OECD Public Integrity Indicators – New data on quality of anti-corruption and public integrity strategies

By Zuzana Smidova, Agnès Cavaciuti, OECD Economics Department, and Jesper Johnsøn, OECD Public Governance Directorate

OECD's new Public Integrity Indicators offer a credible alternative to existing corruption-related indices, drawing directly on data from member countries instead of expert views. The indicators unpack the general notion of corruption into specific integrity risks and measure the strength of regulations, institutions and practices. The first data set for 36 countries – on quality of the anti-corruption strategy or strategic framework – has already proven useful for decision makers in strengthening their policy frameworks. It brings interesting insights on how countries are prioritising efforts to address corruption and documents the need to focus more on implementation. Analysts, national administration and international organisations can now explore these data that adhere to OECD standards for statistical quality.

The experience of OECD countries shows that addressing corruption requires a comprehensive policy approach, which in 2017 led to the adoption of the Council Recommendation on Public Integrity.[1] The OECD Public Integrity Indicators were developed to monitor progress made in the implementation of the Council Recommendation.

The first data set measures the quality of the strategies for

public integrity and anti-corruption (Figure 1) and is described in detail in our recently published working paper Anti-corruption and public integrity strategies – Insights from new OECD indicators (Smidova, Z., A. Cavaciuti and J. Johnsøn (2022).

Figure 1. Structure of Strategic Framework for Public Integrity indicator

Source: OECD, Public Integrity Indicators.

The dataset covers 32 OECD countries and four non-OECD countries[2] and shows that:

- One of the central ambitions of the OECD Council Recommendation on Public Integrity – a whole-of-society approach to curbing the most serious and detrimental forms of corruption such as undue influence, political and grand corruption – has not yet been translated into concrete policy objectives. In many countries, high-level strategic objectives addressing such forms of corruption are missing.

- In countries that do set strategic objectives to curb corruption, implementation is surprisingly weak. Our analysis shows that high-quality strategies correlate with the existence of comprehensive action plans and ex-ante analysis of corruption risks. However, such comprehensive action plans and monitoring reports based on reliable sources and pre-established indicators are often missing. The average implementation rate of planned activities of 55% means that almost a half of the planned activities were not yet carried out. Moreover, half of the countries do not track the implementation rate at all.
- Development of integrity and anti-corruption strategies should be transparent and inclusive. Yet, only half of the countries have ensured that integrity strategies went through standard public and intergovernmental consultation and included non-state actors in working groups to develop or amend integrity strategies. Stronger involvement of the non-governmental sector can improve the quality of strategies and increase trust in government.

A majority of countries adopted a single strategy approach, while six do not have strategic frameworks for reducing corruption in place at all (Figure 2). Countries with the single strategy approach tend to have comprehensive strategic framework for public integrity.

Figure 2. Countries' overall score on the indicator of Strategic Framework for Public Integrity

Aggregate indicator, equal weights of subcomponents, 2021
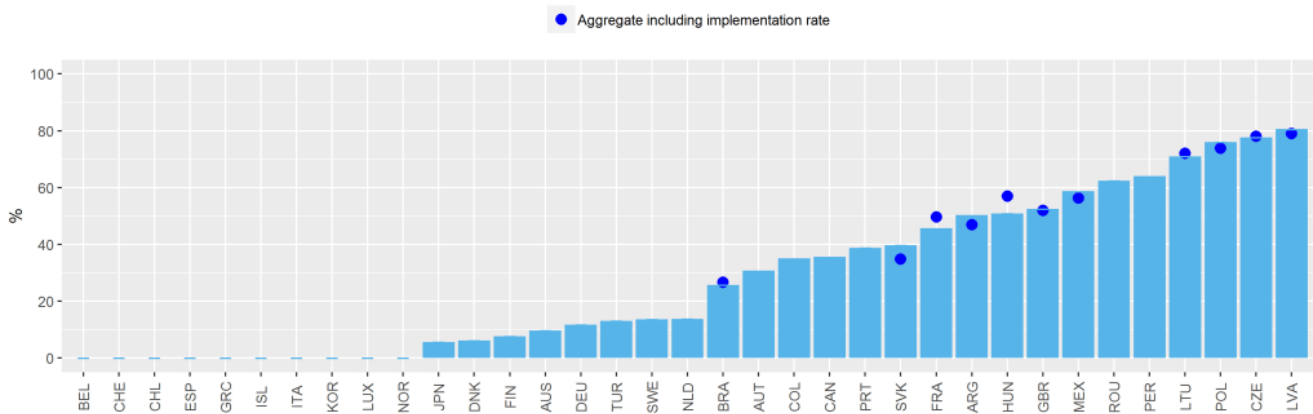
Note: A higher score indicates better quality of strategic framework for public integrity. Countries with zero have either adopted strategic framework at a level below Government (Council of Ministers or equivalent) or do not have strategic framework in place at all. Blue dots show aggregate indicator including implementation rate. Due to lack of data, the aggregate score without implementation rate is shown in bars.
Source: OECD, Public Integrity Indicators.

Countries where the general population and business experience and perceive corruption as a highly problematic issue tend to have better strategic frameworks.[3] One possible explanation could be that since those countries face numerous corruption problems, they dedicate more efforts to putting in place strategic objectives to address the challenge. However, existing measures focus on petty corruption. Arguably, all countries face corruption risks, albeit in different ways.

This is the first time that an international organisation has developed a set of standard indicators in the area of anti-corruption policies, using primary data validated by countries. A key advantage of these indicators is that they build on administrative data and in some cases big data from public registries and databases that are becoming increasingly available to use for performance measurement. Most existing anti-corruption and corruption indices were developed decades ago and mainly for advocacy reasons. They rely on perceptions of experts, are ill-suited for monitoring of developments over time and give only little guidance in terms of improvements

needed in specific policies.

The data are accessible through the OECD Public Integrity Indicators portal, which provides an overview of performance for each country in comparison with the OECD average and top performers, to identify best practices in each policy area. Further data are being collected and will be added to the portal.

Find out more:

Smidova, Z., A. Cavaciuti and J. Johnsøn (2022), "Anti-corruption and public integrity strategies — Insights from new OECD indicators", *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1725, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a925c7fd-en.

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[1] Public integrity — taken here as a synonym of anti-corruption policies — goes in fact beyond the enforcement and criminal acts that are at the core of the usual anti-corruption policies. It includes preventive measures, integrity violations (not necessarily criminal offences) and administrative offences. In the words of the 2017 Council Recommendation public integrity refers to the *consistent alignment of, and adherence to, shared ethical values, principles and norms for upholding and prioritising the public interest over private interest in the public sector.*

[2] Non-OECD countries covered are Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Romania. Seven OECD countries did not provide data: Belgium, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Slovenia. Validation is pending for Costa Rica, and data collection is ongoing for other countries. Five other sets of public integrity indicators are planned, covering accountability of public policymaking, external oversight and control, meritocracy of the public sector, risk management and enforcement.

[3] A major shortcoming of comparing results with population and business surveys is that they often focus on petty corruption or general perceptions, and do not capture well certain types of corruption in the wider sense — e.g. revolving doors issues, trading of influence, bid rigging in public procurement — and no country is immune to such wrongdoing.