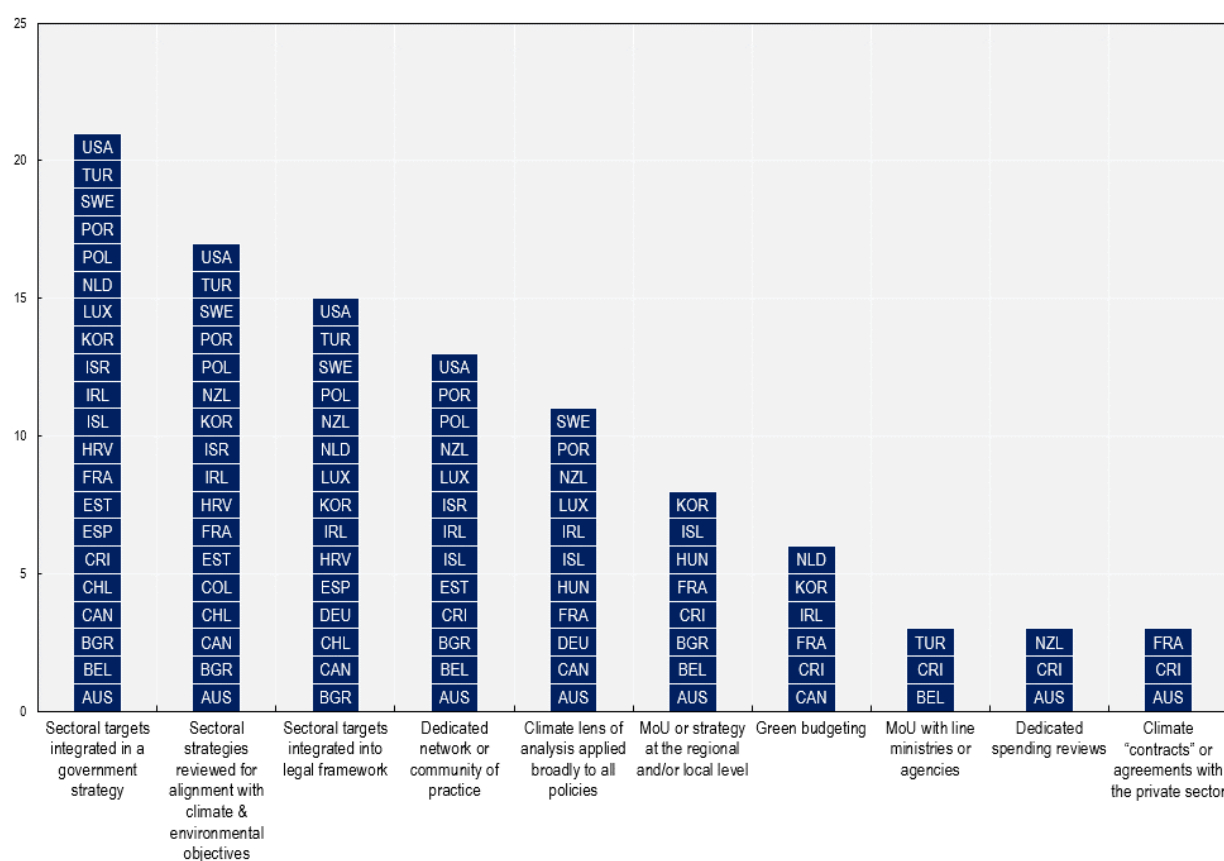
Supranational agreement or mechanism	Corresponding domestic level strategic document	Mandatory or voluntary
UN 2030 Agenda	National Sustainable Development Strategy Voluntary National Reviews	Voluntary
COP21 Paris Agreement	Nationally Determined Contributions  Long-term Strategies	Mandatory / Voluntary
NextGenerationEU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility	National Recovery and Resilience Plan	Mandatory
Reducing Emissions and Forest Degradation (REDD)	National REDD+ Strategy	Voluntary
Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011- 2020 and Post-2020 Global biodiversity Framework (GBF)	Biodiversity pledges under the framework of Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People	Voluntary

Note: The NextGenerationEU and the Recovery Resilience Facility apply only to countries that are members of the European Union.

Source: Author's own elaboration

The role of the centre in ensuring coherent climate policies is further reflected by the data. Figure 3.3 shows the mechanisms, tools, and instruments used by centres of government to mainstream climate resilience policy objectives at the sectoral level. In 78% of cases (21 out of 27), sectoral targets are integrated in a government strategy and in 63% of countries (17 out of 27) the centre reviews the alignment of sectoral strategies with climate and environmental objectives.

**Figure 3.3. Mechanisms, tools, and instruments at the centre of government to mainstream climate resilience objectives at the sectoral level, 2023**



Note: n=27; Respondents to the survey were asked "What formal mechanisms, tools and instruments are deployed by your government to mainstream climate resilience objectives at the sectoral level? (as outlined in domestic or international commitments)".

Source: Preliminary data from (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>), Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government.

While the extent to which centres of government are involved in planning varies, generally, planning is more effective when it is systematic, coherent and includes high-level leadership, ensuring alignment between sectoral objectives themselves, with whole-of-government objectives more generally, and with the budget (OECD, 2020<sup>[17]</sup>). Strategic planning activities across OECD countries, driven by supranational institutions, administrative culture, or the budgeting process have not always been accompanied by sufficient articulation mechanisms to ensure activities and goals are aligned over time to improve outcomes. The disconnection between the planning process and the implementation phase could hamper the level of trust on the government's commitment to climate policy, as stakeholders could perceive a politicisation of the topic or could think that the government is paying lip service to climate policy (France Stratégie, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Two examples are outlined below around mechanisms used to align commitments and different levels, though this area is one that could be explored more fully in future studies.

### Box 3.3. From the national level to sectorial actions

#### Scotland's National Planning Framework

Scotland's National Planning Framework set at the central level is an important element in helping the country manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest. It sets out proposals for the development of land, including a section on sustainable places and policy principles to achieve defined policy outcomes. Beneath this plan, 18 national developments support this strategy, including single large-scale projects and networks of several smaller scale proposals that are collectively nationally significant. National developments will be a focus for delivery. Regional spatial strategies and Local Development Plans (LDPs) should identify and support national developments which are relevant to their areas.

#### France's national low-carbon strategy

In France's case, the centre plays more of an oversight or co-ordination role, wherein the sectoral targets and strategies are devised through negotiation and consultation with stakeholders. For instance, the elaboration of the national low-carbon strategy (stratégie nationale bas carbone) is led by the Ministry for Ecological transition, co-created by the relevant ministerial departments and in close collaboration with external stakeholders; but the main policy arbitrages are organized by the SGPE. The SGPE also supervises the elaboration of all relevant sectorial strategies. These strategies are shared with the independent High Council for Climate (Haut Conseil pour le Climat) to be assessed.

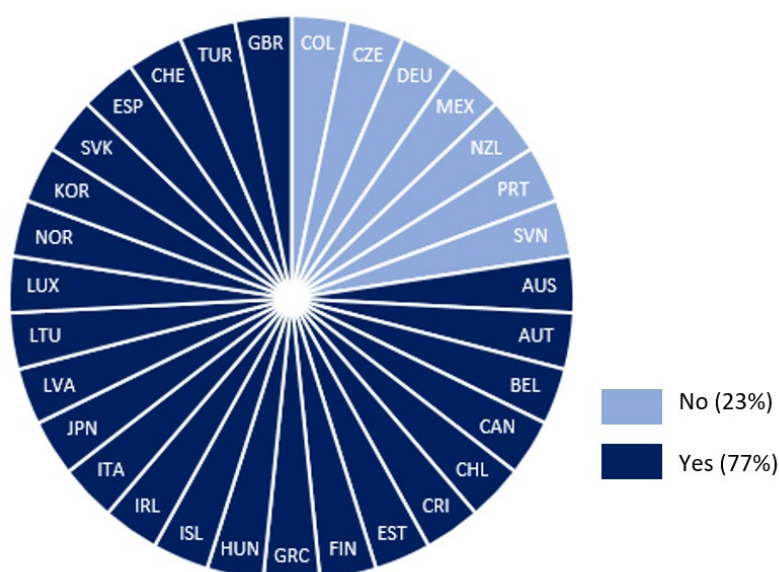
Source: (Scottish Government, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>); (Ministère de la transition écologique, 2021<sup>[31]</sup>); (Ministère de la Transition Écologique, 2021<sup>[32]</sup>).

### ***Steering long-term climate change action through infrastructure planning and investing***

Centres of government are the support structure serving the highest level of the executive branch of government. They provide elected officials with informed and expert analysis in order for them to make informed and evidence-based policy decisions. They also serve as a conduit for ministries and agencies to relay perspectives to decision-makers from their respective sectors and thus better inform top level priorities. The success of any government programme depends on the ability of the centre to oversee the quality of the policy process from policy analysis and development to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. It acts as a political-administrative bridge that facilitates coherence across government agencies and levels, serving as the eyes and ears of the government by maintaining relationships and relevant networks.

Long-term strategies for climate change often rely on infrastructure planning and investing. Data from the 2020 Survey on the Governance of Infrastructure shows that most surveyed OECD countries have become aware of the importance of ensuring policy coherence between long-term infrastructure plans and broader sustainable development objectives, in light of the commitments made under the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. The majority of OECD countries, 20 out of 30 countries (77%) have aligned their long-term infrastructure plan with environmental and climate action policies (see Figure 3.4).

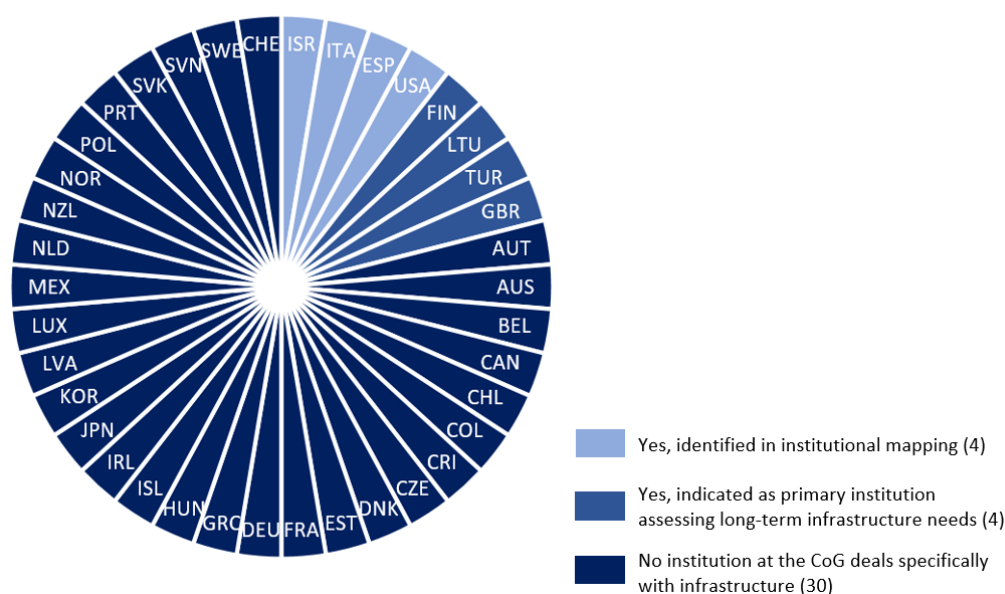
**Figure 3.4. Alignment of the Infrastructure Plan with Environmental or Climate Action Plans in OECD countries, 2020**



Note: Australia's data on long-term strategic vision for infrastructure are based on the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan. The 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan is a practical and actionable roadmap for infrastructure reform, developed by Infrastructure Australia, an independent advisory agency. The plan is not a politically sanctioned document. Croatia is working to ensure that all infrastructure projects financed from EU funds use the EU's "Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027". Germany's current Bundesverkehrswegeplan (Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan) is not aligned with climate goals, but the government intends to launch a dialog process with transport, environmental, business and consumer protection associations with the aim of reaching an of agreement on the priorities for implementing the plan. It is planned to develop a new Federal Transport Infrastructure and Mobility Plan 2040 on the basis of new criteria. Source: (OECD, 2020<sup>[33]</sup>).

The growing presence of centre of government institutions represents a shift towards a more co-ordinated approach to infrastructure policy and the governance of infrastructure more broadly. The increasing role that centres of government play in infrastructure can be linked back to the need to define high level priorities and objectives that require cross-government action and where sector boundaries are blurred e.g. due to new technologies or interconnectedness. Several OECD countries have created institutions that deal with infrastructure policy at the centre of government. A total of eight were identified both through the survey and through the institutional mapping exercise (Figure 3.5). The four countries identified through the survey, Finland, Greece, Lithuania and Türkiye, indicated that their centre of government body was the principal body responsible for assessing long-term infrastructure needs. The four countries identified in the institutional mapping exercise, Israel, Italy, Spain and the United States, have bodies that deal with infrastructure policy and provide advice and guidance to elected officials and/or the head of state.

**Figure 3.5. Presence of centre of government institutions responsible for infrastructure in OECD countries, 2020**



Note: n=38, Countries were asked "Is there a primary institution responsible for assessing the country's long-term infrastructure needs?"  
Source: (OECD, 2020<sup>[33]</sup>).

A number of CoG institutions in OECD Member countries, such as the Presidency of Strategy and Budget, overseen by Office of the Presidency of Türkiye and the Government Committee of Large-Scale Infrastructure in Greece have been established in the past five years.

This trend is in line with the recommendation issued by the OECD Council on the Governance of Infrastructure in 2020 on the need to co-ordinate infrastructure policy across levels of government. In creating bodies that deal with infrastructure in a comprehensive way, channels for dialogue and co-operation can be created between national and subnational governments. Investment is better managed and co-operation with local governments and public-private partnerships can be fully capitalised upon. It also allows governments to strengthen capacities for public investment and policy learning at all levels of government.

### ***Aligning planning with the budget***

While crucial to signal leadership and political commitment, simply enshrining environmental objectives in a robust strategic framework, in the form of a government programme or national development strategy, is not sufficient to truly steer government action towards these objectives. In this sense, the centre of government can play a crucial role in ensuring that national budget processes prioritise and resource policies that significantly affect environmental outcomes (OECD, 2022<sup>[34]</sup>). Successfully meeting long-term objectives in climate policy could require that centres of government strengthen the links between both the strategic planning and budgetary frameworks. For example, the Chilean Ministry of Finance's Financial Strategy Against Climate Change aligns planning with the budget by integrating climate considerations into planning and budgeting at all levels of government, setting clear goals for mitigation and adaptation, and applying sustainability criteria in project evaluation.

The OECD Centre of Government Review of Brazil highlighted that although planning and budgetary frameworks are inherently linked, it can be difficult to reinforce in a government where the functions are

not closely co-ordinated. A co-ordinated approach does not need to rely on a structural solution, such as a common structure for both functions, but nevertheless requires well-defined governance arrangements that articulate the functional responsibilities and expertise of each organisation, the flow of information that is to occur, and the decisions and outputs that are to result from the co-ordination (OECD, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). This report could offer learnings to other countries, for example that the centre could thus reinforce the linkage between budgeting and strategic planning by fostering such arrangements.

In recent years, green budgeting has emerged as a means for countries to integrate climate and environmental objectives into their budgetary and public financial management framework and practices, with the objective of better aligning budgetary policies with environmental goals. Green budgeting includes evaluating the environmental impact of budgetary and fiscal policies and assessing their coherence towards the delivery of national and international commitments (OECD, 2023<sup>[36]</sup>). More than a third of OECD countries surveyed in 2021 practiced some form of green budgeting, yet the three biggest impediments to its introduction at that time were the lack of existing methodology for assessing environmental effects, the lack of a modern performance budgetary framework, and a lack of political will (OECD, 2021<sup>[37]</sup>).

Launched in 2017, the OECD Paris Collaborative on Green Budgeting is a co-ordination platform for governments and experts, which aims to facilitate the design of new, innovative tools to assess and drive improvements in the alignment of national expenditure and revenue processes with climate and other environmental goals (OECD, 2023<sup>[36]</sup>).

Some countries which practice green budgeting employ green tagging to classify budget measures according to their climate and environmental impact and to enhance the transparency of governments' green actions (OECD, 2021<sup>[37]</sup>). France has notably made use of this tool as a first step in assessing the relationships between the budget and climate and environmental goals while Spain is doing something similar, mandating identification of identify resources in the State Budget for the fight against climate change and energy transition (Box 3.4), while Ireland is developing definitions under their climate action plan 2023 to identify and track government spending that may have a negative impact on climate and environmental outcomes.

### Box 3.4. Green budgeting in France and Spain

#### France

Since 2020, France has published an annual "Environmental Impact Report on the State Budget" as an annex to the initial budget bill. Each expenditure item is rated according to its impact on 6 environmental objectives:

1. Climate change mitigation
2. Climate change adaptation and natural risk prevention
3. Water resource management
4. Circular economy, waste management, prevention of technological risks
5. Pollution
6. Biodiversity

Each expenditure is subsequently graded or "tagged" by a mark ranging from 3 to -1 depending on its environmental impact.

In 2022, out of a total of EUR 586.6 bn in budgetary and fiscal expenditure, EUR 53.4 bn of expenditure was classified as having a potential impact on the environment. EUR 32.5 bn of 'green' spending will do so positively, EUR 4.5 bn of 'mixed' spending, is favourable to the environment on at least one axis but has negative effects on at least one other axis; and EUR 10.8 bn of expenditure has an unfavourable impact on at least one environmental axis.

#### Spain

The Spanish Climate Change and Energy Transition Law (7/2021) gives the mandate to identify resources in the State Budget for the fight against climate change and energy transition. The Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan also includes milestones focusing on Green Budget.

Furthermore, within the framework of the Technical Support Instrument of DG Reform (TSI), the European Commission assisted Spain through the "EU Green Budgeting Training" project with guidance on Green Budgeting trends in the European Union and the European Green Budgeting Reference Framework (GBRF). Therefore, a dedicated Working Group was established, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration and the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, aiming at designing the methodology, analysing the information provided by the line ministries, and preparing the first Green budget report in Spain. The Budget Directorate decided for this first exercise to focus on green expenses from some budget institutions (central government, public agencies and the Social Security System), and for the coming years plans to broaden the scope (public companies, tax benefits) and to introduce the brown dimension. This first exercise included the link between the SDG targets (the line ministries have been aligning their budgetary programmes with 2030 Agenda for some years now) and the 6 environmental objectives of the European Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities (Reg. EU 2020/852). The tagging of the climate and environmental contribution of budgetary programmes is weighted based on intervention fields from the European Recovery and Resilience Fund regulation (Reg. EU 2021/241).

As a result, for the first time, the Spanish 2023 Public Budget has been complemented with a report on budget alignment with the Ecological Transition, analysing its green dimension, with the intention of promoting and consolidating green budgeting in Spain as a fundamental pillar in the field of public sector sustainability. A cross cutting approach resulting on 33.721 million € contributing to the fight against climate change and to the energy transition.

Source: (Government of France, 2022<sup>[38]</sup>) (Government of Spain, 2023<sup>[39]</sup>).



Other countries such as Austria, Ireland and Greece have focused on incorporating consideration of the impact of measures on climate goals alongside considerations of efficiency through spending reviews (see Box 3.5), which are a tool used by almost all OECD countries to develop, assess, recommend and adopt policy options by analysing the government's existing expenditure and link these options to the budget process (OECD, 2023<sup>[40]</sup>). Some countries, including non-members (e.g. Egypt), also launched initiatives to better monitor green elements in public expenditures.

### Box 3.5. Green spending reviews in Austria, Ireland and Greece

#### Austria

The Federal Ministry of Finance has introduced gradually a green element to spending reviews as an additional tool of budgetary analysis and flexibility. As a first step green spending reviews are used for identifying efficiency and effectiveness potentials for a limited number of programmes. As of June 2020, Austria had adopted environmental impact assessments of budget measures. Austria also considered integrating green perspectives into recovery measures. In addition, Austria has a Green Finance Agenda that identifies strategic measures and areas of action that enable the scaling of innovative financial instruments for climate-friendly investments.

#### Ireland

Given that the focus of the NDP review is investment over the period 2021 – 2030 and that the Government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030, Departments were asked to take a common sense approach and prioritise the more certain, early to medium-term expected impacts of their proposals.

#### Greece

In 2019, a green dimension was added to spending reviews during a spending review pilot exercise. The spending review objective was to control and reduce energy consumption across the general government. In preparation for the pilot, government entities were asked to complete a template indicating current energy consumption and listing the potential actions they could take to reduce consumption. Recommendations ranged from digitalising government documents to reducing water consumption.

Source: (UNDP, 2021<sup>[41]</sup>), (OECD, 2021<sup>[42]</sup>), (OECD, European Commission and IMF, 2021<sup>[43]</sup>) (Government of Ireland, 2021<sup>[44]</sup>).

Based on the resources of the OECD's Paris Collaborative on Green Budgeting and experiences in OECD countries from implementing green budgeting, the OECD identified seven key areas to support the development of green budgeting practices in making progress toward climate and environmental goals in a 2022 report (Blazey and Lelong, 2022<sup>[45]</sup>). Additional work on green budgeting is currently being undertaken within the OECD, and its implications regarding centre of government institutions and functions is an area for continued research and discussion.

## 3.2 Co-ordinating the implementation of climate action from the centre

Centres of government play a key role in stewarding and guiding good outcomes through co-ordination of policy. The OECD's 2023 NetZero+ report recommends that government thus "take a genuinely whole-of-government approach to policymaking" and recognise "the important role of centres of government in driving a co-ordinated approach" (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>).



Yet, the co-ordination arrangements for climate change policy are heterogeneous across administrations. While in some countries the co-ordination of climate change policies is led by the centre, in others this is done in a decentralised way. Data gathered through OECD research shows that some centres of government are using dedicated units with the domestic co-ordination of climate and environmental policies. These units could be well positioned centrally to foster co-ordinated actions across the administration by having an overarching view of the stakeholders, objectives, and mandates that are part of the climate ecosystem.

The arrangements identified through the research for co-ordinating climate change policy at the national level can be grouped into two approaches: centralised and decentralised. The selection of an arrangement depends on elements such as the political context or administrative culture, and their level of complexity. These arrangements are:

- Centralised approaches:
  - **Lead unit situated at the centre of government or in a line ministry** as the primary body tasked with co-ordination
- Decentralised approaches (where centres of government play a role):
  - **Permanent intergovernmental committees or commissions**
  - **Climate “focal points”** within line ministries and government agencies to address gaps in interagency co-ordination for climate change
  - **Taskforces** specially put in place for the co-ordination of a specific policy area

While this presents a way to categorise a range of processes, in reality, often co-ordination mechanisms draw on a mix of both centralised and decentralised approaches, for example for vertical co-ordination.

### ***Centralised approaches to climate policy co-ordination***

#### *Co-ordination from the centre of government*

Whenever countries have allocated climate-related responsibilities in units or individuals at the centre of government, their mandate typically includes co-ordination functions. This centralised approach could help to prevent overlaps and foster synergies across the different actors in the system (UNPD, 2017<sup>[46]</sup>). In Poland, climate policy issues related to EU policy and law are handled by the part of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister responsible for the co-ordination of Poland’s European policy, reporting to the Minister for European Affairs. Austria established an interministerial steering group co-chaired by the Federal Chancellery and the Climate Ministry, which is dedicated to co-ordinating Austria’s positions on the European Union’s “Fit for 55” package”. Box 3.6 describes the cases of Australia, Estonia, France, Spain and the United States, where the unit at the forefront of the co-ordination efforts is in the centre.

### Box 3.6. Co-ordinating climate policy from the centre of government

#### Australia

The Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) Office in Australia co-ordinates the Government's national and international climate change initiatives. This is done in collaboration with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) as well as other relevant departments, agencies, and scientific institutions. Additionally, the PM&C supports the development and implementation of the Government's energy policy agenda and works with several institutions in the administration to foster adaptability to climate changes.

#### Estonia

In Estonia, since January 2022, the green transition policy has been centrally co-ordinated by the Government Office with the main aim to draw up a clear and concise action plan for the coming years to assure the effective implementation of green transition and climate policy. This was in response to the acknowledgement that climate and green transition policies need a fundamental shift in policy design and implementation. Estonia emphasised the importance of a government-wide approach, which considers the environmental, social, and economic aspects of these policies to be of major importance. In addition, as climate and green transition policies lead to fundamental transformation of the society and economy, the government-wide leadership of these processes needs to be assured.

To achieve their aim, three main steps were taken:

- Establishment of the Committee of Green Transition Policy (led by the Prime Minister, consists of relevant Ministers)
- Creation of an expert group, whose task was to make recommendations on the main priorities in green transition policy (consisted of experts, scientists, and private sector representatives)
- Establishment of the green transition team at the Government Office, whose responsibility was to co-ordinate the government-wide green transition process and to draw up the above-mentioned action plan.

All these steps were necessary to acquire the political mandate, which gave to the co-ordination team a lever to push all the sectors to set up their respective plans. Estonia noted that political leadership, flexibility and the need for sufficient time for changes to occur were key lessons learnt.

From autumn/September 2023 the Committee of Green Transition Policy and the whole process will be led by Minister of Climate, indicating a shift of approaches for the implementation.

#### France

In 2022, the President provided direction to the Prime Minister to lead inter-ministerial "ecological planning", and the Secretariat General for Ecological Planning was established to support her in this endeavour. The responsibility covers all areas of ecological transition (climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, natural resources and health & environment) and involves co-ordinating the elaboration of policy, organizing arbitrages, monitoring implementation including at the local level, and mobilizing stakeholders.

#### Spain

Given Spain's highly decentralised institutional set-up, Autonomous Communities (regional governments) are responsible for key competences related to the implementation of climate-related policies. Hence, a Commission for the Co-ordination of Climate Change Policies deals with the co-

ordination and collaboration between the State and the Autonomous Communities. It includes Groups of technical nature on inventories, mitigation, adaptation and emissions trading.

### **United States of America**

The Climate Policy Office is the co-ordinator of the whole-of-government approach to tackling the climate crisis in the United States. The Office is located in the centre of government and is led by the Assistant to the President and National Climate Advisor. Among the functions of the Office are:

- Co-ordinate the domestic policymaking process
- Co-ordinate domestic climate-policy advice to the President
- Ensure cohesiveness across policy decisions, programmes, and the President's goals
- Monitor the implementation of the President's domestic climate-policy agenda

The Office engages with other institutions and agencies from the administration to support the delivery of climate-related goals.

Source: (PM&C, 2023<sup>[47]</sup>); (The White House, 2023<sup>[48]</sup>); Information shared in the context of the OECD Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-Making at the Centre of Government; (France Stratégie, 2022<sup>[49]</sup>); (Government of the United States of America, 2023<sup>[50]</sup>).

Co-ordination from the centre conveys political support from the highest level - an important element that was shared by participants of the Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-making from the centre of government as a key enabler to advancing any priorities and enabling focus across Ministries, including climate objectives.

Considering the expertise needed to define ambitious and coherent objectives in governing procurement policies, public procurement authorities in all OECD countries rely on other government bodies. In 29 out of the 32 OECD countries with GPP strategies (90%), the national frameworks integrate a co-ordination mechanism to design, implement and revise GPP policies. In 16 countries (55%), they rely on inter-ministerial or *ad hoc* working groups convening different stakeholders, some of which are convened by the centre. In the United States, the alignment between GPP and environmental policies is assigned to the Executive Office of the President, one of the highest levels of government. In France, the General Commission for Sustainable Development, an inter-ministerial delegation for sustainable development run from the centre, is responsible for steering the National Sustainable Procurement Plan (PNAD) 2022-2025 (OECD, forthcoming).

## ***Decentralised approaches for co-ordination***

### *Intergovernmental committees or commissions*

One of the most widespread mechanisms for co-ordination in OECD Member countries are permanent bodies, such as interministerial or interdepartmental committees, councils, or working groups, including several led or facilitated at the centre of government. They can help identify potential trade-offs and synergies between different government actions and ensure that policies are coherent, and without unintended spill over effects. Participants in these bodies can include ministers, senior management, and public officials with technical background as well as other non-governmental stakeholders.

These structures can be grouped in two categories: bodies with decision-making powers, which tend to be composed of government officials, and bodies with a consultative role. The creation of these entities can also signal high-level leadership and political will if they are chaired by the head of government, or if participation at the ministerial level is mandatory and thus the role of the centre becomes paramount. This in turn is likely to enhance the level of attention and priority given to this issue at the line ministry level and

can help ensure policy alignment and foster the exchange of good practices. In some countries (4 out of 26 countries surveyed by the OECD – Belgium, Costa Rica, Estonia and Türkiye), these committees or commissions are underpinned by interministerial agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), which provide a legal framework for the collaboration.

**Table 3.2. Intergovernmental committees to advance climate policy**

Country	Intergovernmental committee(s) and/or commission(s)
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Climate Committee</li> <li>• Interministerial working groups on different climate issues</li> </ul>
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet committee on the Economy, Inclusion and Climate</li> <li>• Deputy Minister Committee on Climate Plan Implementation</li> </ul>
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interministerial Technical Team for Climate Change (ETICC)</li> <li>• Council of Ministers for Sustainability and Climate Change</li> </ul>
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-Sectoral Co-ordination Commission for Policy and Measures for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation</li> </ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological Defense Council</li> </ul>
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interministerial Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change</li> </ul>
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Action Delivery Board</li> <li>• Senior Officials Group on the Environment and Climate Change</li> </ul>
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Commission on Sustainable Development</li> </ul>
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-Departmental Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD)</li> </ul>
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interministerial Commission on Climate</li> </ul>
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdepartmental Executive Board</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisional Spanish Office for Climate Change</li> <li>• National Climate Council</li> <li>• Environment Interministerial Commission for the incorporation of ecological criteria in public procurement</li> </ul>
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-ministerial committee on climate change in Singapore</li> </ul>
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIAAC/Interministerial Commission for Air &amp; Climate Change</li> <li>• Council for Climate Action</li> </ul>
Türkiye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Change and Adaptation Co-ordination Board (İDUKK)</li> </ul>
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Committee on Climate Change</li> <li>• Climate Action Strategy Committee and Climate Action Implementation Committee</li> </ul>

Note: Selected examples. Box 3.9 and 3.10 outline further examples from the United Kingdom and Singapore.

Sources: (Prime Minister of Canada, 2022<sup>[51]</sup>); (Elysée, 2020<sup>[52]</sup>); (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 2018<sup>[53]</sup>); (European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), 2021<sup>[54]</sup>); (European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), 2021<sup>[55]</sup>); (Government of Spain, 2008<sup>[56]</sup>); (Government of Spain, 2018<sup>[57]</sup>); (Government of Ireland, 2022<sup>[58]</sup>); (Government of New Zealand, 2022<sup>[59]</sup>); (The White House, 2022<sup>[60]</sup>); (Ministry of Environment, 2022<sup>[61]</sup>).

### Box 3.7. Whole-of-government co-ordination structures on climate change – United Kingdom

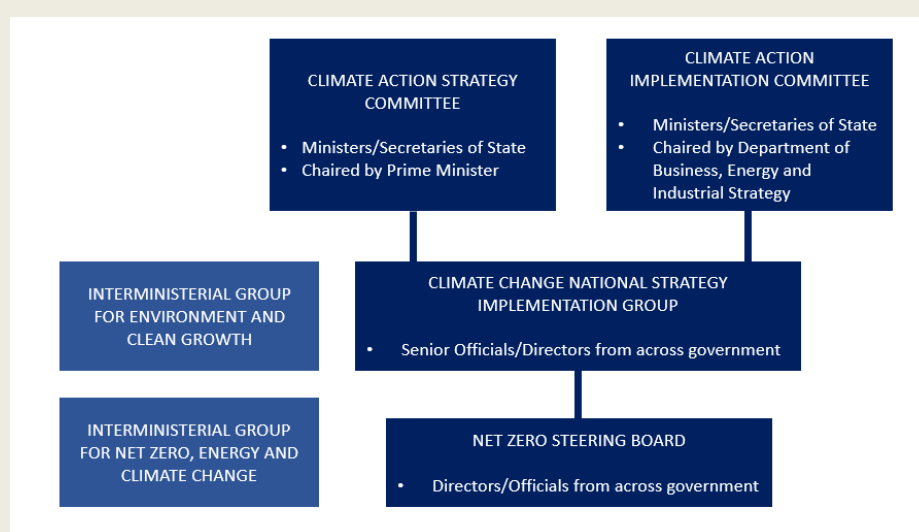
In 2020 the UK Prime Minister set up two high-level cabinet committees to deal with climate change and coordinate across government. On a bimonthly basis, the Climate Action Strategy Committee and the Climate Action Implementation Committee bring together senior officials from across government to discuss cross-cutting issues related to the government's approach to climate change (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>).

Chaired by the Prime Minister and comprised of six ministers/secretaries of state (the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs; the Minister for the Cabinet Office; the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy; the Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs; and the Minister of State for Pacific and the Environment), the Climate Action Strategy Committee is tasked with considering issues related to the delivery of the domestic and international climate strategy (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>).

The Climate Action Implementation Committee on the other hand considers issues related to the delivery of COP26, net zero and enhancing the country's resilience to climate impacts (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>). The Minister for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy chairs the committee and convenes its cross-departmental members, including all Climate Action Strategy Committee members (with the exception of the Minister for the Cabinet Office) as well as the Secretary of State for International Trade, the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Secretary of State for Transport as well as the Secretary of State for Scotland (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>).

The two cabinet committees are further supported by two other groups: the Climate Change National Strategy Implementation Group, and the Net Zero Steering Board. Chaired by the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, the National Strategy Implementation Group is made up of senior officials from line ministries and is in charge of implementing the UK's climate action strategy and dealing with both domestic and international aspects of mitigation and resilience (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>). The Net Zero Steering Board supports the National Strategy Implementation Group with the delivery of the net zero strategy.

Figure 3.6. Climate change co-ordination structures in the United Kingdom



Sources: (Climate Change Committee, 2022<sup>[63]</sup>), (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>), Figure adapted from (McKenzie and Kuehl, 2021<sup>[62]</sup>).

### Box 3.8. Inter-ministerial committee on climate change in Singapore

In Singapore, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change (IMCCC) facilitates whole-of-government co-ordination on climate change policies. Established in 2007, the IMCCC is chaired by the Senior Minister and Co-ordinating Minister for National Security and comprised of the Ministers of Finance, Sustainability and the Environment, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industry, Transport/Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations, National Development, as well as the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office/Second Minister for Finance/Second Minister for National Development.

The National Climate Change Secretariat established under the Prime Minister's Office acts as the secretariat to the IMCCC. The IMCCC is also supported by an Executive Committee comprising the permanent secretaries of the line ministries represented in the IMCCC. The Executive Committee also oversees the work of five working groups.

Figure 3.7. Climate change co-ordination structures in Singapore



Sources: (National Climate Change Secretariat, n.d.<sup>[64]</sup>), Author's own elaboration (figure).

Interministerial Agreements (NAs) are instruments for co-operation between two or more national institutions, also eventually involving co-operation with non-governmental stakeholders, to undertake activities defined either by law or policy to tackle environmental and climate challenges. Interministerial Agreements can have many different forms such as legal prescriptions, strategic documents and action plans, executive orders, etc. (Stefanov and Mineva, 2017<sup>[65]</sup>). Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) tend to be less formal, entailing general principles of co-operation describing broad concepts of mutual understanding, goals and plans shared by the parties, for example in the case of Ireland who have an MoU between the government and the Climate Change Advisory Council (Stefanov and Mineva, 2017<sup>[65]</sup>). Box 3.9 showcases the examples of the United States and Costa Rica, and their use of MoUs as a co-ordination mechanism for environmental policy, and the UK's approach in distributing and setting out clear responsibilities in delivering Net Zero. Additionally, Box 3.7 and Box 3.8 outline inter-ministerial co-ordination structures in the United Kingdom and Singapore, while Box 3.9 outlines other inter-ministerial mechanisms.

### Box 3.9. Interministerial collaborations

#### Costa Rica's bilateral agreements between line ministries

Costa Rica is an example of the way in which bilateral agreements can enhance coherence of government action on environmental and climate commitments. Costa Rica's Sectoral Agreements for the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are a response of the sectors to meet national and international commitments, such as the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement (OECD, 2019<sup>[66]</sup>). They are bilateral agreements among two sectoral ministries, the Ministry of Environment and Energy on the one hand, and the relevant sectoral ministry on the other. These agreements include concrete measures and actions to achieve a GHG emission reduction target for the sector, proposed by the sector after a multi-stakeholder process and updated every five years to regularly increase the ambition of the targets.

#### Clearly distributing roles and responsibilities in delivering the United Kingdom's Net Zero

The UK Climate Change Committee has recommended, in its 2022 Annual Report to the Parliament, that "the UK Government needs to clearly map out the different roles and responsibilities in delivering Net Zero. An example of good practice is the Infrastructure Strategy and its chart for distribution of roles and responsibilities. Cross-cutting guidance is required that sets out (i) what each actor's role is and who is responsible for what in delivering Net Zero between and in some cases within the Government's departments, as well as (ii) clearly identify the unit with responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring delivery across Government, and how this interacts with cross-Government structures such as the Climate Action implementation committee. This should abide by the following core principles:

- it should focus in stewarding the system and aim to delegate as much as possible to those with clear accountability for delivering;
- its activity and skill-base should be focused on co-ordinating actions that are more complex and require a whole system-approach, not on actual delivery. A small, agile, dedicated team could be helpful to achieve this;
- it needs to have sufficient seniority/empowerment to be able to bring together and influence decision-makers across Government."

#### The United States' Memoranda of Understanding in the environmental sector

MoUs are commonly used as a co-ordination mechanism in the United States, especially in the environmental sector. The United States Environmental Protection Agency notably has MoUs with key relevant central government bodies, including the Department of Agriculture and the Marine, Health and Safety Authority; National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management; Sustainable Energy Authority; Office of Public Works; Planning and Appeal Board (PAB); National Parks and Wildlife Service; and Central Statistics Office.

Sources: (Climate Change Committee, 2022<sup>[63]</sup>); (OECD, 2019<sup>[66]</sup>); (United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.<sup>[67]</sup>).

The increasing creation of interministerial committees or commissions can be explained by the ease to establish them, which might also be a disadvantage. The existence of an agreement alone does not guarantee increased levels of co-ordination or coherence, nor does it guarantee participation within them. For instance, in 2014 the OECD noted that in Colombia the frequent use of interministerial environmental co-operation agreements was useful to enable policy dialogue, but in most cases was quite general and lacked a roadmap for action (OECD, 2014<sup>[68]</sup>). Table 3.3 synthesises some of the risks that derive from an increasing proliferation of intergovernmental committees or commissions and some activities that could



help mitigate them. Co-operation agreements and MoUs related to climate and environmental issues are also widely used to promote vertical co-ordination between different levels of government, especially in federal countries (OECD, 2014<sup>[68]</sup>). The regularity and frequency of meetings of these committees are also a key factor of success impacting their effectiveness.

**Table 3.3. Ensuring that interministerial committees remain relevant**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigation actions</b>
Fragmentation of environmental and climate governance	Regulate the creation of committees through standards, sunset clauses, and evaluations
Overextending the capacity of line ministries to contribute effectively	Ensure adequate resources (e.g. staff, technical capacities, etc.), define clear expectations and responsibilities, and put in place transparent criteria to select participants
Difficulty translating into concrete actions the decisions or recommendations made by the committee or commission	Develop mechanisms to integrate the recommendations and decisions by the committees into the overall decision-making process
Focus on communications rather than on operational alignment	Define clear mandates, expectations, and milestones.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

### *Climate “focal points”*

One way of fostering co-ordination across the administration is by designating a climate focal point in line ministries and agencies. Focal points close the gap between the leading unit or agency on climate policy and their “home” institution. They facilitate the dialogue between the line ministry or agency that they represent and the entity responsible for the overarching climate agenda. This helps guarantee that line ministries have clear and up-to-date information regarding climate goals, while also ensuring that sectoral concerns are communicated to the relevant parties. One country that has decided to follow this approach to co-ordinate climate policies is Thailand, where all ministries and some agencies have a climate change co-ordination officer (UNPD, 2017<sup>[46]</sup>).

### *Taskforces*

Many countries are using taskforces that focus on specific areas or topics related to climate policies, initiatives, and implementation actions. Usually, taskforces bring together representatives from different institutions or sectors and have defined goals and targets, which allows for greater ownership among the different stakeholders and increases accountability. The composition of taskforces varies in line with its objectives. For instance, in the United States the National Climate Taskforce is composed by officials from different institutions of the Federal Administration (The White House, 2022<sup>[60]</sup>), while in Australia, the NetZero Economy Taskforce includes stakeholders from regional communities, industries, and unions (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023<sup>[69]</sup>) (see Box 3.10).



### Box 3.10. Co-ordination through taskforces

#### Australia's NetZero Economy Taskforce

Australia's NetZero Economy Taskforce is located in the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office and provides advice on how to attain a net zero economy in the regional communities of the country. In parallel, the taskforce also provides support in securing growth and employment opportunities in the regions.

#### The United States' National Climate Taskforce

The National Climate Task Force gathers over 25 Cabinet-level leaders from across the administration, with the objective of delivering on their four key objectives:

- Reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 50-52% below 2005 levels in 2030
- Reaching 100% carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035
- Achieving a net-zero emissions economy by 2050
- Delivering 40% of the benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities

The broad representation from senior officials of the administration helps to foster synergies by encouraging a co-ordinated approach to climate policy and by defining clear expectations and roles.

Source: (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023<sup>[70]</sup>); (The White House, 2022<sup>[60]</sup>).

## 3.3 Guiding sound climate policy development

The quality of inputs and evidence used to inform decisions around policies is important in supporting good decisions and outcomes. Governments use a range of different mechanisms to encourage sound policy development, explore the use of systemic or contemporary approaches for climate change policy, make systematic use of evidence and assessments during the policy cycle, to enhance achievement of outcomes. As evidence and inputs need to come from a wide range of stakeholders, co-ordinating and pooling knowledge from a wide range of stakeholders and representatives of different groups can enrich the quality of the policies and regulations while increasing buy-in for the project. Centres of government play a key role in guiding sound climate policy development, through establishing good frameworks and guidance, and in cultivating environments and mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders through policy, for quality reviews and for helping to lift overall performance.

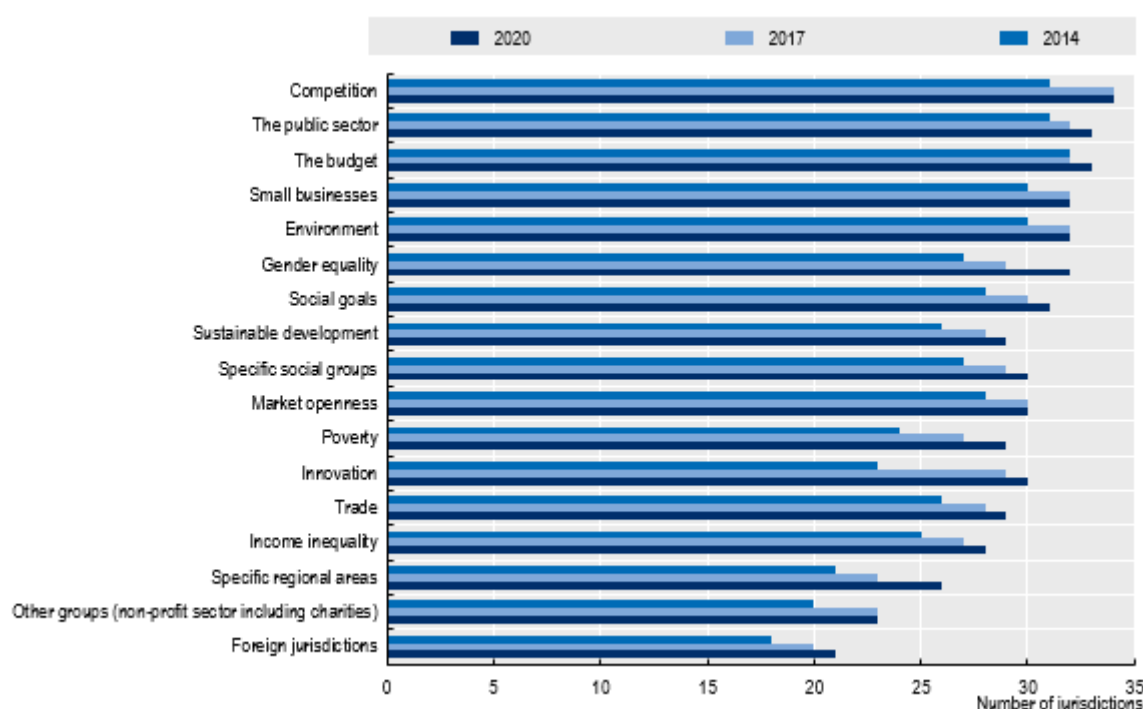
### ***Evidence-informed decision-making***

#### *Embedding climate considerations in the policy cycle*

Due to the complexity of policies, governments can struggle to fully consider the likely effects of the interventions they are developing, whether that be a policy, law or regulation, which could lead to unintended consequences. In an effort to lessen this risk, many countries have adopted or deployed various *ex ante* assessment mechanisms to ensure greater quality of government intervention, enhance accountability and transparency in the policymaking and decision-making processes (OECD, 2018<sup>[71]</sup>). Integrating environmental and climate consideration when identifying, comparing, and selecting possible policy solutions represents a challenging but necessary step to enable governments to take action. Some

countries have introduced requirements to assess the potential impacts of policies, laws, and regulations through a climate lens. According to data from the OECD Survey Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG), in 32 out of 35 cases, countries assess the regulatory impacts on the environment (see Figure 3.8) (OECD, 2021<sup>[72]</sup>).

**Figure 3.8. OECD regulators are increasingly assessing regulatory impacts on the environment**



Note: Data are based on 34 OECD Member countries and the European Union

Source: Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG) Surveys 2014, 2017 and 2021. In (OECD, 2021<sup>[72]</sup>)

Historically, regulatory impact assessments have focused on economic and social impacts. However, in recent years, a growing number of countries have started to expand these assessments to a broader range of regulatory impacts, particularly environmental ones. For example, in France, bill proposals must imperatively be supported by a study presenting the economic, financial, social, and environmental consequences of the bill's provisions (France Stratégie, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). On the other hand, the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada Secretariat calls regulators to integrate environmental considerations in the development of regulatory proposals. In cases where regulatory proposals have potential impacts on the environment, regulators must take steps to identify the scope of the impacts, engage with the public about environmental impacts, and describe how the implementation plan will address the potential impacts (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2018<sup>[73]</sup>).

Beyond the co-ordination, standardisation and methodological soundness of the assessment criteria, efforts could also be made to ensure the assessment criteria are also linked to a country's strategic objectives. In other words, *ex ante* assessments of policies and regulations could ensure that environmental impact information or data are in line with the government's stated goals. This approach can also enable governments to mainstream environmental concerns beyond mitigation. Strengthening and broadening the scope of *ex ante* appraisals of policies and regulations could represent an opportunity for countries to "climate proof" policy development. The inclusion of assessment criteria beyond mitigation could be a promising step towards decision-making practices that foster climate resilience.

### *Data and evidence as the basis for informed decisions on climate action*

The quality of policies is influenced by the evidence that is used to develop them, including for policies, initiatives, and regulations aimed at addressing climate change. Collecting, processing, and managing data on climate indicators and other relevant variables is important to guide policy development and evaluation as well as to build trust on the administration's actions. While for the formulation of the policy or regulatory proposal practitioners usually rely on information already available, this might not be possible when it comes to assessing the effectiveness of the intervention.

Discussions with countries within the framework of the OECD informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government identified data and evidence for decision-making as a key challenge and point of importance to respond to policy challenges and analyse potential trade-offs, such as climate issues. In response to the UNFCCC's sixth synthesis report of national communications, countries for instance also highlighted the "need to improve the availability and reliability of [emissions] data through active cooperation with relevant government departments and agencies, industry, NGOs and other institutions that provide, collect and maintain relevant data" (UNFCCC, 2005<sup>[4]</sup>). To advance research and strengthen data collection, government could consider increasing information-sharing across institutions as well as the transparent dissemination of results to policymakers and the public in order to continuously assess climate policy progress and the suitability of climate policy plans to changing circumstances (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>).

Likewise, adequate capacity-building and training are key elements to strengthen the collection, management and dissemination of data. Some public administrations are considering the right infrastructure to boost the availability of easily accessible and interoperable information including across sectors and borders. Finland has taken steps to increase the use of data in policymaking by creating a data room with cross-sectoral data in the centre of government, but that can be also accessed by ministries (see Box 3.11).

One of the main initiatives adopted by countries to foster engagement with stakeholders and gather evidence on climate action is the creation of policy advisory bodies. These bodies are thought to bring a longer-term and evidence-based perspective, thereby strengthening climate governance, and supporting policy credibility (Averchenkova and Lazaro, 2020<sup>[74]</sup>). Research shows that these bodies can guide and provide credibility to the policy formulation process not only through the collection and analysis of evidence, but also through their capacity to access different government branches and their ability to reach out to key stakeholders and citizens (EEA, 2021<sup>[75]</sup>). In the European Economic Area (EEA), climate change advisory bodies vary greatly across national jurisdictions regarding their institutional make-up, taking the form of both independent and in-house scientific councils, stakeholder engagement platforms and inter-ministerial roundtables. In January 2021, independent scientific councils accounted for a majority 12 of 29 existing climate change advisory bodies in the EEA (EEA, 2021<sup>[75]</sup>).

### Box 3.11. Finland's data room in the centre of government

Finland has developed a Data Room at the centre of government to support decision-making in the administration. It gathers information from a wide range of entities and topics and facilitates the use of evidence to inform decisions in an uncertain and rapidly changing environment. Information in the Data Room can be accessed by public officials in the centre and in line ministries and promotes the exchange of information across institutions.

The data room's work is organised in teams, include a team on energy issues and another one on the green transition, which provides an example of how centres of government are incorporating streams of evidence at the centre.

Key partners include not only the ministries but the national statistics office (Statistics Finland) and the Helsinki Graduate School of [Economics \(GSE\)](#).

Source: (VATT Institute for Economic Research, 2022<sup>[76]</sup>).

### *Using scientific advice in addressing climate change*

Centres of government are a key steward in guiding good practices including in ensuring that decision-making and policy actions are informed by evidence. This require linking policy decisions with the best available science. Scientific advice has an important role to play in all phases of the crisis management cycle - preparedness, response, and recovery. It can be particularly valuable during the sense-making period when a crisis occurs and develops. However, this value is dependent on the quality and timeliness of the advice and most importantly its relevance to the decisions that crisis managers and policymakers have to make during a crisis, for example the climate crisis (OECD, 2018<sup>[77]</sup>).

Centres of governments deploy a range of structures in using scientific advice, yet the role of the centre of government is not very detailed in the literature. In Chile, the work of central government institutions is supported by the scientific community through the Ministerial Scientific Advisory Committee on Climate Change, which provides relevant scientific information for decision-making as established in the Framework Law Project on Climate Change. It is also supported by non-state actors that include representatives from trade associations, non-governmental organizations, and the general public through the National Council for Sustainability and Climate Change (Government of Chile, 2021<sup>[78]</sup>). In Ireland, for example, the Climate Change Advisory Council who have an MoU with government provides scientific advice, including recommending carbon budgets. Ireland is currently strengthening their role in the Climate Act, for example their involvement in the Annual reviews. In Spain, their law on Climate Change and Energy Transition, has established a Committee of Experts on Climate Change and Energy Transition as the body responsible for evaluating and making recommendations on energy and climate change policies and measures, including regulations. These examples demonstrate the centre of government's role in an area crucial to managing the climate crisis - establishing mechanisms for fostering capacity for scientific advice in crises such as the climate crises.

Box 3.12 presents the example of the Danish Council on Climate Change scientific bodies and the United Kingdom's Climate Change Committee, which provide advice to the heads of government on climate change goals, particularly emissions targets. Both committees provide advice to the centre and the political layer of government to inform decision-making.

### Box 3.12. Climate Change Committees in Denmark and the United Kingdom

#### ***Danish Council on Climate Change***

As a means of facilitating Denmark's climate objective to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 80-95% by 2050 set up by the Climate Law of 2020, the Danish Council on Climate Change assists the Minister for Climate, Energy and Utilities in setting national and international climate targets and evaluation their progress and implementation on an annual basis. The Danish Council on Climate Change is also charged with drawing up climate policy recommendations to promote an impartial perspective to Denmark's climate trajectory and give robust expertise on the potential cost-effective means of achieving the transition to a low-carbon society by 2050. In addition to this 'watchdog' and 'advisor' role, the Danish Council can also be considered as a contributor to the public debate through its wide-ranging expertise and mandate to consult and involve concerned relevant parties such as the private sector, civil society and social partners to work on all climate-related topics (energy, buildings, transport, agriculture, environment, nature and the economy).

#### ***The United Kingdom's Climate Change Committee***

Set up by the Climate Change Act 2008, the United Kingdom's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is an independent and public expert committee tasked with advising climate national action and evaluating UK's progress towards its commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. The purpose of the CCC consists of conducting and providing solid scientific policy analysis for national authorities (governments and the parliament) to develop effective and long-term climate mitigation and adaptation trajectories in line with international emission budgets set by the Paris Agreement. The CCC's recent publications include "2021 Progress Report to Parliament" with policy recommendations on climate mitigation and adaptation to the Government, "Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk" reporting UK's primary climate-related risks and opportunities, as well as the "Sixth Carbon Budget" tracing the required pathway to Net Zero as set up by the Climate Change Act.

Source: (Climate Change Committee, 2023<sup>[79]</sup>); (Government of Denmark, 2022<sup>[80]</sup>)

New Zealand has a network of chief science advisors that are appointed to individual departments but form part of a cohort that can work together on overall government priorities, for example, the scrutiny of budget. Among other roles, they are charged with ensuring that government departments individually and collectively improve the evidence base underpinning their policy development and advice to ministers (see Box 3.13).

### Box 3.13. Network of science advisors in New Zealand

#### ***The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor***

The role of New Zealand's Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor (PMCSA), originally created in 2009, is established constitutionally and consists of a single member reporting directly to the prime minister. The PMCSA is seconded from an academic institution, which also physically hosts its office, but it has direct contact with the prime minister and the cabinet. Its responsibilities include strengthening the role of science in policy development, promoting education in sciences, technology, engineering and math, providing scientific advice to the Prime Minister and commissioning deliberative advice on selected topics.

#### ***The Chief Science Advisor Forum***

The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor brings together chief science advisors (CSAs) and departmental science advisors (DSAs) from across government agencies and institutions to create the Chief Science Advisor Forum. CSAs and DSAs, which have been appointed in major ministries and report to both their chief executive and to the PMCSA, provide strategic inputs on the development of evidence-based knowledge for public policy and assure the quality of internal research. In addition, they are engaged in the scientific review of specific budget bills through the Science Committee of Central Agencies. These scientific advisors are typically contracted by a government entity, or they may be seconded from a research institution into the role to provide senior independent advice. Regular meetings usually also include the government chief statistician, the chief economist (Treasury) as well as the president of the Royal Society of New Zealand and a deputy head of the State Services Commission representing the authority of the civil service.

The Chief Science Advisor Forum is a community of practice for science advisors that promotes the use of science to inform policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, and it provides a bridge between research and government policies. Sub-committees of the Forum typically co-ordinate research projects and advice, and research reports are published under the Forum's label or that of the PMCSA. The Forum advises the government on selected opportunities and risks highlighted by the research community and ensures both that advice from DSAs and the PMCSA is embedded in decision-making processes and that the advice is founded on the latest research projects and insights from science and technology. The Forum also works to address the priorities of minority groups by supporting diversity in the scientific system and by including Māori approaches as part of the evidence base.

Source: (Government of New Zealand, 2022<sup>[81]</sup>).

Additionally, PlanAPP, the Competence Centre for Planning, Policy, and Foresight in Public Administration has recently commenced a new initiative to co-create integrative strategies on water and soil with the scientific community and civic space. The centre is partnering with a research centre called Associate Laboratory CHANGE to support this work, as outlined further in Box 3.14.

### Box 3.14. Co-creating Integrative Strategies from the Centre for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change for the resources water and soil in Portugal

Water scarcity affects over 40% of the world's population. In Portugal drought circumstances are already limiting conditions, and the climate-change expectation is that these will aggravate. Water management goals are well defined in terms of public policy, but they are not being met. The issue is largely one of resource governance. In Mediterranean Europe, 25% of soils are at high risk of degradation, and 24% are subject to water erosion. To these factors, Portugal adds loss of soil organic matter. Unlike for water, there are no goals defined for soil, there is a lack of data, of consistent monitoring strategies, and a lack of programs to train/inform users and managers. The EU Soil Mission strategy provides guidelines that will be adapted by member states to lead a transition to healthy soils by 2030.

Given the urgency of solutions for these two resources for Portugal, it is important to design soil utilization and water governance strategies that can quickly mobilise relevant actors from each of the resources, and complement traditional decision-making governance processes.

PlanAPP contributes to improve public policy coherence and co-ordination, with a special focus on cross-cutting issues, by creating and/or contributing the necessary methodologies and competencies within the public structure. This project will stimulate dialogue and collaboration between the three actors of public policy (decision-makers, scientists, and civil society) to produce co-created, shared outputs (policy briefs). Along with scientific knowledge, the Associate Laboratory CHANGE, will contribute expertise in mediation and co-construction processes. Because they will be co-created, the objectives and instruments proposed for water and soil will be recognised by the various actors and players involved, enhancing their chance of being adopted while minimising tensions among actors.

A potential challenge could be that policy briefs developed through the partnership do not have mandatory applicability by decision-makers, and thus consideration of how this work informs decision-making processes will be important. Yet, it is hoped that this project will stimulate dialogue and collaboration between the three actors of public policy introducing working methodologies that may improve the quality of public policy dealing with complex problems.

Source: Information shared by public official from PlanAPP, Government of Portugal (unpublished).

### *Engaging with citizens for climate action*

Tackling the climate emergency is a complex task that governments cannot do alone. Many governments have set ambitious goals and targets on this topic, many of which require action from businesses and community. Addressing increasingly complex problems requires governments to pool knowledge, expertise, and insights from representatives of different sectors, with diverse backgrounds and varying interests. Stakeholders are crucial to improve the quality of policies and to increase buy-in from all relevant actors for the implementation phase and can better position governments to identify, design and steer policies around climate change. International attitudes towards climate policies show that 75% of surveyed respondents perceive climate change as “an important problem” and that their country “should take measures to fight” it (OECD, 2022<sup>[82]</sup>). In this context, strengthening channels for citizens to influence government action and partake in the policy development and planning process is an important consideration to respond to the climate crisis. The meaningful participation of citizens may also be a way to respond to and engage with the relatively new climate protest movements that exist in some member countries (e.g. in Germany). Further, participatory approaches, often used at the local level, are offering

positive and meaningful contributions to climate change action, such as renewable projects, and could be a learning for citizen-centred engagement from the centre.

There is no fit-for-purpose approach to guarantee the effective participation of stakeholders and citizens in policymaking processes, as these need to be tailored adequately to address the institutional, cultural, and political variables specific to each country. Governments typically deploy a patchwork of structures. Multi-stakeholder bodies for climate policy can be formal or informal, institutionalised or *ad hoc*, depending on the existing legal and regulatory framework of a given country and the type of issue discussed (ICAT (Initiative for Climate Action Transparency), 2020<sup>[83]</sup>). These initiatives can take various form, from a stakeholder engagement platform tied to a supranational commitment or event, a permanent stakeholder engagement platform embedded in the national or local climate governance framework, to a punctual citizen assembly. Platforms and mechanisms to engage stakeholders need to be carefully designed and potentially integrated within existing governance frameworks, to ensure they become means of empowerment for the public (Uittenbroek et al., 2019<sup>[84]</sup>). Further, there are also complexities that can arise, for example, interactions with powerful actors and economic players and how this may influence policymaking in relation to climate change. The centre's involvement in stakeholder engagement activities is varied and includes engaging directly with stakeholders to inform policy and regulatory decisions and setting standards for the rest of the administration. Data from the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government indicates that 38% of respondent countries split the leadership of stakeholder engagement on policy development between the centre and a line ministry; 19% of respondent countries reported significant variation in stakeholder engagement leadership among public agencies (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>).

Centres of government generally play a role in pooling knowledge to inform decisions and to develop policies and regulations that are efficient in achieving their intended objectives. By gathering and using the feedback and ideas from representatives of different sectors and groups to support decisions, centres of government can increase transparency and trust in their actions. It is important, though, to underscore that effective stakeholder engagement goes beyond collecting comments from different actors. It implies an active effort from the administration to gather substantive inputs from relevant groups and requires transparency in the management of the information provided as part of the consultation. Responsiveness to citizens consultation is important given its role as a key driver of people's trust in public institutions (OECD, 2022<sup>[85]</sup>).

Centres of government are at the forefront of supporting high-quality citizen engagement and in creating a more objective, constructive, and solution-oriented approach to policymaking that aims at delivering better public outcomes (Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, 2019<sup>[86]</sup>) (Wellstead, 2022<sup>[87]</sup>). Citizen assemblies are one mechanism for countries to engage with stakeholders. Ireland recently held two citizen assemblies on climate change and biodiversity loss, Austria has a climate assembly and dialogue, while Box 3.15 presents the examples of Canada, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, where citizen assemblies were carried out with the objective of identifying recommendations to achieve national climate objectives. By co-ordinating and hosting such assemblies within their own institution, centres of government can best communicate the cross-cutting nature of climate policy issues to citizens and ensure a whole-of-government implementation of citizen interests. For instance, in Luxembourg, the *Klima-Biergerrot*, or Citizen Climate Council, was intentionally organised close to the centre rather than in proximity to a line ministry on the understanding that climate change is a horizontal, multi-sectoral issue (Government of Luxembourg, 2022<sup>[88]</sup>). In Chile, the design and construction process of their long-term strategies on climate involved a multi-actor, multi-level, cross-cutting, and transparent participation process through various participatory instances. The aim was to build an inclusive and representative vision, considering different instances of co-ordination, dialogue, analysis, discussion, and involvement of the public sector, local authorities, civil society, social organizations, youth, indigenous peoples, trade associations, private sector, and academia (Government of Chile, 2021<sup>[78]</sup>).



A large majority of 79% of the parties to the Paris Agreement also report to have formal arrangements in place for the consultation with domestic stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which contain information on targets, and policies and measures for reducing national emissions and on adapting to climate change impacts and represent the basis for countries to achieve the objectives of the Agreement (UNFCCC, 2022<sup>[89]</sup>).

Engaging citizens effectively also entails communicating with and listening to them throughout the policy cycle (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). As climate-related policies for transition and adaptation reach into all aspects of policy and public life, communication approaches can benefit from becoming more integrated and streamlined under the leadership of the centre. A more co-ordinated and whole-of-government approach to embedding overarching messages and narratives in all public communication on climate policy can facilitate a better understanding of government action and encourage compliance, for instance when behaviour change is required. It can also help mitigate the risks of message fatigue and potential swings in public support for transition policies that have long time-horizons.

### Box 3.15. Engaging with citizens for climate-related issues

#### Canada

In the creation of the National Action Plan on Open Government 2022-2024, the Government of Canada provided citizens with the occasion to participate via virtual feedback and comments on the Plan's commitments. Participation took place on the "Let's Talk Open Government" website, through which citizens could engage in several discussions of interest, including a topic on climate change and sustainable growth. Citizens were provided a summary of the topic, as well as questions to stimulate open debate. The Government of Canada additionally hosted a series of live consultation sessions over a five-week period in November and December 2020. The consultation data has since been made public as part of the government's initiatives as a member of the Open Government Partnership. Other examples of engagement with citizens on climate-related issues include the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which recognizes the importance of engagement to inform the development of climate plans and targets. Moreover, the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan reflects submissions from over 30,000 citizens and the National Adaptation Strategy was also informed by public, partner and expert input.

#### Luxembourg

Klima-Biergerrot (KBR), a participatory citizen's initiative, was established in January 2022 as a form for citizens to express their opinions and expectations on how climate policy in Luxembourg should evolve. It involved representative sample of 100 people. The government made a conscious decision to place the KBR within the centre of government (the Ministry of State in Luxembourg) rather than the Ministry of the Environment, based upon the recognition that climate change is a horizontal issue calling for policy action across multiple sectors. The recommendations derived from this activity were presented and discussed in the Parliament and will inform the next Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan.

#### Spain

On January 21, 2020, the Council of Ministers of Spain approved the Declaration of Climate and Environmental Emergency, in line with the widespread consensus of the scientific community, which demands urgent action to safeguard the environment, health, and safety of the citizens. One of the commitments of the Declaration is to strengthen the existing participation mechanisms by convening a Citizens' Assembly for the Climate, a commitment enshrined in Law 7/2021 of May 20, on climate

change and energy transition. The Assembly contributes to the decision-making process on climate change by providing the citizens' perspective.

The Assembly is designed as a forum for citizen participation, a deliberative participatory exercise to generate reflection, collective knowledge, and to enable citizens to be informed, deliberate, and reach consensus on the necessary solutions for the significant transformations required to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and to make the country more resilient to the impacts of climate change, all in a fair and supportive manner. The goal is to establish a social dialogue about the major issues entailed by the ecological transition, focusing on the question that will mark the Assembly's inaugural mandate: "Creating a safer and fairer Spain in the face of climate change." How do we achieve this?

The Assembly consists of 100 individuals randomly selected to reflect the diversity of Spanish society. Six working sessions have been conducted in which participants have undergone a preliminary phase of learning concepts and general reflections related to the energy transition, followed by an intermediate phase of deliberation and debate, as well as a final phase of crafting recommendations that have been integrated into a final report submitted to the Government and the Congress of Deputies.

### United Kingdom

In June 2019, the United Kingdom held the *Climate Assembly UK*, with the objective of examining a pressing question, "How should the UK meet its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050?". The assembly gathered 108 members from different backgrounds and representatives of the UK population. The work of the assembly is supported by 25 principles developed by the participants. The assembly convened during six weekends where they heard presentations on one of the ten topics up for discussion. One of the outcomes of the assembly is a series of key recommendations to attain the UK's goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Source: (House of Commons, 2019<sup>[91]</sup>); (Government of Luxembourg, 2022<sup>[88]</sup>); (Government of Canada, 2022<sup>[92]</sup>).

Centres of government sometimes also play a role in setting requirements for citizen/stakeholder engagement in the broader policy development framework of a country and devising associated quality standards for these exercises. In Canada for instance, the Privy Council Office has elaborated and published a wide array of engagement tools and resource, including a Designing Public Engagement Experiences toolkit and a Public Engagement Community of Practice available to all ministries and public agencies (Government of Canada, 2020<sup>[93]</sup>). In other cases, the centre might financially support the initiative. In Ireland for instance, the Citizens Assembly is not institutionally anchored in a specific department, but has its own secretariat drawn from the civil service and financed by the Department of the Taoiseach.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in some countries the centre is the lead institution in steering stakeholder engagement for climate-related policies. In Luxembourg, for instance, the Klima-Biergerrot (KBR), a participatory citizen's initiative, was established in January 2022 as a way for citizens to express their opinions and expectations on how climate policy in Luxembourg should evolve. The government made a conscious decision to place the KBR within the centre of government (the Ministry of State in Luxembourg) rather than the Ministry of the Environment, based upon the recognition that climate change is a horizontal issue calling for policy action across multiple sectors.<sup>3</sup>

### *Communicating clear and trusted messages*

Recent challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic have brought to light the obstacles governments face in ensuring clear communication and coherent messages during crises, lessons in which can be considered for climate change, given it is often considered as a crisis. Public communication strategists

<sup>2</sup> Information gathered in the context of a country project with the Republic of Ireland

<sup>3</sup> Information shared in the context of the OECD Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-Making

found themselves struggling to maintain clear, coherent and accurate messaging amid an unprecedented “infodemic” (OECD, 2020<sup>[94]</sup>). Further, disinformation strongly impacted countries’ responses to the pandemic by eroding trust in government, amplifying fears and resulting in harmful behaviour (OECD, 2022<sup>[95]</sup>). Maintaining effective public communication in times of crisis helps to uphold “the government function to deliver information, listen and respond to citizens in the service of the common good” (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). Against this background, the UNFCCC found that most parties to the Paris Agreement highlighted the importance of communication in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (UNFCCC, 2005<sup>[4]</sup>). They “emphasized the need to raise awareness and knowledge in climate change in all areas of society, including schools, universities and other research institutions, and the media in order for all stakeholders to play an important role in advocating policies and/or implementing climate change measures” (UNFCCC, 2005<sup>[4]</sup>). The OECD Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Critical Risks also recognises the gravity of this issue, and guides members to a two-way communication between government and stakeholders, ensuring that information sources are accurate and trusted, and the information is made accessible in a manner appropriate to diverse communities, sectors, industries and with international actors (OECD, 2014<sup>[96]</sup>).

Centres of government are playing greater roles in facilitating government communication, with survey data indicating 13 of 26 surveyed centres of government have increased their role in communications from 2019 to 2023 (OECD, forthcoming). Some countries have sought to embed values of trusted communications directly into their emergency planning protocols; setting such standards can be considered a key function of centre-type functions.

- In the **United Kingdom**, the emergency management protocol stresses that “a strong crisis communication strategy can keep stakeholders informed, build and maintain public trust in the government and ensure accurate information is being reported by the media” (Government Communication Service, 2018<sup>[97]</sup>).
- Furthermore, the Government of **Canada**’s Emergency Management Framework remarks that decisions “must be weighed carefully within the context of emergency management ethics and values. Whole-of-society partnerships based on effective collaboration, co-ordination and communication are key” (Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management, 2011<sup>[98]</sup>).
- Further efforts in countries include the codification of communication procedures, a principal example being **Costa Rica**’s crisis communication decision tree. The multi-level tree intends to unify process management and communication resources to ensure that the Ministry of Communication can quickly and effectively react to major crises that could alter government functioning (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>).
- In **Australia**, multi-purpose arrangements for co-ordinating communication and disseminating timely information to the public in times of crisis is codified in the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). Streamlining crisis communication protocols along both ethical and procedural lines allows the centre to ensure messaging coherence across government.

Promoting transparency and access to information is also important for issues of accountability and can help “ensure risk management decisions are better accepted by stakeholders to facilitate policy implementation and limit reputational damage” (OECD, 2014<sup>[96]</sup>). Moreover, maintaining strong public communication with citizens can clarify why certain crisis measures were chosen over alternatives, which, in turn, can repair relationships between governments and citizens (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). To this end, the OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Critical Risks recommends governments a whole-of-society approach to risk communication and to foster honest and realistic dialogue between stakeholders, provide public access to information and encourage openness about assumptions behind analyses (OECD, 2014<sup>[96]</sup>). In Denmark, the centre actively communicated the exemption of “opinion-shaping assemblies” related to COVID-19 measures from pandemic-related gathering restrictions, to reassure the

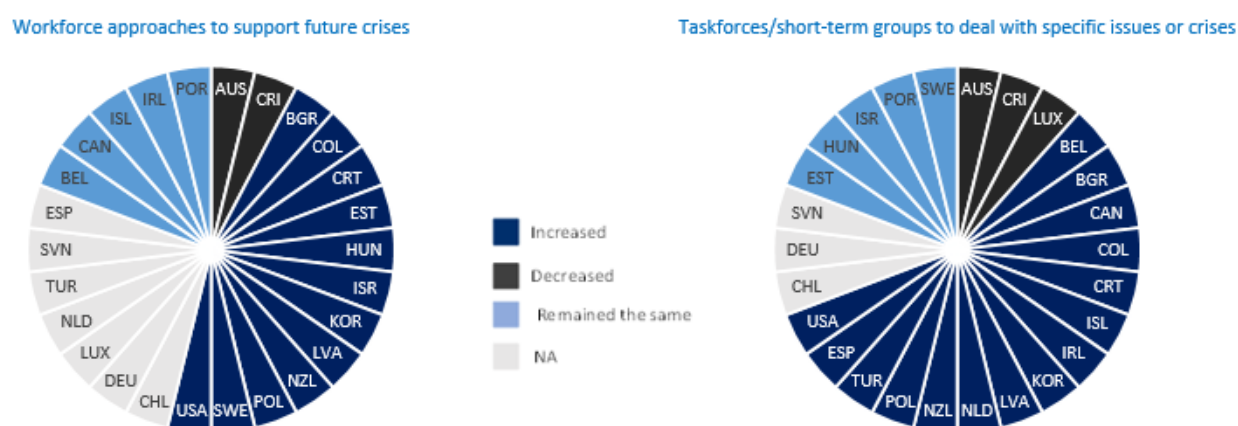
public of their right to engage in political dialogue during the crisis (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). Other countries have launched national dialogue initiatives to foster space for open and transparent communication between government and its citizenry. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Chancellery of Germany organised Citizens' Dialogues to allow citizens the opportunity to send inquiries directly to the Chancellor, who in turn was granted a unique platform to reassure citizens of public service programmes (OECD, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>).

### Utilising strategic foresight for supporting better policy for climate action

According to the World Economic Forum, climate-related risks are among the top 10 most severe risks in the next two years; however, over a 10-year period, their relevance increases and become the top four most pressing issues (World Economic Forum, 2023<sup>[99]</sup>). Additionally, the UN has stated that "climate change is the defining crisis of our time" (UNHCR, 2020<sup>[100]</sup>). The far-reaching severity of the impacts of the climate emergency calls for broad and whole-of-government actions that support the development of future-fit policies, and strategies to prepare for the unfolding future of climate change. In a context considering climate change as a crisis, centres of government harness innovative public governance tools and draw on techniques to utilise contemporary approaches to anticipating and planning for climate change to drive effective and efficient public governance processes and practices (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>).

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Critical Risks recommends that members build preparedness through foresight analysis, risk assessments frameworks, to better anticipate complex and wide-ranging impacts (OECD, 2014<sup>[96]</sup>). Over the last three years, governments, including centres of governments, have increased the number of resources that they devote to dealing with crises such as climate change. Data from the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government shows that 46% of centres have increased their workforce approaches to prevent and tackle future crises and 57% have increased the use of *ad hoc* taskforces or other short-term groups to deal with specific issues or crises (Figure 3.9).

**Figure 3.9. Changes in the structure of the centre of government from 2019-23**



Note: n=26; Respondents to the survey were asked "From 2019 to 2023, have the following factors about the structure and role of the centre of government increased, decreased, or remained the same?"

Source: Preliminary data from (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>), Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government.

This reflects an increased level of awareness and a stronger role of centres of government in addressing climate change. It also indicates a progressive shift towards preventive action and a stronger focus on long-term priorities (Frederick, Loewenstein and O'Donoghue, 2002<sup>[101]</sup>). By analysing potential trajectories, probabilities and potential outcomes (for example through strategic foresight approaches),

governments could be better positioned to anticipate and prepare for the future and incorporate these issues into climate change policy development and action (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>). Box 3.16 outlines key definitions of this approach.

### Box 3.16. Future-looking approaches: key definitions

#### ***Strategic foresight***

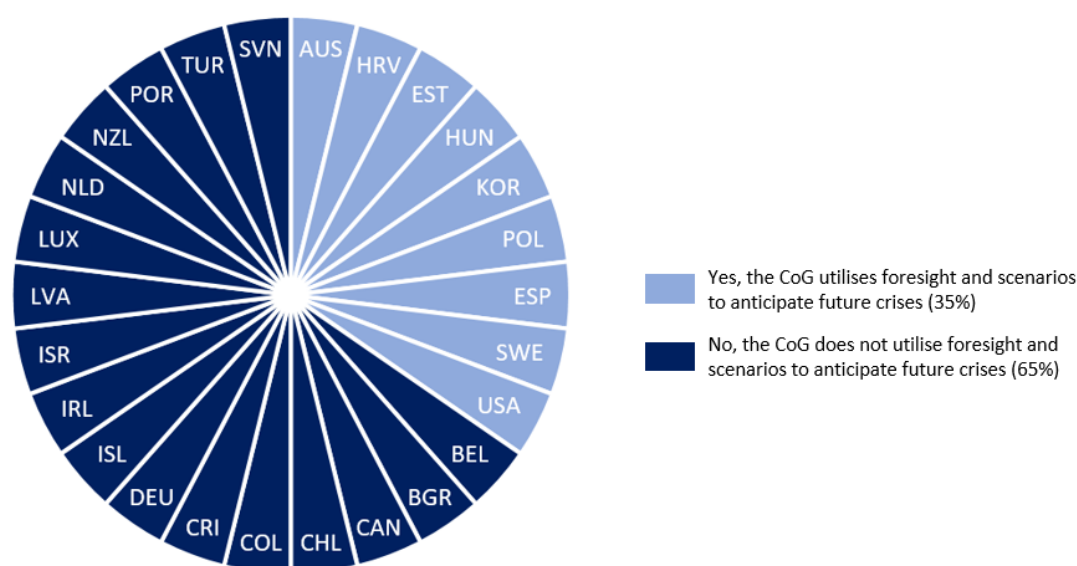
Strategic foresight refers to the structured and explicit exploration of multiple futures in order to inform decision-making. It makes use of a broad range of methodologies that always need to be tailored to the specific context. Systematically using these tools for the development of strategic plans and identification of priorities can help administrations become more climate resilient. Among the most common methods are:

- Horizon scanning: Seeking and researching signals of change in the present and their potential future impacts. Horizon scanning is the foundation of any strategic foresight process. It can involve desk research, expert surveys and a review of existing “futures” literature.
- Megatrends analysis: Exploring and reviewing large-scale changes building in the present at the intersection of multiple policy domains, with complex and multidimensional impacts in the future.
- Modelling: modelling different scenarios or situations
- Scenario planning: Developing multiple stories or images of how the future could look in order to explore and learn from them in terms of implications for the present.
- Visioning and back casting: Developing an image of an ideal (or undesirable) future state and working backwards to identify what steps to take (or avoid).

Source: (OECD, 2021<sup>[102]</sup>); (OECD, 2019<sup>[103]</sup>).

While the national context plays an important role determining the best configuration for the foresight ecosystem, in some countries a centralised set-up with the foresight unit sitting in the centre of government are being used (OECD, 2021<sup>[102]</sup>). Yet, the use by the centre of foresight and scenarios to anticipate future crises remains relatively low. Data from the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government shows that 35% of centres use these tools (Figure 3.10). This section will explore the main characteristics of innovative and contemporary methodologies and how they can be employed by centres of government and other government agencies to consider the long-term trends on climate change that can support more future-fit and considered policy development.

Figure 3.10. The CoG's use of foresight and scenarios to anticipate future crises



Note: n=26; Respondents to the survey were asked "What is the role of the CoG in preparing and managing crises? [Utilising foresight and scenarios to anticipate future crises]".

Source: Preliminary data from (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>), Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government.

Some countries across the OECD are using strategic foresight to support their efforts to prepare for climate change, including through providing information to the centre to support policy decisions. Strategic foresight can be an important way of gathering scientific advice, emphasising policies that are backed by evidence and analysis and support future-proofed policy options that consider disruptions (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>). In Ireland, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has used futures approaches to generate a series of strategic documents to address the impacts of climate change (OECD, 2021<sup>[104]</sup>) which is shared with decision-makers in centre of government functions.

In Spain, the National Office of Foresight and Strategy of the Government of Spain is an entity responsible for analyzing and studying possible future scenarios that may affect the country in various areas, including climate change and environmental sustainability. Its main objective is to anticipate challenges and opportunities related to climate that may arise in the future and provide recommendations and strategic information to the government for informed decision-making on climate policies and sustainability. The National Office of Foresight and Strategy is responsible for the drafting of the Agenda 2050, a long-term strategic initiative aimed at establishing a framework of policies and actions that will enable Spain to move towards a greener, more inclusive, and competitive economy aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Box 3.17 showcases the Finnish case, where futures approaches have been used for years in the centre of government to determine emerging disruptions and set priorities based on the most relevant challenges.



### Box 3.17. Finland's Government Report on the Future: Incorporating futures approaches in decision-making

Since 1993, the Government of Finland prepares a Report on the Future with the objective of highlighting key issues for the future. The document is composed of two sections, first it focuses on the ministries' foresight activities and, based on the results of the first part, it zooms in on specific issues and analyses potential solutions. Using a participatory dialogue approach, the document is developed by the ministries' joint foresight working group located in the Prime Minister's Office and collaborates with the National Foresight Network and the Government Foresight Group. Once published, the report is discussed by Parliament and the Government and supports the development of strategic plans by ministries.

The most recent report, released in 2023, aims to build a common understanding of what Finland will look like in the next decades, looks at how Finland can mitigate climate change, combat biodiversity loss and transition to a low-carbon economy in a just manner and focuses on how securing opportunities of future generations.

Source: (Prime Minister's Office, 2023<sup>[105]</sup>).

### ***Tackling climate change using systems approaches***

The complex nature of the climate crisis is starting to see governments interested in new approaches. Innovative approaches that emphasise holism, iteration and experimentation can support the development of overarching goals over a long-term horizon, which operate as drivers for public action (OECD, 2021<sup>[106]</sup>). Although the benefits of these approaches are clear, their uptake by centres of government is still low. According to information collected through the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government, integrating contemporary methods into the policy development practice is a major challenge for 11% of CoGs and 30% consider it a moderate challenge (OECD, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>).

Systems-thinking approaches are a set of processes, methods and practices that aim to address the properties and dynamics of complex systems in a holistic and integrated manner (Hynes, Lees and Müller, 2020<sup>[107]</sup>). Its increasingly popular twin, "design thinking", generally describes the process of ordering information in complex systems in such a way that leads to action. Systems thinking is one approach that some centres of government are using as part of their toolbox to develop climate change policies. This methodology takes into consideration the myriad of stakeholders, the way they interact, and the potential impacts of the governments' actions. Applying systems thinking to climate policy intends to offer decision-makers a clearer view of the dynamics and play. This encourages the use of scenarios to test potential programmes or initiatives and identify critical actions, unintended impacts, trends, and the relationships between elements of the system. These insights are particularly important when it comes to calibrating the public action, updating assumptions that underpin policy and regulatory decisions (for example to introduce new technologies), or to bring in new forms of evidence. This type of systems approach has now been extended into missions-based policy and innovation approaches that some governments have started to use. Box 3.18 showcases the example of the UK, which used a systems-based approach to define its Net Zero Strategy, a strategy which the centre has facilitated, and created key structures at the centre to support the implementation. Other countries, such as Ireland are also using similar approaches at a national level, for example in the SFI National Grand challenges program.

### Box 3.18. Using systems approaches to support climate objectives

#### *The UK's Net Zero Strategy*

The UK Government introduced systems approaches to the development of policy aimed at achieving the net zero goal. Among the elements considered were:

- Establishing forums for delivering shared net zero goals and identifying key issues through cross-system governance structures, including two new Cabinet committees
- Working towards a shared understanding of interdependencies and risks across different parts of the net zero challenge, for example through £2 million funding from the Shared Outcomes Fund to develop systems tools;
- Testing and determining feasible net zero scenarios with our whole energy systems modelling suite, and supporting our work to identify high leverage, systemic actions such as CCUS that will be necessary in a wide range of scenarios.

Source: (Government of the United Kingdom, 2021<sup>[15]</sup>).

#### *Mission-oriented approaches to climate change*

In efforts to address the many policy challenges associated with climate change actions particularly in terms of co-ordination between policy areas – some countries are adopting different forms of mission-oriented policy approaches. Missions are ambitious, time-bound, concrete and measurable targets that can mobilise resources across and beyond government to drive innovation towards a specific societal challenge. In turn, mission-oriented innovation policies (MOIPs) act as co-ordinated packages of policy and regulatory measures specifically tailored to mobilise innovation to address well-defined societal objectives – notably reaching net-zero targets – in a defined timeframe. The potential benefits include moving from siloed to more holistic and integrated policy responses, engaging and mobilizing broad coalitions of stakeholders across sectors, and integrating different complementary policy instruments towards a unified goal.

Depending on the vertical division of responsibilities in country's government hierarchies, the centre of government can have varying levels of involvement in the design and implementation of such policies. While the centre can play a leadership role in initiating missions, it can also act in more of a co-ordinating capacity, notably in countries in which ministries or agencies have a dominant role in sectoral policy design or strong subnational governments. Either way, the mandate and support of the centre carries significant weight to mobilise different parts of government and external stakeholders.

A recent survey of mission-oriented innovation policies (OECD, 2023<sup>[108]</sup>) aimed at reaching net zero emissions suggests that there is still a way to go to realise the hoped-for frameworks for systemic collective action that manages to also mobilize the private sector. Yet it also shows marked improvements in terms of policy design in terms of stronger orientation, broader co-ordination and higher integration of policy relative to traditional STI policy mixes. This highlights a need to identify and strengthen government capacity to adopt green mission practices (e.g. innovation portfolio management and multi-stakeholder co-design) as well as the organisational structures and capacities needed to make it effective. Box 3.19 presents two examples of centre of government-led mission-oriented innovation policy in France and Germany.



### Box 3.19. Example of centre of government-led mission-oriented innovation policy

#### **France's Acceleration Strategies**

The French mission-oriented Acceleration Strategies (*Stratégies Nationales d'Accélération*) are part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Investment for the Future Programme (PIA 4), an investment of EUR 20 billion over five years (2021-25) dedicated to supporting innovation, research and higher education. Multiple goals are related to the climate and ecological transition, such as promoting advanced technologies for energy systems, decarbonising industry and developing carbon-free hydrogen. Each of these so-called “Acceleration Strategies” has its own strategic agenda, dedicated budget and governance structure with a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordinator. The programme is led by an autonomous agency attached to the Prime Minister's Office and has strong support from the President.

#### **Germany's Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity**

The Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity (*Aktionsprogramm Natürlicher Klimaschutz*, ANK) has an unprecedented, planned funding envelope of EUR 4 billion for 2023-26. With this budget, it aims to accelerate implementation of NbS towards achieving national climate targets. In doing so, it will pay special attention to the land use, land-use change and forestry sector. Parallel activities will help reverse biodiversity loss and build climate resilience. The action plan is linked closely to many sectoral programmes and strategies to build synergy and bundle all NbS activities within a coherent approach.

The ANK defines 64 individual measures in ten fields of action, including among others:

- implementing the National Peatland Protection Strategy
- restoring a near-natural water balance
- promoting healthy forests
- making cities and municipalities climate resilient.

Activities related to data gathering, monitoring, modelling and reporting, as well as research and capacity building, will complement the thematic work areas. In addition, synergy is also being sought at the European and international levels. A series of pilot projects started in 2022. The plan has been further fine-tuned following a nationwide consultation process launched in September 2022.

Sources : (Secrétariat général pour l'investissement, 2022<sup>[109]</sup>); (OECD, 2023<sup>[14]</sup>).

### **Behavioural insights as a tool for steering climate action from the centre**

In many OECD Member countries, BI units work with governments to apply behavioural insights to public policy. Behavioural insights draw from behavioural economics and psychology to understand how people make decisions and behave in specific contexts. By applying these insights, policymakers can design policies that account for behavioural biases and motivations, thus increasing the legitimacy and effectiveness of policy interventions. This is particularly important as climate action often relies on behaviours of people, for example in attitudes and behaviours around recycling, energy usage and low-carbon transport.

Taking behavioural insights into account and integrating it into policymaking for climate action can offer a number of benefits. In addition to increased effectiveness in addressing climate-related issues due to additional information and the reduction of barriers and frictions, a better understanding of individuals' behaviour and opinion may help overcome policymakers concerns and result in more ambitious climate policy. BI can also be a powerful tool to assess different demographics' perspectives on climate change

and to consider the long-term impact of policy action and help to shift the focus from short-term goals. By differentiating between generations, BI also allows for more tailored public communication strategies that resonate with specific target audiences. This enhances the chances of conveying the importance of climate-related policies and encouraging positive behavioural changes and may eventually lead to improved public support and acceptance of climate action.

While some governments embed these units in line ministries or specialised agencies, BI units located within the centre of government can focus on applying BI across government. In Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, for instance, capacity for supporting the use of behavioural insights has been integrated into specialised units within the centre (OECD, 2018<sup>[6]</sup>). While there is no single institutional model for applying behavioural insights within public bodies, establishing dedicated units within the centre can facilitate the wide incorporation of behavioural insights in policy development processes across departments and foster the collaboration with experts in the field to provide guidance and support to policymakers. Box 3.20 provides an example of how Canada's central agencies are utilising behavioural insights for dealing with climate action.

### **Box 3.20. The Program of Applied Research on Climate Action (PARCA), Government of Canada – informing decision-making through evidence from behavioural science**

Canada recognises the need for achieving rapid and effective climate action in Canada and the need to change behaviours as a part of the solution. The Impact and Innovation Unit (IIU) of the Privy Council Office, which applies methods such as behavioural science and challenge prizes to promote better outcomes on government priorities can bridge the gap between policy development and effective implementation. In collaboration with two line ministries responsible for leading Canada's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, the IIU has launched the Program of Applied Research on Climate Action (PARCA), a behavioural insights-based approach to inform policy, programmes, and communications related to climate and environmental action.

PARCA generates rigorous evidence to make behaviourally-informed recommendations that align government decision-making with an accurate understanding of how Canadians think, feel, and act in relation to climate change, as well as the Government of Canada's efforts to address it.

PARCA leverages the IIU's centralized role in the Government of Canada to maximize the impact of innovative policy practices in several ways, which include:

- generating data to understand how Canadians think, feel and act in response to climate change in order to identify high-potential areas for promoting greater individual action
- using experimental testing and evidence in policy and program design. For example, addressing the underlying reasons behind low uptake of zero-emission vehicles (e.g., range anxiety and misperceptions of price and performance) versus accepting resistance to climate-friendly products
- aligning priorities across government by connecting lead departments in climate-related areas to work on shared priorities, such as increasing uptake of climate-friendly home retrofits
- developing frameworks for regulatory policy and exploring the feasibility of other opportunities to leverage findings from applied behavioural science to guide policy development

PARCA consists of three overlapping phases. First, a longitudinal data collection effort gathers evidence about how Canadians think, feel, and act in relation to climate change and identifies key problems of interest. Then, rapid online studies isolate drivers and barriers to desired behaviour changes and test potential solutions to identified problems. Finally, in-field experiments test research findings in the real world in collaboration with trusted partners and build support for policies that are likely to produce

meaningful outcomes. Findings are relevant for informing lead departmental policy analysis, program development and public communications. They also support overall central management of the climate change agenda.

This case study illustrates the unique opportunities to leverage innovative policy tools such as behavioural science when operating from the unique vantage point provided by the centre of government. The IIU has learned that central decision-makers are interested in findings derived from rigorous methods but require timely insights to be presented in actionable terms that relate to immediate policy objectives for them to be incorporated into policy development processes.

Source: (Government of Canada, 2022<sup>[110]</sup>).

### 3.4 Closing the policy cycle: Monitoring policies for climate change

Following up on the implementation of climate change actions is necessary to monitor overall progress of actions, to identify bottlenecks, challenges and roadblocks help governments to make decisions if iterations are required. The OECD's 2023 NetZero+ report recommends countries to "set up mechanisms to track progress on implementation of policies [...] and use the information to compare and evaluate potential alternative policy options to optimise the policy mix for each context" (OECD, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>). In several jurisdictions, centres of government or centralised functions of the centre monitor the implementation of climate commitments and plans. Yet, the mechanisms, and norms of inter-ministerial co-ordination through which this monitoring takes place vary greatly across jurisdictions. For example, Box 3.21 outlines Germany's approach to reviewing the impact of climate policies and France's monitoring from the centre, while Ireland has an annual review process from its Climate Change Advisory Council as well as progress reporting each quarter from the Department of the Taoiseach on the Climate Action Plan. Austria's central civil service approach are based on impact assessments, including for their National Energy and Climate plans.

#### Box 3.21. Monitoring systems of national climate policies

##### France: Evaluating the economic impact of climate action

In France, the prime Minister entrusted scholars with the task of evaluating the macroeconomic impacts of the ecological transition. *France Stratégie*, which belongs to the Office of the French Prime Minister, is acting as the secretariat for this taskforce, supported by the Inspectorate General of Finance. The report aims to improve the understanding of the macroeconomic impacts of the climate transition to improve decision-making and base policy decisions on evidence.

##### Germany: Annual reviews of the impacts of climate policies

An independent Council of Experts on Climate Change (*Expertenrat für Klimafragen*), created in 2019, assesses annual GHG emission trends and the effectiveness of climate measures. It also advises the federal government on implementation of the Federal Climate Change Act. Among others, the Council of Experts assesses immediate action programmes (*Sofortprogramm*). On the 21st of June the German government cabinet has passed the second reform of the federal climate law. The German climate objectives will now be verified based on a cross-sectoral and multi-annual accounting. The main mechanism of the law is now foresight-based and is focussed on the projection of future emissions until 2030 based on the common EU methodology. If this projection shows that the sum of annual emissions across all sectors up until 2030 is above the emissions reduction goal, the government must pass

measures to ensure the goal will be met. The reform also strengthens the role of the independent Council of Experts on Climate Change.”

Source: (OECD, 2023<sup>[111]</sup>); (OECD, 2023<sup>[112]</sup>); (France Stratégie, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>).

Consideration of monitoring approaches is particularly critical to the implementation of climate change policy given it is complex and not always easy to measure. Research shows that establishing common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements can be useful to align strategic documents or objectives across time and levels of government. A crucial step to co-ordinate monitoring systems is to identify key output and outcome indicators common to the different strategies the government is trying to align (Falduto and Rocha, 2020<sup>[113]</sup>).

Digital monitoring platforms paired to measurable indicators have presented opportunities for centres of government in monitoring of climate policies. In the United Kingdom, the non-ministerial Climate Change Committee (CCC) facilitated by the centre has developed a Monitoring Framework to track Government progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Framework produces an extensive range of outputs including sector monitoring maps, annual progress reports, risk assessments and departmental recommendations (Climate Change Committee, 2022<sup>[114]</sup>). These outputs are linked to a comprehensive set of progress indicators that will inform a forthcoming progress dashboard (Climate Change Committee, 2022<sup>[114]</sup>). Additionally, France’s Delivery Unit, which is located within a central institution, is using dashboard systems accessible by government and citizens for the monitoring of key priorities, including climate change. The dashboard provides monitoring information on progress of its top priorities through its delivery through departmental regions in France.

Another mechanism used to support the alignment of climate objectives consists of breaking down national objectives into sectoral plans, targets, or emission ceilings. This approach is facilitated in cases where objectives are easily quantifiable, and there is a common methodology or ‘framing’ of the issue across various sectors. In some cases, there is a formal, top-down, allocation of emissions across sectors: for instance, in Germany, the first climate law passed by the Federal Government in 2019 and amended in 2021 lays out annual sectoral emission targets for six individual sectors until 2030 (Box 3.21 and (OECD, 2023<sup>[112]</sup>)). Similarly in Ireland, carbon budgets set out to 2035 are now translated into Sectoral Emissions Ceilings, with details on how these will be achieved in national Climate Action Plans.<sup>4</sup>

The OECD International Programme for Action on Climate (IPAC) represents another example of how to support country progress towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and a more resilient economy by 2050. Through regular monitoring, policy evaluation and feedback on results and best practices, IPAC helps OECD members, G20 countries and selected other countries strengthen and co-ordinate their climate action. It complements and supports the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement monitoring frameworks. IPAC has four pillars: a climate action dashboard, an annual climate action monitor, country notes and policies in practice examples. Several countries acknowledged the usefulness of these tools and have referred to and used them in support of their own monitoring tools.

In the United States, the centre of government plays a direct role in steering policy coherence and co-ordinating domestic climate policy implementation across government agencies. The White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy was created via Executive Order in January 2021 to ensure the consistency of domestic climate policy programmes with the President’s stated goals and monitor the implementation of the President’s climate policy agenda (The White House, 2021<sup>[115]</sup>). The White House’s creation of a monitoring agency independent from existing government departments contrasts greatly with approaches that favour inter-ministerial co-ordination mechanisms. For instance, in New Zealand, where implementation responsibilities are regularly devolved to government agencies, a Interdepartmental

<sup>4</sup> Information shared in the context of the OECD Informal Expert Group on Strategic Decision-Making

Executive Board which includes representation from the centre, was created to monitor progress in the long-term implementation of the Emissions Reduction Plan and National Adaptation Plan (Ministry for the Environment, 2022<sup>[116]</sup>); the Board is composed of chief executives across government ministries (Ministry for the Environment, 2022<sup>[116]</sup>). The formation of interdepartmental executive boards in New Zealand is an initiative of the Public Service Act 2020 (New Zealand Parliament, 2020<sup>[117]</sup>).

Effective systems of M&E for climate policy should consider how climate strategies and targets can be properly paired to the right indicators that are also measurable and accessed by those who play a role in climate resilience. Additionally, they could consider the use of mainstreaming climate risk assessments as another input into policy evaluation, understanding how climate change impacts affect achievement of any line ministry's remit. Overall, centres of governments are well positioned as a locus of M&E arrangements, as seen by some countries including central monitoring agencies that have broad access channels and co-operative relationships with relevant line ministries (see Figure 3.1).

### Box 3.22. Learning from the COVID-19 crisis: lessons that can be taken for climate change

In an era of increasing disruptions and overlapping challenges, centres of government can look to these past crises for inspiration and lessons learnt to inform their contemporary efforts in tackling the climate crisis. During COVID-19, many countries used approaches and mechanisms that were novel or different from usual practices that are now being considered as potentially longer-term approaches. Effective learning loops and channels can help governments understand what worked well and why, as well as learn from mistakes to help them consider decisions into the future for climate change issues.

In Luxembourg, inter-ministerial management of the COVID-19 crisis from the centre of government was particularly well-co-ordinated and agile, largely due to already existing crisis response mechanisms. The High Commission for Natural Protection greatly aided crisis management efforts during the pandemic. In its tenure, the High Commission has responded to natural disasters as well, having activated a crisis unit in response to the unprecedented floods of July 2021; the unit was tasked with directly co-ordinating crisis response operations in direct consultation with stakeholders. Experience in stakeholder engagement proved critical in the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the High Commission organised the reunion of essential service providers and critical infrastructure operators to share good practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic generated a demand for data and expertise to support short-term, evidence-based decision-making within centres of government. In some jurisdictions, the centre played a co-ordinating role in risk assessment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United Kingdom, the Cabinet Office created the National Situation Centre (SitCen) in 2021 to respond to this demand, assigning it to collect and collate timely and reliable data on all aspects of risk and crisis management. SitCen is thus tasked with providing public decision-makers with an overview of critical sectors using dashboards, modelling past data to generate projectors related to the materialisation of certain risks and briefing senior officials and ministers. SitCen's position within the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat has significantly shortened the chain of command through which urgent data has traditionally travelled to the Cabinet Office and has thus boosted the centre's capacity for evidence-based decision-making. SitCen's larger role has since evolved beyond the needs of the pandemic, having been utilised as a central point for data analysis throughout the Russian invasion of Ukraine with an aim of crafting a holistic image of local, national and international risks. These updated responsibilities are a fundamental component of the UK Government Resilience Framework.

The implementation of restrictions during the pandemic that limited the traditional rights of individuals brought challenges to communications, including requiring governments to consider frequent, transparent and inclusive communication with citizens and stakeholder groups. Several centres of



government actively engaged citizens in consultations and focus groups, brought the scientific community into the communication process and effectively delivered group-specific communication to traditionally excluded segments of society, all of which have continued to inform crisis governance beyond the pandemic. Over the course of the pandemic, the Finnish government engaged in over 100 dialogues with citizens to gather perspectives on COVID-19 restrictions and further sensitive policies. This practice has since been integrated into Finnish governance culture as the “Finnish National Dialogues”. In countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom, national chief health officers presented alongside the Prime Minister in national press conferences and speeches, and sometimes leading their own communications without the influence of policy makers. During the pandemic, Canada additionally launched focus groups with traditionally excluded or underrepresented segments of society, including Indigenous peoples and migrants, to develop more effective government messaging customs.

Source: (OECD, 2022<sup>[118]</sup>); (Cabinet Office, 2022<sup>[119]</sup>); (OECD, 2022<sup>[95]</sup>).

### 3.5 Greening public administrations

Seeking more climate-friendly public administrations is an important area of emphasis for many countries, as governments are often one of the largest real estate holders, fleet owners, energy consumers and purchasers of goods and services. Government-wide objectives can also be addressed through cross-cutting functional approaches, for example green public procurement which encourages sectoral bodies to adopt sustainable practices that they may not feel empowered to enact. Governments across the OECD are increasingly focusing on sustainability and using their purchasing power to steer their economies towards greater consideration of environmental choices and outcomes.

The most recent OECD survey on Green Public Procurement (GPP) confirmed OECD countries have been developing GPP strategies and policies for more than a decade, and their adoption has substantially increased since the definition of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development (OECD, 2016<sup>[120]</sup>). In 32 out of 34 OECD countries surveyed (94%) there is an active national GPP policy or framework, suggesting that GPP is widely recognised as a powerful tool to achieve the climate action goals countries have endorsed. 28 out of the 32 countries with a GPP policy or framework (88%) clearly refer to GPP or public procurement in national commitments on climate action and consider this government function as integral to achieving their environmental commitments. Japan mentions the national policy on GPP in its Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures and National Action Plan, and Canada cites GPP to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Croatia is currently developing guidelines on improving the environmental performance of public administration in order for Croatia to comply with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Environmental Performance of Government ([OECD/LEGAL/0283](#)), as well as drafting Government's Decision on the obligation to implement green public procurement in order to harmonize with the OECD Council Recommendation on Improving the Environmental Performance of Public Procurement, aimed to be adopted in 2024. Governments across the OECD are increasingly focusing on sustainability and using their purchasing power to steer their economies towards greater consideration of environmental choices and outcomes. By taking a whole life cycle approach to the purchase of goods, services and works, governments can make an important contribution to protecting the environment and tackling climate change.

Many countries are also developing and implementing holistic and systemic reforms that extend for the entirety of public administration and government operations and to be ‘greener’. Such efforts and strategies can also send a signal to countries about the importance of this, potentially spurring economy-wide actions through demonstrating by leadership. Such signalling could be argued to be most effective if some type of stewardship came from the centre of government; this can signal a direct commitment from the Head of a

country the importance of practically contributing to the climate transition. Yet, centre itself cannot achieve such reforms alone; these are whole-of-government efforts, and thus, other mechanisms are needed to ensure that prioritisation, implementation, and monitoring are undertaken effectively, such as committees, monitoring plans, and agreed mandates across ministers and agencies. Further, given the CoGs role in guiding good practices across the administration, CoGs can support good guidance, for example, related to the mainstreaming of resilience of government offices to climate risks (in regard to the continuity of operations).

Box 3.23 below discusses the centre-led approaches to climate-related public administration reforms in Canada and in the United States and the broader Greening Government global initiative that the US and Canada launched in April 2021, noting that further research needs to be undertaken on the mechanisms centres of government are using and the benefits or challenges in utilising such mechanisms at the centre, or through other set-ups.

### **Box 3.23. The United States' Federal Sustainability Plan & Canada's Greening Government Strategy**

#### **Canada**

In response to the climate situation in Canada, the Government of Canada has committed to greening government operations. The Government of Canada will transition to net-zero carbon and climate-resilient operations, while also reducing environmental impacts beyond carbon, including on waste, water and biodiversity. Led by the Centre for Greening Government of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the Government of Canada will ensure that Canada is a global leader in government operations that are net-zero, resilient and green.

There is a Centre for Greening Government, which provides strong mandates and political leadership.

- lead and co-ordinate the federal emissions reduction, climate-resilience and greening government initiatives
- integrate knowledge from other leading organizations and share best practices broadly
- track and disclose government environmental performance information centrally
- drive results to meet greening government environmental objectives

The Greening Government Strategy is a set of government-approved commitments that apply to all core government departments and agencies. The strategy has commitments across all types of government operations and administration processes, property, workforce and fleets.

The strategy has a set of clear actions against each focus area, and the Centre is ensuring accountability for the government's environmental performance and is committed to the principles of transparency and open data. In order to ensure oversight, the Centre will publicly disclose detailed environmental performance information on government operations, including a complete inventory of federal GHG emissions.

The Government of Canada also hopes that this approach will not only help to address climate resilience, but also help government operations be more resilient into the future through many types of large-scale disruptions, while supporting the government to be an employer of choice.

#### **United States**

In President Biden's Executive Order 14057 on catalysing American clean energy industries and jobs through Federal sustainability and accompanying Federal Sustainability Plan sets out a range of

ambitious goals to deliver an emissions reduction pathway consistent with President Biden's goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emission by 50–52 percent from 2005 levels by 2030 and limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as the science demands. While of course such a plan may not entirely be sufficient to guarantee achievement of all climate goals, it has ambitious objectives to reduce emission reductions.

It is a wide-ranging reform, for example on reducing electricity consumption, utilising zero-emissions vehicles in its fleets, reducing emissions of government buildings, procurement, public services operations emissions reductions, and climate-focused workforce.

The Executive Order provided the highest-level political leadership on this PAR, which was then also complemented by a Memorandum for the Heads of Departments and Agencies in 2021, as well as detailed implementation instructions for federal agencies.

The centre of government has a lead role, with an Office of the Federal Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) who has primary oversight and monitoring of the PAR. Each agency is also required to appoint a CSO who is responsible for co-ordinating and implementing the goals within their agency, whilst providing data and reports to the Federal CSO and to the Council of CSOs.

Each agency is also required to have agency level plans which need to not only be approved, but renewed each year, and are publicly available on the centre of government's website. This iterative approach can both enhance alignment between agency strategies with the whole of government strategy but allows adjustments to be made based on monitoring of progress and contextual changes.

### **Greening Government Initiative**

In April 2021, the United States and Canada launched a new global effort—the Greening Government Initiative—to engage and support governments around the world in greening national government operations. This first-of-its-kind international community of practice will enable countries to share knowledge and lessons learned, promote innovation, and help meet Paris Agreement commitments. The Greening Government Initiative serves as a platform for country representatives to share information and best practices, showcase innovation and success, and develop collaborative relationships with one another to accelerate national efforts to green national government operations and build a climate-resilient public administration.

Source: (Office of the Federal Chief Sustainability Officer, 2021<sup>[121]</sup>); (Government of Canada, 2022<sup>[122]</sup>); (Office of the Federal Chief Sustainability Officer, 2021<sup>[123]</sup>).



## 4. Moving Forward

Centres of government have taken an increasingly active role in climate governance as awareness for the need of whole-of-government approach to tackle climate change continues to increase. More recently, this has been reflected in the adoption of a diverse range of institutional set-ups and mechanisms to allow centres of government to deliver on their roles stewarding and guiding climate change policy. Climate change is a complex and multi-faceted challenge that also requires involvement of a multitude of stakeholders and thus, there can be a risk of government efforts being fragmented, duplicated, or even in conflict with other efforts. As such, governments often aim for clear and cohesive ambitions and goals that (a role often undertaken by the centre) align into actions so different actors are also clear on their roles. Yet achieving coherence and alignment is not easy, with factors such as the complexity of policy interactions, stakeholders involved, challenges in assessing the impact of such policies, as well as challenges in inputs such as data, budget and capacities (OECD, forthcoming) (OECD, 2023<sup>[124]</sup>) (OECD, 2020<sup>[125]</sup>). While it is still too early to assess the effectiveness of these set-ups, mechanisms and practices, this stocktaking highlights a few key themes:

- There is no consistent or one-size-fits-all institutional set-up of centres of government in dealing with climate action, as any set-up needs to be fit for purpose to the context, goals and operations of government. Greater leadership at the centre can send strong signals of political support and better co-ordination; yet, it can also be more subject to disruptions from changes to government and overlook technical expertise, while line ministry ownership can risk more challenges in gaining buy-in from other ministers on a cross-cutting topic. What is clear is that governments are continuing to place increased priority on climate; this is also being reflected more and more as a top priority for centres of government. The mandates and set-ups are evolving and will continue to do so into the future.
- While anecdotal evidence suggests that the centre can support good strategic planning and accountability, the linkages between the institutional set-ups and planning or implementing climate change action is not clearly researched and could be an interesting aspect for further exploration. For example, in which areas should the centre play a more significant role, and what types of set-ups and mandate approaches best support the centre in doing this?
- The complexity of climate change and the time frame for its development means that the centre potentially has a role play as the steward of climate policy. Yet, this stocktake has not addressed the mutually reinforcing and complementary role of subnational governments and vertical alignment, which is an important factor to consider as well.
- Some countries are allocating responsibilities in the centre for the stewardship of climate action, including building a long-term vision. Long-term visions and the identification of short, medium, and long-term priorities in a coherent manner can help to ensure public resources are allocated in an efficient way and that climate policies are not overtaken by more immediate priorities. Centres of government can help to navigate the political advocacy, which is important in creating strong long-term plans that outlive election cycles and in ensuring alignment in short to medium-term priorities in the government plan. Additionally, anchoring national climate goals in the legal framework and international commitments are also important elements in this context.

- Centres of government tend to lead the strategic planning and prioritisation exercises, which set the tone for the rest of the administration. Climate policy requires both long-term vision and short-term actions rendering it critical that centres of government can undertake long-term visioning that extends beyond political cycles while balancing these with short-term priorities.
- Effective steering and co-ordination of such strategies, as well as a government's position on international climate and environmental commitments, remains highly practiced among centres of government.
- In developing high-quality climate policies, centres of government gather evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and sectors, including using systemic and innovative approaches in supporting them to do so. Some are putting in place the standards to ensure that policies and regulations from across the administration support the country's national goals. Given the importance of the scientific community, there is room for further research on how centres of government can steer systematic engagement with this community into the future. A strong evidence base is an important aspect for broader planning, and to integrate such opportunities into government prioritisation. More broadly, communication that is trusted and evidence-informed for the climate issue is also crucial given the spread of mis and dis information.
- A common role of centres of government in climate policy is the monitoring of national climate strategies and environmental priority projects, which also continues to be a topic of high interest amongst centres of government. Since the COVID-19 crisis, some centres have adopted new approaches such as risk, anticipation, and crisis co-ordination role in managing the climate crisis.

This stocktaking paper has also shown there are still many aspects of the centre of government's role and functions in relation to climate policy that need to be explored, and this will be further covered in the OECD's forthcoming "Compendium: Steering from the Centre of Government".

Climate action is demanding governments more than just simple policy solutions; it is demanding more holistic solutions requiring a multitude of actors and substantial shifts in the way governing is undertaken. Centres of government are not the "silver bullet", yet they play an important role in harmonising the orchestra of actors required to come together to tackle this intractable and pertinent challenge. The centre's role in climate policy is not easy, and thus a stocktaking and exploration of practices is an important first step to help countries learn from each other and identify approaches that could be tailored into their own context, or to identify approaches that could facilitate international collaboration on the subject. Yet, a practice in one country functions in the way it does based on several contextual factors that may be vastly different to the factors in another country. Thus, there is an opportunity to further distil and synthesise such contextual factors, and common enablers and hindrances that could contribute to specific principles or themes to help decision-makers enhance centres of government as a system in a way that can produce positive outcomes in climate policy.

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## Annex A. Overview of long-term strategies supporting the Paris Agreement

**Table A.1. Long-term strategies supporting the Paris Agreement, as of February 2023**

Country	Long-term strategy(ies)
Australia	Australia's long-term emissions reduction plan: A whole-of-economy plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2050
Austria	Long-Term Strategy 2050 - Austria Period through to 2050
Belgium	Belgium's long-term strategy
Canada	Exploring Approaches for Canada's Transition to Net-Zero Emissions Canada's mid-century long-term low-greenhouse gas development strategy
Chile	Chile's long-term climate strategy: The path to carbon neutrality and resilience by 2050
Colombia	Colombia's long-term climate strategy: E2050 to comply with the Paris Agreement
Costa Rica	National decarbonization plan: 2018-2050
Czech Republic	Climate protection policy of the Czech Republic
Denmark	Climate Programme 2020: Denmark's Mid-century, Long-term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy
Finland	Finland's long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy
France	National low carbon strategy: The ecological and inclusive transition towards carbon neutrality
Germany	Long-term strategy for climate action of the Federal Republic of Germany Climate Action Plan 2050: Principles and goals of the German government's climate policy
Hungary	National Clean Development Strategy 2020-2050
Iceland	On the Path to Climate Neutrality: Iceland's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy
Japan	The Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement
Latvia	Strategy of Latvia for the Achievement of Climate Neutrality by 2050
Lithuania	Lithuania Climate Change Management Agenda 2021
Luxembourg	Long-term national strategy for of climate action: "Towards climate neutrality in 2050"
Mexico	Mexico's Climate Change Mid-Century Strategy
Netherlands	Long-term strategy on climate mitigation
New Zealand	Transitioning to a low-emissions and climate-resilient future: Low-emissions development strategy
Norway	Norway's long-term low-emission strategy for 2050
Poland	National Energy and Climate Plan for the years 2021-2030
Portugal	Roadmap for carbon neutrality: Long-term strategy for carbon neutrality of the Portuguese economy by 2050, Climate Law Lei de Bases do Clima -Lei 98/2021 Lei n.º 98/2021   DR (diariodarepublica.pt)
Korea	2050 Carbon neutral strategy of the Republic of Korea: Towards a sustainable and green society
Slovak Republic	Low-Carbon Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 with a View to 2050
Slovenia	Slovenia's long-term climate strategy until 2050
Spain	Long-term decarbonization strategy: long-term strategy for a modern, competitive, and climate-neutral Spanish economy in 2050
Sweden	Sweden's long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions
Switzerland	Switzerland's Long-Term Climate Strategy
United Kingdom	Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener The Clean Growth Strategy: Leading the way to a low carbon future
United States	The long-term strategy of the United States: Pathways to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050 United States Mid-century strategy for deep decarbonization

Note: Data in the table refers to OECD member and partner countries. Please note that countries might have other long-term strategies besides the ones reported in this table

Source: (UNFCCC, 2023<sup>[24]</sup>).