



Government resolution on communications during the term of office of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government



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1 Introduction

Communications are an integral part of strategic leadership. In its Government Programme, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government stated that it would issue a resolution on government communications during its term of office. The resolution describes the common objectives and operating methods of government communications and outlines the procedures for cooperation in communications within the central government. The resolution is an important element of the Government's leadership.

A key objective of government communications is to strengthen the democratic environment and democratic decision-making. To achieve this goal, communications must systematically promote freedom of speech, transparency, equality and non-discrimination.

The values, objectives and principles of communications adopted in the [Central Government Communications Guidelines \(2023\)](#) lay the foundation for implementing the resolution and for ensuring effective joint communications by the Orpo Government and the central government. The government resolution on communications during the term of office of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government was adopted at the government plenary session on 21 September 2023.

More information about the implementation of the resolution and the procedures and division of duties related to joint communications is provided in the Government Communications Handbook approved by the Prime Minister's Office. Individual ministries also have their own communication strategies and guidelines to support communications within the ministry and administrative branch.

2 Operating environment

The rapidly changing communications landscape requires increasingly systematic, long-term planning and overall management of communications by the Government and all central government organisations. Recent crises have further highlighted the need to examine the central government's joint communications as a whole and to ensure a clear division of leadership roles and responsibilities. In its report on the COVID-19 epidemic (S 2021-16), the Finnish Safety Investigation Authority OTKES recommended making clarifications to the chain of command and roles related to communications. A report by the crisis communications working group at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO 2023:1), for its part, proposes more effective coordination of official communications preparedness so that resources can be allocated to meet acute needs in the event of a crisis.

The rapid transformation of the information environment has gained momentum from the crises of the past few years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Social media has taken on a stronger role as an information channel, while traditional media outlets have lost ground, though they still enjoy a strong position in Finland. Social and traditional media are in constant interaction: content is shared from one to another, and audiences may no longer necessarily distinguish between the two. Algorithms and personal choices mean everyone has their own customised media and communications environment. The way we interpret information has become more fragmented, and the target groups of communications have become more diverse. The fragmentation of information environments has been fuelled by the increasing polarisation of society.

Media consumption has changed the most and the fastest among the youngest age groups. Messages, videos and images transmitted online are challenging traditional fact-based media and official communications. Old social media channels are evolving and new ones are taking their place. The pace of communication has accelerated, and visual communication is playing an increasingly important role.

Civic dialogue is taking place in new forums, and people are increasingly forming their opinions on the fringes, outside of the traditional democratic decision-making system. Hostile actors seek to influence people and society by taking advantage of the changing information environment.

Rapid changes in the operating environment mean that communications units in the Government and ministries must be able to cooperate more closely and evolve as needed. Consistent, systematic communications lay the foundation for strengthening the psychological resilience of society at a time when the information environment is becoming increasingly unpredictable.

3 Objectives and principles

Government communications are guided by the principle of public access and the values of central government communications: openness, reliability, impartiality, intelligibility, interactivity and service-mindedness. The right to obtain information on the decisions of public authorities and their preparation is a key basic right of all citizens.

The objectives set in the Government Programme cannot be achieved without systematically managed communications that are seamlessly linked to the overall management of the central government. Consistent words and actions support the resilience of society as a whole, including when difficult political decisions have to be made. In a fast-paced, unpredictable information environment, the ability to manage the whole picture and anticipate future developments becomes even more important.

The objective of central government communications is to provide a fact-based overall picture of the activities, objectives and decision-making of the Government and its ministries and to promote dialogue between the Government and the rest of society. The central government aims to communicate in such a way that people can trust they will be given correct and reliable information in an open, fair and timely manner.

The purpose of communications is to support the functioning of democracy and the realisation of citizens' rights. Consistent leadership and systematic communications increase predictability and improve people's ability to understand the Government's decisions, even difficult ones. It is important to bear in mind the growing importance of visual communications, such as images, videos and infographics.

Government bodies should be present on the communications channels that people use. New channels and forms of interaction can be used to support dialogue with the general public and stakeholders. The central government communicates primarily through its official communications channels, such as its website, while other channels play a secondary role.

Important issues should be communicated to the public at an early stage and during the preparation process. It is essential for everyone in Finland to know why things are being done, not just what or how.

The Government's messages and objectives should also be communicated clearly within the central government. It is critical that experts and leading public officials understand the Government's objectives and feel that they have an active role to play. Continuous open and trust-based dialogue between political leaders and public officials lays the foundation for timely and successful communications.

All communications should take into account accessibility and the realisation of linguistic rights. Particular attention will be paid to the clarity of communications and different language groups will be taken into account. Communications must also take into account the international media and other foreign audiences and communicate key policies as quickly and comprehensively as possible in English, too.

Changes in the security environment mean it is increasingly important for Finland to be able to tell its own story, including to international audiences. Finland's NATO membership also places new demands on the Government's joint strategic communication and its coordination both nationally and internationally. Systematic country branding helps make Finland better known on the world stage and places Finland's positions in a more understandable context.

Transformations in the information environment have also increased the need for strategic communication. Strategic communication is systematic and proactive communication that is based on a thorough analysis of the information environment, takes into account different target audiences and covers both words and actions. Strategic communication based on an understanding of the information environment strengthens psychological resilience and mitigates the effects of hostile information influence operations.

4 Cooperation in communications

The objective of joint government communications is to manage and coordinate communications systematically, effectively and in line with the objectives of the Government Programme. Joint communications create the necessary conditions for implementing the Government Programme and achieving the Government's strategic objectives.

The cooperation is based on the statutory duty of the Prime Minister's Office to coordinate the communications by the Government and within central government organisations. The ministries are responsible for communicating about their activities and for coordinating communications in their respective administrative branches. Common guidelines may be agreed on in forums such as joint meetings of the ministries' communications directors, where the goal is to plan, outline, coordinate and monitor the communications of the Government and its ministries.

The Government will agree on themes for which communications will be centralised to the Government Communications Department for the duration of the term. These include the key reforms outlined in the Government Programme in which the role of several ministries should be highlighted equally and uniformly at all stages of the reform process.

A joint technical communications pool will be established for the Government and its ministries within the Prime Minister's Office to centralise communications services requiring special expertise, such as streaming and photography, according to a separate agreement. In this context, it will be important to ensure that there are sufficient resources for the pool and that the ministries are able to contribute their resources. Any new recruitment to strengthen the pool will be made by the Prime Minister's Office.

Common operating models will also be developed for online communications, competitive tendering and stakeholder cooperation, among others. A project will be launched during the government term to create and introduce a common visual identity for the Government.

Communications on the Government's political decisions and policies and other central government communications form a common whole. From the perspective of government management, it is important to ensure effective coordination between the communications of ministers and their staff and other central government bodies. Cooperation between the special advisers responsible for communications in the Government groups and the communications departments of the Government and ministries plays a key role in this. Coordination is especially important in incidents and emergencies and in other communications situations with far-reaching cross-administrative impacts. Party-political communications and election campaigns, for their part, are the responsibility of the ministers' party political communications parties' communications services.

The Government Communications Department is responsible for communications related to the joint meetings of ministerial committees, including the President of the Republic and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (TP-UTVA), and concerning government negotiations, such as negotiations on finances and evening sessions. The Director of Government Communications participates in government negotiations and meetings of statutory ministerial committees, with the exception of the Finance Committee. Communications are discussed at these meetings as a separate agenda item.

Decisions on the communications of ministerial working groups are made when the groups meet to organise their activities. Ministerial working groups' communications are managed either by the Government Communications Department or by the communications department of the chair's ministry. To ensure successful communications, it is essential for a representative of the Communications Unit of the relevant ministry to attend the meetings of the ministerial working groups on a regular basis. Communications are discussed at these meetings as a separate agenda item.

In incidents, emergencies and other situations with far-reaching impacts requiring communications across administrative branches, the responsibility for coordinating and managing joint government communications may be assigned to the Government Communications Department. This decision is made by a government plenary session based on the proposal of the Prime Minister or another minister. The plenary session may also decide to activate the government communications pool and may enlist communications professionals from the ministries to strengthen the Government Communications Department in order to implement effective joint communications.

Understanding the information environment involves systematically identifying, analysing and preventing hostile, manipulative information influence activities targeting Finland and its democratic decision-making system and responding to these activities through strategic communications. The Government Communications Department coordinates central government communications and strategic communications during information influence situations with far-reaching impacts across administrative branches.

5 Implementation and monitoring

The government resolution on communications during the term of office of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government aims to support government leadership and the implementation of the Government Programme. The Government and its ministries will comply with the resolution in close cooperation with one another.

Understanding the communications landscape plays a key role in successful decision-making. The situational picture with regard to communications and the information environment, along with communications on the Government Programme as a whole, will be regularly discussed at different levels of decision-making, including in government talks and evening sessions.

Practices for implementing the resolution and monitoring the effectiveness of communications will be prepared at the meeting of communications directors and the results will be reported to the Government and the meeting of permanent secretaries as separately agreed. The impact assessment will make use of target group-specific studies, such as population surveys, stakeholder surveys, media barometers and employee barometers.



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