

SGI Sustainable
Governance
Indicators

2014 Policy Communication Report

Coherent Communication



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.

Hungary

Score 10

The Prime Minister's Chancellery largely coordinates and controls government communication. Ministers tend to follow the prime minister's message; and for this reason, the Chancellery has often been derided as a "chorus of parrots." Contradictory statements by individual ministers are rare. If they do occur, the statements are corrected quickly by the prime minister and his staff or aides. In December 2012, for instance, an improvised statement by Prime Minister Orbán in Brussels ended a period of confusion over the government's position on university enrollment.

Australia

Score 9

Australian governments have traditionally made considerable efforts to align their policy priorities with the messages that they communicate to the public, which has continued over the review period. This habit has been aided by a number of factors: a tradition of very strong discipline across all the major political parties (perhaps the strongest among the Westminster democracies) and 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 which will seek to exploit any apparent policy divisions within government.

Finland

Score 9

Since the position of the prime minister is one of *primus inter pares* rather than one of absolute leadership, it is natural that the government's attempts at speaking with one voice are advanced through discussion and consultation rather than through directives and commands. Furthermore, as directives and commands would easily come into conflict with 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 is governed at the time of writing under a broad-based umbrella coalition, which accommodates many diverse interests and ideological shadings, serves to diversify communication to some extent. The existence of an agreed-upon and fairly detailed government plan, on the other hand, serves to streamline communications.

Netherlands

Score 9

In the age of "mediacracy," government has sought to make policy communication more coherent, relying on the existing instrument of the National Information Service (Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst, RVD), whose director general is present at Council of Ministers meetings and responsible for communicating policy and the prime minister's affairs to print and other media. The RVD's director general is also mandated with communicating all affairs concerning the royal family, including its relations with the media. The government also tries to streamline and coordinate its external communication at line ministry level. In 2011 there were some 600 information service staff left for all departments (795 in 2009). The 1Logo project, for example, aims to impose a single brand and editorial policy on all websites run by the national government. Another project aims to create a single pool of government communication and information officials to be used by all departments. The project also includes establishing a shared intranet (rijksporaal.nl) and joint digital news service for all officials working for the national government. Another effort toward centralized, coherent communication involves replacing departmentally run televised information campaigns with a unified, thematic approach (e.g., safety). All these efforts to have government speak with "one mouth" appear to have been fairly successful.

Citation:

4de Voortgangsrapportage Programma Vernieuwing Rijksdienst, September 2009, pp. 11-12.

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

Sweden

Score 9

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. This strategy 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; it may even have been too successful. The media are increasingly complaining about problems with access to ministers or other representatives of the governing parties. There is also increasing frustration with the government'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).

United States

Score 9

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. Specifically, the emails revealed discussion between agencies over the set of talking points to be used to explain the attacks to the public. In the end, it appeared that most of the revisions were prompted by the State Department and 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 public communications.

Canada

Score 8

The current government has centralized its communications functions in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). All departmental policy communications must be approved by the PMO. This process effectively coordinates the communications (or lack of communications) of ministries, and aligns any departmental message with the government's overall communications strategy. In practice, however, there have been instances displaying an obvious lack of coordination in managing communications with the media. Media leaks – deliberate or not – are still part of the Ottawa process at both the political and bureaucratic levels.

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, and in recent years prime ministers have employed 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 lose their job. However, the fact that Denmark usually has coalition governments creates situations where the different government parties feel a need to communicate their views and visions.

Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, *Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark*, 2002.
Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*. 3. udg., 2011.

Ireland

Score 8

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 is a clear incentive to produce a closely coordinated communications strategy.

At present the introduction of legislation to permit abortion in certain circumstances has led to contradictory statements by government ministers, while tensions within the coalition are evident from differing views on economic strategy and austerity.

Latvia

Score 8

The government office organizes weekly coordination meetings of ministerial communication units. Communication and statements are generated by the ministries, not centrally, and they are generally consistent. A communications coordination council sets annual priorities for the main messages to be propagated to the public. At the political level, however, ministerial disagreements are visible to the public.

Luxembourg

Score 8

After Council of Ministers meetings on Fridays, the prime minister usually holds a press conference to communicate the body's work effectively and coherently to the public. This weekly press briefing had been the government's main method of communicating, but has in recent years become a rarer event. Neither the prime minister nor Council members have 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 give the impression of unanimous decision-making. The search for consensus is one of the main traditions in Luxembourg government. In 2010 however ministers became outspoken over austerity policies. During the coalition years of the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP) and the Christian Social People's Party (CSV), the press reported that there were some disagreement between government members, but such was never expressed explicitly by government members.

Citation:

<http://www.gouvernement.lu/gouvernement/sip/>

<http://www.land.lu/2012/11/09/die-fronde/>

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 center-left 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.

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 – 2007 period, when the Swiss People's Party's 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. This decline in the coherency of government policy communications can be attributed to the following factors:

- the structure of the collegiate body itself, which makes it difficult to speak with one voice in the mass media age;
- the Federal Council's poor crisis management with respect to international affairs;
- political polarization, even among the members of the all-party government;
- the systematic distortion of the Federal Council's communications indiscretions on the part of some aggressive media outlets; and
- the Federal Council's lack of authority or capacity to sanction communications indiscretions, and inability to manage its communication policy effectively.

United Kingdom

Score 8

Compared with the secrecy culture of earlier decades, government has become much more open in the United Kingdom, through a combination of the Freedom of Information Act passed by the Blair government and a willingness to use the internet to explain policy. The recently renamed

www.gov.uk website provides extensive information on government services and activities. The legacy of the “spin” approach that was a hallmark of the Blair governments has induced some skepticism about government communication. Although the present government tried to distance itself from its predecessor’s approach, it has fallen short of successful connection with the British public. Prime Minister Cameron has also tried to avoid the appearance of centrally dictated government communication, but there is reasonably effective management of communication. In a way, the challenge for the government is to achieve the communication of a common sense of purpose while retaining the distinct positions of the two parties forming the coalition. To some extent, the coalition partners have made public some of the internal policy disagreements, but it has been unclear whether this betrays a lack of coherence or simply a political desire to maintain their separate identities. Since the British public’s expectation is that the government presents a unified position, going “off message” is still an easy way for politicians to put themselves into the spotlight, but ministers tend to use off-the-record briefings. The government has occasionally suffered from this with respect to the issue of European integration, but has so far managed to contain the damage.

France

Score 7

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. Under the Hollande administration, the executive branch has demonstrated more leeway in this regard, as Hollande appears to prefer addressing differing views internally rather than have these differences of opinion be subject to external criticism.

The key problems with policy communication in France have come about as a result of the president and his administration’s lack of strategic and decision-making clarity. For example, many of the choices made by President Hollande have not been in line with his campaign pledges (and thus with his party as well as voters’ expectations). A poor communication of his budget-tightening measures has led to much public criticism.

Israel

Score 7

By law, the Prime Minister's Office supervises and coordinates activity between government ministries through a special division within the PMO. Yet annual reports from the state comptroller (in addition to a special report regarding the 2010 Mount Carmel forest fire) revealed major shortcomings in ministerial coordination, emphasizing the mutual tension and recrimination between ministries.

The power of the Ministry of Finance over other ministries with regard to budgetary issues can and has inspired arbitrary action; struggles over economic issues as part of the Arrangements Law have indeed damaged communications and work that was coordinated with government plans.

Pioneering work during the period toward creating more "open" government and improving government communications has also spilled over to improving interministerial communications, if not only because of the transparency that such a program promotes; yet as the initiative is just begun its effects are not yet apparent.

Citation:

"The Prime Ministers Division for Coordination follow up and Control," PMO's website

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

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.

Citation:

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

Poland

Score 7

Ministry communication is coordinated by the Government Information Center, a department of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. However, ministers have occasionally voiced different positions apart from the government, for instance on same-sex marriages or on pension reform. Moreover, the Government Information Center has failed to inform the citizens regularly or comprehensively about government activities. For some observers, this failure represents a major cause of the recent decline in popular support for Prime Minister Tusk and his Civic Platform party, as well as a decline in trust in government overall.

Portugal

Score 7

The government has internal structures for communication. However, it is facing increasing challenges to achieving coherent and coordinated communication. The difficulty has been growing since mid-2012 as tensions have increased within the coalition, the economic crisis worsened and the austerity measures failed to fully achieve their budgetary consolidation goals. This lack of coordination is evident in terms of:

- Proposals that are announced and then withdrawn or not implemented.
- Publicized disagreements between ministers.

In April 2013, the minister in charge of communication resigned. While the main cause of his resignation was not communication problems, he was heavily criticized – even within his own party – for failing to achieve coherent and coordinated communication during his time in office.

Turkey

Score 7

The spokesman for the Council of Ministers issues public declarations on behalf of the council. A spokesman's office was also established for the prime minister, which further complicated the coordination of the goal of a government that speaks with "one voice." Yet still some important ministers often make contradictory public statements in private to other members of the government. What's more, concerning issues of foreign and security policy and regional development, members of the government continually make contradictory declarations in public. Usually, however, the unquestioned authority and leadership of the prime minister by and large ensures that the government speaks with one voice, despite public differences in opinion.

Chile

Score 6

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. This was the case when the current government resumed power. There have been communication problems and conflicts followed by strong public criticism (and criticism from within the government's own coalition) regarding the work of the General Secretary of the Government (Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, MSGG) and, for example, regarding the appointment of members of the National Television Directorate (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, CNTV) which is governed by the MSGG. Furthermore, during recent years the reliability of governmental information has suffered due to manipulations that implied conflicts with external organizations, as in the case of the latest household poverty survey (Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional, CASEN) organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. A similar scandal happened recently in the case of the National Institute for Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE).

Germany

Score 6

In a formal sense, the federal government's Press and Information Office is the focal point for communication, serving as the conduit for information from all individual ministries. However, this does not guarantee a coherent communication policy, which is a difficult goal for any coalition government. The persistent tendency of coalition partners to raise their own profile versus that of the other government parties explains what has sometimes appeared to be very dissonant communications policy.

The coalition government in power during the review period displayed rather incoherent communications on a wide variety of issues. At the start of the legislative term, the CDU/CSU and FDP were unable to present the program of the coalition treaty in a coherent way. Instead, the governing parties quarreled with one another in public on a large number of issues. This tension continued during the government's entire term of office, although it improved somewhat toward the end.

In matters relating to the euro-area debt crisis, government communication was strongly concentrated on the chancellor and the finance minister. However, individual incidents evinced strong disagreements within the government. For example, Philipp Rösler, the federal minister of economics

and FDP party leader, defected from the official government line, according to which it was vitally important to secure Greece's place in the European Monetary and Economic Union, when he declared that in his view "an exit by Greece from the euro zone lost its horror a long time ago" (The Telegraph 22.07.2012), thereby publicly opposing his own government's rescue plans.

Nevertheless, the government's communication on the issue of the euro-area debt crisis was largely successful in conveying a joint and coherent strategic approach, based on principles such as conditional solidarity, the rejection of so-called Eurobonds and a strong emphasis on better fiscal governance .

Iceland

Score 6

The government of Iceland generally speaks with one voice. However, in the so-called West Nordic administrative tradition, in which every minister is responsible for the state institutions subordinate to his or her ministry, every minister has the power to make decisions without consulting other ministers. Nonetheless, ministers do not often contradict each other, and generally try to reach decisions through consensus. This said, the 2009 – 2013 mandate period proved to be an exception. In the beginning, the left-wing coalition government maintained an environment in which every minister's independence and authority to make decisions in his or her area was respected. However, in late 2009, some members of the Left-Green Movement parliamentary group, even government ministers, began to oppose measures brought by the government to parliament. For example, Minister of Health Ögmundur Jónasson resigned in October 2009 due to a disagreement over the Icesave deal with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Later, three Left-Green Movement legislators withdrew from the party group. This brought the government close to becoming a minority government, forcing it to negotiate with the opposition on some big issues. Jón Bjarnason, the minister of fisheries and agriculture between 2009 and 2011, was steadily opposed to Iceland's application to the European Union, and left the government in 2011. However, despite these repeated eruptions of internal dissent, the 2009 – 2013 government was able to finish out its term in office.

Japan

Score 6

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

The DPJ-led government (2009 – 2012) instituted a major departure from earlier communications policy by putting politicians with ministry responsibility, often the ministers themselves, in charge of representing their issue area in the Diet and in press conferences. Ministers and other politicians also used various means of communicating with the public, including holding press conferences and soliciting direct feedback over the Internet. While this may have seemed a refreshing departure from the previous regime's somewhat stiff communication patterns, communication may actually have lost transparency as a result.

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, and its long-run consequences remain difficult to ascertain.

The new LDP-led coalition started with a massive and – during its first months – highly successful public-relations campaign in support of its policy agenda. This included the carefully planned timing of announcements, trips and interviews. Although this did result in government high approval ratings among the public, it remains unclear whether the campaign will lead to true reforms or simply have produced a temporary upswing in the public mood.

Citation:

Kingston, Jeff, Abe-phoria: A national punching bag morphs into a popular leader, *The Japan Times*, 7 April 2013

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 Prime Minister's Office coordinates these activities and provides the public with information about the government's performance. On the whole, the government lacks a coherent communication policy. Contradictory statements are rare but do occur to different 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, the implications of this goal in terms of coherent communications had not been addressed at the time of writing. Moreover, Prime Minister Butkevičius has himself publicly made contradictory

statements on such politically important issues as tax reform or the future of nuclear power in Lithuania, probably reflecting the diversity of opinions within his party and the ruling coalition.

Mexico

Score 6

It is too early to evaluate Pena Nieto's communication style, as he has only been in power since December 2012, though early indications are positive. Communication under recent administrations has been fair. Former President Fox had remarkable public relations talent, but not much grasp of policy detail. For example, the president and the Finance Ministry occasionally provided conflicting economic forecasts. Under former President Calderón there was marked enhancement in the general quality of official communication, but Calderon had less feel for the news. He certainly ran a much tighter ship, with a clearer government line, but there were sometimes communication problems between the security sectors. Different agencies, namely the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Defense and the Attorney General competed with each other to take the lead in fighting the drug cartels.

Slovakia

Score 6

Policy communication has strongly differed between the Radičová and the Fico government. Prime Minister Radičová did not put much emphasis on coherence in government communication, but allowed, and even opened, controversies within the governing coalition. This pluralistic policy style often sent incoherent signals to the public. By contrast, Prime Minister Fico, leading a single-party government dominated by himself, has largely succeeded in streamlining government communication. Members of his Cabinet have made contradictory statements on only a few occasions.

South Korea

Score 6

The government seeks to coordinate communication between ministries, but contradictions between government agency statements happen sometimes. Bureaucratic politics and turf rivalry take place at various levels of policy-making and communication, but contradictions among ministries can be generally mediated by the Blue House and prime minister's office.

Citation:
JoongAng Daily 12 April 2010

Spain

Score 6

The government tries to speak with one voice. A communication office (Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación) exists within the Government Office (Ministerio de la Presidencia, GO), led by the Deputy Primer Minister Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, who also serves as the government's spokesperson. The communication office is responsible for coordinating all the government's information policy both internally (through a consultation procedure with the ministries, and by providing a press service for the entire public administration) and also externally (by informing the mass media of the government's activities, planning the political messages sent to the public and controlling institutional communication campaigns). 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. In late 2011, during the last months in office of the previous socialist Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero, in a very difficult political situation and with two successive spokespersons not based in the prime minister's entourage (Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba and José Blanco), the government lost effectiveness in its communication strategy. Since early 2012, with a new government and with the role of coordinating the messages of the different ministries returned to a deputy prime minister who also leads the GO, the coherence of communication has improved. Nevertheless, contradictions do occur from time to time.

Austria

Score 5

The Cabinet uses occasional, informal policy-coordination meetings to define the general direction of government policies. Following such meetings, the government holds press conferences to provide the public with information about what has been decided. These are typically led by the chancellor and the vice-chancellor, representing the two government coalition parties.

Government communication is overwhelmingly 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.

Belgium

Score 5

Most of the time, the federal government manages to maintain coherent communications and avoids ministers sending contradictory signals to the public, even though political parties come from different ideological backgrounds in a broad government coalition.

The high frequency of “other” elections (municipal, regional, European) however induces parties to keep differentiating themselves by highlighting their individual achievements. Strong party leaders are allowed to create a role where the party leader delivers the party message while party members in the government mostly align to the government strategy.

A striking example is the Francophone Socialist Party Prime Minister, Elio Di Rupo. He is in charge of a mostly center-right government that has achieved, and has publicly communicated, several non-socialist-inspired structural reforms. Still, the party leader (Paul Magnette) maintains the message that such policies do not represent the view of the Socialist Party itself.

A major weakness of this role comes, again, from Belgium’s institutional structure. As ministers compete for votes only within their own (linguistic) community, the competences of a member of government are much more visible in the media of his or her own community. This leads to situations where a certain topic of federal interest is mostly debated in one part of the country while widely ignored in the other.

Estonia

Score value_6

Ministries in Estonia’s government have remarkable power and autonomy. Therefore, ministers belonging to different political parties in the coalition government sometimes make statements that are not in line with other ministries or with the general position of the government.

Italy

Score 5

Italian governments have been in general coordinated communication rather weakly. Ministers and even undersecretaries have been able and willing to express their personal positions without coordinating their comments with the Prime Minister’s Office. The Monti government’s non-political ministers and dominant focus on economic and financial matters meant that the prime minister and the minister of finance have in general monopolized

governmental communication in an often coherent and efficient way. However, instances of uncoordinated and contradictory communications by individual ministers have not been completely absent. In particular this has been the case between the minister of finance and the minister of economic development.

Overall, it's fair to say that communication to the public of the (harsh) measures adopted has not been particularly effective and convincing. One reason is that the Monti government used a technical, cold and elite style in its communication. The other reason is that Monti's coalition parties supported the government's unpopular action in parliament but – as elections drew near – did not communicate that support to the public.

Bulgaria

Score 4

The coherence of government communication in Bulgaria is relatively low. The communication activities of different 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. Inasmuch as there is coordination of different messages, it is done mostly through the political cabinets of the respective ministries rather than as a matter of formalized administrative communication coordination procedures. Under the GERB government in 2009 – 2013, the active personal role played by the prime minister in communicating the policies of his government helped to deal with contradictory statements by different ministries, but sometimes also generated uncertainty and confusion about the government's positions.

Croatia

Score 4

Reflecting the strong overall position and the monocratic style of Prime Minister Kosor, the Kosor government was characterized by a relatively high level of coherence in communication. Under the Milanović government, contradictory statements by different ministries have increased, and the government has done little to streamline its communication policy.

Czech Republic

Score 4

The Nečas government was composed of multiple parties with different priorities and preferences regarding major policy issues. The establishment of a Government Information Center in 2009 was not sufficient to coordinate communication between the different ministries and to create the impression

of a unified government position. On a number of occasions government figures have complained that the social acceptance of government measures has suffered from contradictory statements by coalition partners.

Malta

Score 4

The government's Department of Information official role is to provide the public with information on government policies and plans. But this department has degenerated into a tool instead for defending government plans and policies, with a partisan slant. Ministries have come to employ their own communication officers instead, rarely consulting this central office; hence responsibility for informing the public has devolved on individual ministries. Yet as these offices do not have the resources needed to carry out this task properly, individual ministries occasionally engage public relations companies. Yet this too is often just a simple public relations exercise, and the government message may not always be factually correct or reflect the intentions behind government plans; too often the information released is of a superficial nature.

Romania

Score 4

While the Romanian government has published a lengthy governing program for 2013 – 2016, it has been only partially successful in its attempts to coordinate communication and policymaking across ministries. As a result, the Romanian media repeatedly reports contradictory statements between different ministers and the prime minister, undermining the coherence of the government's message. For Romania's current coalition government these problems are exacerbated by differences in policy preferences for ministers from different parties.

Slovenia

Score 4

Neither the Pahor nor the Janša government managed to streamline its communication. The Pahor government literally fell apart in 2011 because of the prime minister's inability to bring the different coalition partners in line. Prime Minister Janša benefited from the fact that his party had a majority of ministers in government and tried to impose some discipline on his coalition partners by an authoritative style of leadership and frequent coalition meetings. While he was more successful than Pahor in this regard, he too eventually failed to achieve a coherent communication with the public.

Cyprus

Score 2

The government's communications are channeled through the Press and Information Office, a department of the Ministry of Interior that supplies the government spokesperson. Liaison press officers are dispatched to individual ministries. There have always been problems with coherent communication, but the situation grew considerably worse between 2010 and 2013. Government members' conflicting policy positions were often made public, in some cases leading to the cancellation of presidential plans and measures. On some occasions, already-announced plans went unimplemented. This produced considerable confusion, leaving citizens with some uncertainty as to the government's actual course.

Greece

Score 2

For the Greek government, 2011 – 2013 was a period of hectic, if not panicked decision-making in order to avoid default. The government was preoccupied with negotiations with the Troika and the implementation of painful income and pension policies. Consequently, the government devoted very limited time and resources to communication, let alone coordination of communication flowing from ministries or strategic communication planning.

This proved to be a grave mistake for successive governments. Greek society had a limited understanding of the very few options available to the Greek government in order to avoid default and remain in the eurozone.

Messages were mostly coherent, not because of any purposeful coordination, but because all ministries were pressed to pursue the same policy of spending cuts and administrative reorganization. However, the fact that some ministers and most civil servants were reluctant to embark on any change sent a contradictory message to the rest of society – for instance, to private sector workers who took heavy income losses, and to tax payers. On the other hand, because of this communication void, the sensationalist press, some parties of the extreme right and the extreme left and narrowly focused interest groups were able to communicate to the public unrealistic, if not extravagant messages on policies, including suggestions that Greece allied itself to China and Russia, or that the public seized power by storming political institutions.

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