



Policy Communication Report

Coherent Communication

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2018

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Indicator

Coherent Communication

Question

To what extent does the government achieve coherent communication?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = The government effectively coordinates the communication of ministries; ministries closely align their communication with government strategy. Messages are factually coherent with the government's plans.
- 8-6 = The government coordinates the communication of ministries. Contradictory statements are rare, but do occur. Messages are factually coherent with the government's plans.
- 5-3 = The ministries are responsible for informing the public within their own particular areas of competence; their statements occasionally contradict each other. Messages are sometimes not factually coherent with the government's plans.
- 2-1 = Strategic communication planning does not exist; individual ministry statements regularly contradict each other. Messages are often not factually coherent with the government's plans.

Canada

Score 9

The Liberals under Trudeau have made good on their campaign pledge to adopt a more open communication policy compared to the previous Conservative government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The Conservative government's communications were managed top-down and tightly controlled by the Prime Minister's Office. Ministers are now responsible for coordinating communications between their departments, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office. A recent paper on the government's communications strategy offers some insight into the strategic media management of both the current and previous governments, and draws on interviews with government officials and internal communications templates. Perhaps not unexpectedly, the author of the paper concluded that considerable efforts are made to spin and frame government information. While the Trudeau government's media relations are more decentralized, the Prime Minister's Office has not fully abandoned control over ministers and departments. The prime minister now conducts a series of town hall meetings, which are open to Canadians across the country. These meetings are a sign of his willingness to engage and obtain feedback.

Citation:

Marland, Alex. (2017). Strategic Management of Media Relations: Communications Centralization and Spin in the Government of Canada. *Canadian Public Policy*. 43(1).

France

Score 9

Government policy communication is usually subject to centralized control by the executive branch. One of the preoccupations of the executive branch as part of the

Fifth Republic is to avoid disagreement or contradiction within the ministerial team, even when coalition governments are in power. There have been situations in which ministers expressing divergent views in the media have been forced to resign.

Hollande's government communication was poor and messy. In contrast, Macron has defined a new strategy: precise indications about his program during the presidential campaign, a commitment to fully and speedily implement these policy measures, and strict control over the communication policy under the tight supervision of the Élysée staff. This has conferred a significantly higher degree of coherence on governmental communication.

Sweden

Score 9

Improved communications dovetails with increasing coordination among the government departments. During the past couple of years, the government has developed and implemented a more coherent communications strategy. The flow of communication from government departments and the PMO is now carefully controlled such that only a very limited number of officials are authorized to engage the media or other actors outside the core of government.

This strategy is very similar to the communications strategies today used in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom. It implies that cabinet ministers carefully assess invitations from radio and TV and, perhaps surprisingly, frequently decline those invitations if they cannot control the format or if they are to debate with representatives from the opposition.

This strategy has been rather successful; indeed, in some ways it may even have been too successful. Scholars and the media are increasingly objecting to problems in accessing ministers and other representatives of the governing parties. There is also increasing frustration with the GO's tendency to be slow in providing the media with public documents. Even among several agencies there is now frustration about the decreasing access to government departments and government information.

Citation:

Dahlström, C. J. Pierre and B. G. Peters (eds) (2011), *Steering from the Center* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

Erlandsson, M. (2008), "Regeringskansliet och medierna. Den politiska exekutivens resurser och strategier för att hantera och styra massmedier," *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 110: 335-49.

Jacobsson, B., J. Pierre and G. Sundström (2015), *Governing the Embedded State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Australia

Score 8

Australian governments have traditionally made considerable efforts to align their policy priorities with the messages that they communicate to the public. A number of factors have helped efforts to align policy priorities with the messages communicated

to the public: a tradition of very strong discipline across all the major political parties (perhaps the strongest among the Westminster democracies); a tradition of suppressing dissent within the parties (often by the threat of de-selection at the next election); strong adherence to the Westminster doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility; and an activist mass media and political opposition that seeks to exploit any apparent policy divisions within the government.

However, governments have been relatively unstable since 2007, rendering coherent policy communication more difficult. The current government has proven unable to publicly offer a clear sense of direction, and has suffered from outspoken dissent by some members of government. In a range of policy fields (e.g., economic policy, foreign policy, climate change policy), the government has been unable to publicly communicate a coherent policy agenda.

Denmark

Score 8

It is important for a government to effectively communicate its policies to its citizens. In Denmark, communication strategy and media attention have become important aspects of politics, and political survival depends on efficient communication. Good communicators are more likely to get ministerial posts than poor communicators. The PMO plays an important role in communication, but many ministries have upgraded and employ media advisers.

There are only a few examples of ministers speaking out on issues that were not in accordance with the government's policy. In such cases, the prime minister will act swiftly and a corrective statement will follow from the minister in question – or he or she will most likely be replaced.

However, the fact that Denmark usually has coalition governments can in some cases create problems in policy communication. This may arise both due to different viewpoints within the coalition and the need for the different government parties to communicate their views and visions, especially as the next election approaches. Even in one-party governments, which are rare in Denmark, different ministers may put emphasis on different aspects of a policy issue. However, one should expect fewer inconsistent statements from ministers in a one-party government than a multiparty government. In the current government, the three coalition parties all feel a need to communicate their policy positions, even if the agreed government basis (regeringsgrundlag) will impose strict limitations.

Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, *Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark*, 2002.
Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*. 4. udg., 2017.

Finland

Score 8 Since the prime minister's position is one of *primus inter pares* (first among equals), rather than one of absolute leadership, it is natural that the government's policy positions are advanced through discussion and consultation rather than through directives and commands. Furthermore, as directives and commands would challenge the principle of freedom of speech, such communication would probably be regarded as illegitimate and foster opposition. In practice, therefore, contradictory statements are rare. However, the fact that Finland has a tradition of broad-based umbrella coalitions that accommodate diverse interests and ideological shadings serves to diversify communication. This has been true of communications from the Sipilä government, which have been notably vague and often undecided, reflecting tensions or even conflicts between the Finns Party and the other government parties. A conflict within the Finns Party in June 2017 almost led to dissolution of the government and new elections. The conflict was solved by the Finns Party parliamentary group splitting up into a radical group and a more moderate group (Blue Reform), the latter of which contained all of the party's ministers and remained in the government coalition.

The existence of an agreed-upon and fairly detailed government plan in principle serves to streamline communications; however, the present Sipilä government has demonstrated that different interpretations of the plan can certainly arise.

Latvia

Score 8 The government office organizes coordination meetings of ministerial communication units. During 2015, 11 formal meetings were held. Communication and statements are generated by the ministries and are generally consistent. A communications coordination council sets annual priorities for the main messages to be propagated to the public. Communication messages are coordinated prior to weekly cabinet meetings. However, this system means that partisan ministerial disagreements are highly visible.

Luxembourg

Score 8 After Council of Ministers meetings on Fridays, the prime minister holds a public press conference, to communicate the body's work effectively and coherently. This weekly press briefing had been the government's main method of communicating. Whereas public press briefings under former Prime Minister Juncker were rare toward the end of his administration, at least at the beginning, public relations have been given more importance under the new coalition. At the end of the last

parliamentary term, the prime minister similarly only sporadically held press briefings.

Aside from the prime minister, no government member has a press officer. Reporting directly to the prime minister, the state Press and Information Service (SIP) works to coordinate a coherent and wide-ranging government communication policy. Government members are encouraged not to voice disagreement in public, so as to make the impression of unanimous decision-making.

Citation:

“Attributions.” Le portal de l’actualité gouvernementale, www.gouvernement.lu/4021433/attributions. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

“Der leise Abschied der Transparenz.” Luxemburger Wort, 25 July 2017, www.wort.lu/de/politik/pressebriefing-des-premiers-der-leise-abschied-der-transparenz-5969d4ada5e74263e13c4243. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

Netherlands

Score 8

The Informatie Rijksoverheid service responds to frequently asked questions by citizens over the internet, telephone and email. In the age of “mediacracy,” the government has sought to make policy communication more coherent, relying on the National Information Service (Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst, RVD), which is formally a part of the Prime Minister’s Department for General Affairs, and whose Director General is present at Council of Ministers meetings and is responsible for communicating policies and the Prime Minister’s affairs to the media. The government has streamlined and coordinated its external communications at the line-ministry level.

In 2011, there were a total of about 600 information-service staffers in all departments (down from 795 in 2009). Another effort to engage in centralized, coherent communication has involved replacing departmentally run televised information campaigns with a unified, thematic approach (e.g., safety). These efforts to have government speak with “one mouth” appear to have been fairly successful. For example, the information communicated by the government regarding the downing of a passenger plane with 196 Dutch passengers over Ukraine on 17 July 2014 and its aftermath was timely, adequate and demonstrated respect for the victims and the needs of their families.

The continual technological innovation in information and communication technologies has led policy communication to adapting to the new possibilities. New developments are focused on responding more directly to citizen questions, exploring new modes of behavioral change, and utilizing Net-based citizen-participation channels in policymaking and political decision-making. For example, in 2011 the Dutch government decided to participate in the global Open Government Partnership. But in 2017 the Dutch government was criticized for structurally misleading and insufficient communication on issues of animal disease and food safety due to prioritizing agricultural interests over public health.

Citation:

Voorlichting, communicatie en participatie. Gemeenschappelijk jaarprogramma voor communicatie van de Rijksoverheid in 2014 (rijksoverheid.nl, consulted 23 September 2015)

Communicatie Online, Nog honderd persvoorlichters bij ministeries, juni 2011 (www.communicatieonline/nieuws/bericht/nog-honderd-persvoorlichters)

Overheidscommunicatie, Kabinet maakt werk van openheid (rijksoverheid.nl, consulted 9 November 2016)

“We leren niks van de Q-koorts,” NRC.nl, 25 January 2017

“Onze gezondheid wordt bewaakt door de minister van boerenzaken,” Marc Chavannes, De Correspondent, consulted 12 October 2017.

Norway

Score 8

Norway has had coalition governments in recent years. These coalitions have worked effectively, but there will unavoidably be disagreements within any coalition, including in the current conservative-liberal coalition. The dynamics of party politics require that disagreements on important matters find some expression, leading to an occasional lack of clarity in government communications. On the other hand, Norway’s coalitions have been remarkably cooperative and its cabinet members well-behaved, often going to great lengths to avoid airing disagreements in public. It is also common for ministries to offer their opinion on issues – sometimes publicly – which allows for the demonstration of differences of opinion across ministries regarding problems and their solutions. Communication of government policies is often dealt with by the line ministry responsible for the issue at stake.

Switzerland

Score 8

Switzerland’s government acts as a collegial body. All members of the government have to defend the government’s decisions, irrespective of their own opinion. However, in the 2003 to 2007 period, when the Swiss People’s Party’s (SVP) Christoph Blocher participated in government, communication was less coherent than before and afterward, and the country’s politics moved in a more populist, aggressive and confrontational direction. Although the current government is much more consistent in its public statements, coherence has not yet returned to the level reached in the 1970s through the 1990s. The new government elected by parliament in December 2015 includes two SVP members who will have little incentive to increase communication coherence. The following factors have contributed to this decline in the coherence of government policy communications:

- the structure of the collegiate body itself, which makes it difficult to speak with one voice in the mass media age;
- political polarization, even among the members of the broad coalition government;
- the systematic distortion of the Federal Council’s communication leaks on the part of some aggressive media outlets; and
- the Federal Council’s lack of authority or capacity to punish and deter communication leaks, and its inability to manage its communication policy effectively.

Chile

Score 7 Each new government designs its own communication policy. As a result, strategic communication often tends to be rather haphazard at the beginning of a presidential term, but improves as the administration gains experience. Both the governments of Sebastián Piñera and Michelle Bachelet have shown a fairly high number of communication lapses.

Hungary

Score 7 The government tries to have coherent communication through drastic disciplinary measures at all levels. Most Fidesz politicians avoid journalists, they do not give interviews and after their public performances they just read out texts written by the Cabinet Office of the prime minister headed by Antal Rogán. Coherent communication as the exercise of soft power appears initially in controlling agenda setting by launching new topics to divert the public attention from emerging problems in the media that can harm Fidesz politics. However, coherent communication sometimes fails at the top level because of the double-headed central communication scheme. On one side, the organization and supervision of the government and Fidesz party communication is in the hands of the ministry headed by Rogán. On the other side, PMO head Lázár has an important government press conference every Thursday, in which he often criticizes indirectly the Rogán-Habony group. Beyond this, confidential information has been increasingly leaked to the press from closer Fidesz circles, addressing the megalomania and luxury consumption habits of the new Fidesz aristocracy around Rogán and Habony.

Ireland

Score 7 Under the constitution, the government is required to act in a collective fashion and all ministers are collectively responsible for government decisions. This doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility is normally adhered to and creates a clear incentive to follow a closely coordinated communications strategy.

In some controversial policy areas, communication between ministries as well as between ministries and the government has lacked coherence. Statements regarding health care continue to lack clarity and consistency, with inadequate coordination between the ministry and the government about what is planned and feasible in this area.

The creation of Irish Water has been characterized by a serious lack of transparency and coherence. This problem persisted throughout 2016. The government's attempt

to remove Irish Water from the General Government sector and have it treated as a commercial state-owned body in the national income accounts was dismissed by a judgment from Eurostat in 2015: “Eurostat considers that Irish Water is a non-market entity controlled by government and should therefore be classified within the government sector.” In 2017, domestic water charges payable to Irish Water were abolished and money already paid to Irish Water was repaid.

Citation:

The complex details of the treatment of Irish Water in the national income accounts were discussed in an exchange of views between the Irish Central Statistics Office and Eurostat: see <http://www.cso.ie/en/surveysandmethodology/nationalaccounts/classificationdecisions/classificationofirishwater/>

Israel

Score 7

By law, the PMO supervises and coordinates activity between government ministries through a designated division. In 2013, representatives from several ministries wrote the Governmental Cooperation Guide, providing guidelines for interministerial cooperation.

However, annual reports from the State Comptroller reveal major shortcomings in ministerial coordination, highlighting the tension and recrimination that still exists between ministries. Contradictory proclamations from different ministries are not uncommon, resulting from political power struggles within the coalition as well as from the treasury’s stronghold on ministerial budgets and practices. In recent years there has been a shift toward creating a more “open” government and improving the government’s communications vis-a-vis the third sector and the public as well as within the government itself. The new emphasis on sharing and transparency has somewhat ameliorated the technical aspect of the divides, but its influence with regard to policy communication remains unclear.

Citation:

“Open government partnership: Progress report on action goals,” Official state publication (October 2013) (Hebrew).

Ravid, Barak and Lis, Jonathan, “After criticizing the government: Netanyahu fires deputy minister of security Danon,” Haaretz 15.7.2014: <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/1.2377994> (Hebrew).

“Special report regarding the Mount Carmel Forest fire – December 2010 oversights, failures and conclusions,” the state comptroller website 20.6.2012 (Hebrew)

“The governmental guide for sharing: A model for interministerial cooperation,” Official state publication September 2013 (Hebrew).

“The Prime Ministers Division for Coordination follow up and Control,” PMO’s website The Governmental Cooperation Guild – September 2013: <http://ihaklai.org.il/>

Prime Minister’s Office. Government ICT Authority, “Israel Open Government Implementation Report 2015 – 2017,” https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Israel_End-Term-Self-Assessment_2015-2017_EN.pdf

New Zealand

Score 7

The coherence of government communication strongly depends on the topic under consideration. All recent governments have been of the minority type, which has increased the chances of conflict between the governing party and its small support partners. This may include disagreement over what constitutes an electoral mandate, as well as accusations of broken promises when sacrifices have to be made during the course of the post-election negotiating process. Successive minority governments have freely acknowledged that tension is part and parcel of the governing process under a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system, with an “agree to disagree” clause being all that may separate the government from instability and collapse. That said, MMP governments have been remarkably stable, with only one early election (2002) – which was due as much to electoral considerations as political instability, since the advent of the proportional electoral system in 1996. One development that requires careful reporting is the growing trend of political spin among both politicians and bureaucrats, which exacerbates the public’s skepticism regarding communication processes in government.

Citation:

Jonathan Boston, *Innovative Political Management: Multiparty Governance in New Zealand*. *Policy Quarterly* 5:2 (2009), 51-59.

Portugal

Score 7

Prime Minister António Costa’s government showed itself to be largely effective in terms of communication and coordination during the review period, despite being a minority government with an unprecedented parliamentary-support coalition. Indeed, its first two years in office were marked by a remarkable degree of stability, with the government’s coherent communication contributing to this stability.

However, the government did display some communication failures late in the review period. Some of these occurred in the aftermath of the deadly forest fires of June and October, while others stemmed from separate policy fields. For example, in June 2017, the government initially decided to back Lisbon as a candidate for the process of relocating the European Medicines Agency, but then made a last-minute change and backed Porto as a candidate in July. The government also gave contradictory information in the aftermath of the theft of military equipment from Tancos in June, with the minister of defense adding to the confusing state of affairs in September when he stated that it was possible that “there may not have been any theft.”

Citation:

Lei orgânica do XXI Governo available at www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/0-governo/lei-organica/lei-organica.aspx

Paul Ames (2017), “Portuguese politics cripples Lisbon’s EU agency bid,” *Politico*, 28/7/17, available online at:

<https://www.politico.eu/article/to-placate-porto-portugal-pulls-plug-on-lisbons-bid-for-ema>

Paulo Tavares e Anselmo Crespo (2017), “‘Não sei se alguém entrou em Tancos. No limite, pode não ter havido furto’,” *Diário de Notícias* online – 10/9/2017, available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/interior/azeredo-lopes-nao-sei-se-alguem-entrou-em-tancos-no-limite-pode-nao-ter-havido-furto-8759607.html>

Spain

Score 7

The government’s sparse communications have led to a phenomenon in which many PP supporters had little understanding of many of the measures undertaken by the government they voted into power (particularly with regard to austerity measures and tax increases). Moreover, the government’s crisis management regarding Catalonia was not accompanied by a thoughtful communication strategy. However, during the review period, the government party announced a new approach in which it would “be closer and communicate more with Spaniards.” At the administrative level, in 2016 the role of coordinating ministries’ messages was moved from Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría to the new spokesperson, Íñigo Méndez de Vigo. Nevertheless, at a time when Spain was undergoing the worst constitutional crisis in recent history, the spokesperson served in parallel as Minister of Education and Culture. The communication office and the spokesperson try to conduct coherent communication planning and ministries tend to align their statements and press releases with government strategy. Though they do issue contradictory statements from time to time, most messages are factually coherent with the government’s plans.

Citation:

May 2015, *El País*: “In rare press conference, Rajoy blames poor election showing on failure to communicate”
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/05/26/inenglish/1432626773_688913.html

September 2017, *El País*: “Alarmed by foreign coverage of Catalan referendum, Spain steps up communication campaign”

https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/09/18/inenglish/1505721046_162413.html

Estonia

Score 6

Ministries in Estonia’s government have remarkable power and autonomy. Therefore, ministers belonging to different political parties sometimes make statements that are not in line with the general position of the government. However, in the period under investigation, this has occurred very rarely.

Japan

Score 6

Policy communication has always been a priority for Japanese governments. Ministries and other governmental agencies have long published regular reports, often called white papers, as well as other materials on their work.

Recent discussion of Japanese government communication has been dominated by the triple disaster of March 2011, in particular by the lack of transparency and failure to deliver timely public information about the radiation risks of the nuclear accident. This experience may have seriously undermined citizen trust in the government. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, trust levels in Japan with respect to the government have recovered somewhat, but according to Edelman 2017, the share of people reporting distrust is (still) high in Japan compared to other countries, and has indeed even risen by two percentage points since 2016.

Even within the ruling LDP, there is sometimes dissatisfaction with the government. LDP leaders occasionally make policy statements that are not fully in line with party positions, with one recent example involving discussion of what a change to the so-called peace clause of the constitution might involve.

The LDP-led coalition has pushed through its policy priorities more assertively than earlier governments, while giving less consideration to dissenting opinions. However, the confirmation of its two-thirds majority in the Lower House snap elections of October 2017 reflected the electorate's dissatisfaction with the opposition rather than approval of the LDP's policies, particularly on the issue of constitutional change.

Citation:

Edelman, 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer – Japan, Slide presentation, 21 March 2017, <https://de.slideshare.net/EdelmanAPAC/2017-edelman-trust-barometer-japan-73399853>

Werner Pascha, Overcoming Economic Weakness in Japan and the EU: The Role of Political Entrepreneurship and the Political Economy of Reforms, in: Jan van der Harst and Tjalling Halbertsma (eds.) *China, East Asia and the European Union. Strong Economics, Weak Politics?*, Leiden: Brill 2016, pp. 15-33

Abe's remarks on constitutional revisions inconsistent with LDP's intraparty talks, *The Mainichi*, 9 May 2017, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170509/p2a/00m/0na/021000c>

Lithuania

Score 6

The political fragmentation associated with Lithuania's ruling coalitions has made it difficult to formulate and implement an effective government communications policy. Line ministries and other state institutions are responsible for communicating with the public within their individual areas of competence; however, the Communications Department of the Government Office attempts to coordinate these activities and provides the public with information about the government's performance. For instance, a unified government portal that aims at providing relevant information to the citizens about the performance of the whole government (the cabinet, the Government Office, ministries and government agencies) was launched in 2015.

On the whole, the government lacks a coherent communication policy. Contradictory statements are rare but do occur to varying degrees depending on the particular

government. Although the Butkevičius government announced that it would pursue a whole-of-government approach to public policy and management, it was not able to achieve this goal by the end of its political term. Moreover, Prime Minister Butkevičius has himself publicly made contradictory statements on such politically important issues as tax reform and the future of nuclear power in Lithuania, probably reflecting the diversity of opinions within his party and the 2012 to 2016 ruling coalition, as well as changing political circumstances. Several ministers in the current government have little political experience, making it more difficult for government to effectively communicate policies.

In its 2015 report, the OECD recommended that the core government rebalance its engagement with other institutions by emphasizing its role as a facilitator of exchange and dialog across government and with non-state stakeholders, rather than primarily focusing on top-down communication.

Citation:

OECD, *Regulatory Policy in Lithuania: Focusing on the Delivery Side*, OECD Reviews of Regulatory Reform, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015 http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/regulatory-policy-in-lithuania_9789264239340-en.

Malta

Score 6

The Department of Information is responsible for providing public information on, among other things, government policies and plans. Each ministry has its own communications office to keep the public informed. Regular meetings of the permanent secretaries have enhanced communication procedures within the government. Also, the run-up to the EU Presidency has demanded better communication strategies and these have been adopted. Individual ministers hold daily press briefings and occasionally engage public relations firms. Despite progress, no studies exist to assess the impact. At times, it appears that the message has failed to get through. In 2016, the government spent €200,000 on advertising 2017 budget measures. Between 2013 and 2017 the government spent €2.5 million on social media, with the office of the prime minister being the biggest spender.

Citation:

How the Maltese government spend over 2.5 million in social media ads. Malta Today 07/11/17

South Korea

Score 6

President Moon Jae-in has emphasized the importance of cooperation among the relevant ministries for promoting sustainability. Significant agenda items requiring interministerial collaboration include the proposed energy policy, water-management policies and the smart-city creation project. In addition to communication with ministries, President Moon has placed a high priority on communication with citizens. He engages in more frequent press briefings than his predecessor, and holds public hearings where he is likely to have more opportunities to have direct

conversations with citizens. Moreover, as a symbol of efforts to reach out to citizens and promote communications with the general public, the government has begun allowing citizens and foreign tourists to drive or walk near the Cheong Wa Dae presidential office at all hours. The road to Cheong Wa Dae had previously been closed from 8 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. for decades. In a public survey conducted in November 2017, Moon's approval rating was tallied at 70%, due in part to his efforts to enhance communication with citizens.

Citation:

KBS News. "Activate the ministerial meetings for better collaboration." July 28, 2017. (In Korean) <http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=3523871>

Germany

Score 5

In a formal sense, the federal government's Press and Information Office is the focal point for communication, serving as the conduit for information originating from individual ministries, each of which organizes their own communication processes and strategies. However, this does not guarantee a coherent communication policy, which is a difficult goal for any coalition government. There is a persistent tendency of coalition partners to raise their own profile versus that of the other government parties. This tendency has increased because the upcoming elections in September 2017. Given that the traditional political parties are confronted with the success of a new right-wing populist party, the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD), conflicts between the governing parties have increased and have become a burden for strategic and coherent governmental policy communication.

Iceland

Score 5

The government of Iceland generally speaks with one voice. However, in the so-called West Nordic administrative tradition, where ministers are responsible for institutions subordinate to their ministries, every minister has the power to make decisions without consulting other ministers. Nevertheless, ministers rarely contradict one another and generally try to make decisions through consensus.

However, the 2009-2013 cabinet proved to be an exception to this tradition since three Left-Green Movement parliamentary members withdrew from the governing party coalition. That brought the government close to the threshold of becoming a minority government and forced it to negotiate with the opposition on contentious issues. Despite this internal dissent, the cabinet coalition held together to the end of its mandated term.

Under the 2013-2016 center-right cabinet comprising the Progressive Party and the Independence Party the situation has reverted to the traditional Nordic practice. The

leaders of the two coalition parties sometimes issued conflicting statements, but this did not result in any open conflict.

In early April, however, events took a dramatic turn following the publication of the Panama Papers, 11.5 million leaked documents that detail financial and attorney-client information for more than 200,000 offshore entities, exposing how wealthy individuals and public officials may use offshore bank accounts and shell companies to conceal their wealth or avoid taxes. On 3 April, the Icelandic state-run television (RÚV) showed an interview with Prime Minister Gunnlaugsson (Progressive Party) on a Swedish TV-program “Uppdrag granskning” (Mission Investigation). He was asked about his and his wife’s ownership of an offshore bank account in the Virgin Islands. Gunnlaugsson denied ownership, but after having been confronted with the evidence, he walked out of the interview. On the second day after this incident he went to the president, without the knowledge of the leader of the Independence Party, to try to convince him to dissolve parliament and declare new elections. The president refused. Later the same day, Gunnlaugsson resigned as prime minister but continued as chairman of the Progressive Party. The vice-chairman of the party, Sigurður I. Jóhannesson, took over as prime minister and new elections were announced for the autumn 2016. At the party congress in early October, Gunnlaugsson lost the chairmanship to Jóhannesson. In addition to Prime Minister Gunnlaugsson, the names of the Independence Party leader (finance minister) and deputy leader (interior minister) were both found in the Panama Papers, as was the name of the president’s wife, the first lady. Thousands of protesters took to the streets in Reykjavík as in 2008, forcing the government to advance the upcoming parliamentary election by six months, from April 2017 to October 2016. These events starting with the world-famous TV interview with the Icelandic prime minister at the beginning of April are the newest, and by far the most famous, example of open conflict in an Icelandic cabinet, earning the 2013-2016 cabinet the nickname “Panama government.”

An alleged breach of confidentiality and concealment led to the breakup of the Benediktsson cabinet (2017-2017) in September 2017. After only eight months in power, the center-right three-party coalition collapsed when Bright Future announced that they were ending their coalition with the Independence Party. A two-sentence post on the official Facebook page of Bright Future stated: “The leadership of Bright Future has decided to end cooperation with the government of Bjarni Benediktsson. The reason for the split is a serious breach of trust within the government.” Here, they were referring to news, which had broken earlier that evening, that the prime minister’s father had provided a recommendation letter of “restored honor” for a man convicted of having raped his stepdaughter almost daily for 12 years. Benediktsson, despite having been informed about this by the minister of justice in July 2017, kept this matter to himself until a parliamentary committee compelled the ministry to release this information to the press. This affair reflects the pervasive culture of secrecy that permeates Icelandic politics.

Italy

Score 5 Italian governments have in general coordinated communication rather weakly. Ministers and even undersecretaries have often been able and willing to express their personal positions without coordinating their comments with the Prime Minister's Office. Under the Renzi government, the prime minister had largely overshadowed the communication of other government bodies. Under the Gentiloni government, the prime minister and his press office have adopted a much less aggressive communication strategy. The prime minister intervenes much more rarely and generally adopts a softer tone. The government's strategy, because the main government coalition party's support for the government is less firm, has been to avoid divisive issues as much as possible. The fact that the leader of the largest party of the majority does not sit in the cabinet and that several ministers respond more to the leader of the largest party than to the prime minister has led to uncoordinated and contradictory government announcements.

Mexico

Score 5 Communication performances under recent administrations have been mixed. Former President Fox had remarkable public-relations talent, but not much grasp of policy detail. Under former President Calderón, there was marked enhancement in the general quality of official communication, but Calderón had less feel for the news media. Even though President Peña Nieto was an effective campaigner, the current administration has generally failed to communicate the importance and implications of its far-reaching reform projects to the public, resulting in eroding public support and low approval ratings. Even though the current administration spends exorbitant sums of money on promotional messages, their substance is more akin to pro-government propaganda than to truly informative and educational campaigns. Public relations spending appears to be intended mostly as a way to disseminate partisan messages, rather than to communicate policy.

Citation:

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/10/opinion/enrique-krauze-mexicos-dubious-reforms.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FKrauze%2C%20Enrique&action=click&contentCollection=opinion®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=8&pgtype=collection

Poland

Score 5 Ministerial communication is coordinated by the Government Information Center, a department of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. It regularly reports on government activities and connects to other ministries' press departments. However, the actual coordination of government communication has been low. Particularly, the

Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Affairs often put out contradictory statements. The information given by ministries has tended to be selective and highly propagandistic.

Slovakia

Score 5 While Prime Minister Fico was able to capitalize on his uncontested position as party leader to streamline communication in the second Fico government, the situation has changed since the elections in March 2016. However, the positions of the members of the new coalition government on major issues in 2016 – 2017 have been broadly similar, so that open conflicts have been confined to minor issues. Until the coalition crisis in August 2017, SNS and Most-Híd, the junior coalition partners, have been cautious to avoid engaging in open conflict.

Slovenia

Score 5 Ministerial communication with the public has been more coherent under the Cerar government than under its predecessor. Due to the prime minister's inability or unwillingness to control his coalition partners, however, there were instances of contradictory statements given in short periods of time. In particular, the ministers and parliamentarians from the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS), the second strongest party of the governing coalition, have sometimes publicly opposed policies proposed or adopted by the coalition. In April 2017, the Social Democrats (SD), the smallest coalition partner, opposed the government's proposal for amending the law on the public funding of private school.

Citation:

N.N. (2017): Govt moves to secure full state funding for private primary schools, in: Slovenia Times, April 6, 2017 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/govt-moves-to-secure-full-state-funding-for-private-primary-schools>).

Turkey

Score 5 In spite of its centralized and hierarchical structure, Turkey's executive is poorly coordinated and rarely speaks with a single voice. Contradictory policy statements on the economy (role of the central bank), security (failure in security and safety provisions) or education (reform of the examination processes) are regular.

In addition, under state of emergency powers, the voice of the president is considered decisive. Yet, a coordinated "division of labor" has not been achieved. Following the April 2017 constitutional referendum, the government initiated a project to prevent confusion over overlapping ministerial authority, reduce the "bureaucratic oligarchy" and improve the effectiveness of administrative processes.

Citation:

“Yetki karmaşaları mercek altında,” *Hürriyet*, 3 September 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yetki-karmasalari-mercek-altinda-40568608> (accessed 1 November 2017)

“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan TEOG ve LYS açıklaması,” *Yeni Şafak*, 27 September 2017, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-teog-ve-lys-aciklamasi-2796903> (accessed 1 November 2017)

“Başbakan Yıldırım’dan TEOG açıklaması,” 3 October 2017, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan-yildirimdan-teog-aciklamasi.gexFodLrykKgWvTynFNNow> (accessed 1 November 2017)

“Milli Eğitim Bakanı Yılmaz, TEOG yerine gelecek yeni istemi açıkladı,” 5 November 2017, <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/milli-egitim-bakani-yilmaz-teog-yerine-gelecek-yeni-istemi-acikladi-340141.html> (accessed 5 November 2017)

Patates fiyatında bakanlar da anlaşılmadı, 8 May 2015, <http://www.ohaber.com/patates-fiyatinda-bakanlar-da-anlasamadi/> (accessed 27 October 2015)

Erdoğan Merkez Bankası’nı eleştirdi, dolar rekor kırdı, 4 February 2015, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/ekonomi/2015/02/150204_erdogan_dolar_faiz (accessed 27 October 2015)

United Kingdom

Score 5

Compared with the culture of secrecy of earlier decades, government has become much more open in the United Kingdom in recent years. This is due to a combination of the Freedom of Information Act passed by a Tony Blair-led Labour government, and a willingness to use the internet to increase transparency and open up government. The government website (www.gov.uk) provides extensive information on government services and activities, and has been redesigned to be more user friendly. It is also a single gateway website, which aims to facilitate greater coherence in line with the government communications plan.

On international measures, such as the Open Data Index or OECD government assessments, the United Kingdom scores well and there is clearly a strong push from within the administration to enhance communication, for example with a strategic communications plan and a single communications budget.

However, while the mechanisms of communication are laudable, delivery can be criticized. Government communication around the divisive issue of UK membership of the European Union has been far from clear and this lack of coherence is still apparent as the government struggles to explain its stance to the public. So far, Theresa May has been unable to develop a clear message for her government. The division that marked the Brexit campaign has seamlessly continued in cabinet friction and intra-Conservative parliamentary quarrels.

Citation:

OPM Approach: <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/> is an open site with short articles on the OPM approach <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/communications-plan/>

Austria

Score 4 Previous cabinets used occasional, informal policy-coordination meetings to define the general direction of government policies. Following such meetings, the government would hold press conferences to provide the public with information about what has been decided. However, there is no evidence yet how the new coalition government will handle public communication.

In the past, government communication was dominated by the individual ministries. This communication is usually also seen as an instrument for the promotion of one of the coalition parties' agendas (and of the specific minister belonging to this party), rather than the agenda of the government as such. As the new government is based – like the outgoing government – on two more or less equally strong coalition partners, this might not change in the future. However, these partners have – at least verbally – committed to a coherent communication strategy and in this regard have also agreed to use one press officer for both parties.

Belgium

Score 4 Maintaining coherent communication has proven increasingly difficult in the Michel I government, with each party seeking to make a display of its contribution to governing and political power to its voters, particularly as the new electoral cycle has approached (2018 local elections and 2019 regional, federal and European elections). For example, members of the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), tasked with pleasing the party's center-right and center-left wings alike, have quite different views on immigration, inequality and taxation than do members of the more liberal-right N-VA. Government communication after the terrorist attacks on Paris and Brussels was more confused than usual. In the aftermath of the attacks, radical immigration and anti-terror policies have proven to be major points of contention, as have the (in some cases botched) tax reforms and energy policies (in particular the still-disputed nuclear phase-out). On some occasions, the prime minister's statements have even been publicly contradicted by other members of the government.

At the regional level, a series of scandals involving the abuse of public positions for private gain shattered the Walloon government coalition between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. The Christian Democrats withdrew its confidence in the government, which provoked ill-managed negotiations to form a new government. During that phase, many pieces of information leaked to the public, with the government seeming losing any capacity to manage communication.

Bulgaria

- Score 4 The coherence of government communication in Bulgaria is relatively low. The communication activities of the various ministries are not centrally coordinated, so it is easy for the media to identify inconsistencies and contradictions in the information and positions of different ministries. Under recent coalition governments, the lack of coherence is exacerbated by the lack of informal coordination between ministries. Many observers of the policymaking process feel that all too often public announcements and communications aim at hiding rather than highlighting and explaining the true intentions of proposed regulations and policies. Prime Minister Borissov's personal style of communication, which involves contradicting statements made by his ministers or representatives of other parties in the coalition, often complicates matters.

Czech Republic

- Score 4 The Sobotka government has largely failed to coordinate communication among different ministries, especially across the party lines. Coalition partners, especially ČSSD and ANO have been more than willing to express their different preferences and priorities, sharing these through the media. On a number of occasions, the general acceptance of government measures by the public has suffered as a result of contradictory statements about legislation or governmental position from coalition partners.

Romania

- Score 4 Both the Grindeanu and the Tudose governments have lacked a unified and coordinated communications strategy, defaulting instead to a decentralized approach with individual ministries' communicating new policy initiatives and programs. In both governments, announcements of different ministers have frequently contradicted each other.

United States

- Score 4 With politically appointed leadership in every agency, executive agencies and departments carefully coordinate their messages with the White House communications strategy. Agency press releases and statements on politically salient matters are often specifically cleared with the White House. During 2012 and 2013, a minor scandal developed over the administration's formulation of a public response to a terrorist attack on U.S. diplomatic offices in Benghazi, Libya. Eventually, the

White House released 100 pages of e-mails detailing discussions between the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the White House. In the end, it appeared that most of the revisions were prompted by the State Department and the CIA rather than the White House and were motivated more by concerns for accuracy than political effect. Regardless, the episode indicated the extensive involvement of the White House in public communications.

The Trump White House press office has been deeply implicated in defending or obscuring Trump's continual false claims. Using a rigorous definition of presidential lies, the New York Times found that President Obama averaged approximately two lies per year; Trump was on a pace that would result in 124 lies per year. Communications offices in the agencies repeat many of the same lies. (Note that we use the term "lie," which is uncommon in analytic discourse, because its meaning of intentional falsehood is evidently accurate. Some psychologists note that Trump, personally, may have a mental illness that results in nearly constant delusion; his spokespersons presumably would not share such delusions.)

Citation:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/14/opinion/trump-lies-obama.html>

Croatia

Score 3 The Prime Minister's Office is formally responsible for policy coordination and the communication of policy to the general public through the Public Relations Service. As the break-up of the coalition between HDZ and MOST (Bridge) indicates, the first Plenković government did not succeed in streamlining its communication policy.

Cyprus

Score 3 Government communications are mainly channeled through the Press and Information Office (PIO), which hosts and logistically supports the government spokesperson and has liaison officers for the line ministries. Today's over-mediated environment exacerbated, to some extent, long-standing problems of coherent communications. The president assumed the key role of presenting and explaining important government decisions and policies. Line ministers assumed their role to communicate policy measures in their fields of competence. However, again in 2017 the government's communication strategy suffered frictions with state officials. In addition, contradictions between previous positions and revised decisions continued to overshadow communication efforts.

Citation:

Our View: President to blame for lack of leadership in health battle <http://cyprus-mail.com/2016/06/14/president-blame-lack-leadership-health-battle>

Greece

Score 3

In the period under review, the incumbent government finally concluded the second review of the economic adjustment program with the country's lenders. However, while Greece's economy has stabilized and is no longer declining, strategic communication about the country's prospects remains largely inarticulate and incoherent. The prime minister, the government's spokesperson, the minister of finance and other ministers conveyed positive messages about future economic growth and the "exit of the Memoranda," while at the same time businesses have closed down or left the country, and the flight of skilled labor ("brain drain") continued. Nevertheless, the overall communication strategy has improved, reflecting the fact that Syriza trails far behind the largest opposition party (the center-right New Democracy) in all opinion polls. The government tried to divert attention from budget cuts and higher taxes by highlighting ideological and social issues of secondary importance, and emphasizing differences between "left" and "right" (e.g., minority rights, socioeconomic disparities and referencing the Greek civil war). This obscured and increased confusion about government plans and policies. However, the government communication strategy remained incoherent and defensive, and in specific policy sectors, such as taxation and education, the same minister or different ministers continued to publicly offer unclear and sometimes contradictory statements.

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