

Foreword

By signing Mexico’s General Law of the National Anticorruption System (NACS) into force on 18 July 2016, President Peña Nieto cleared the way for one of the key pillars of his administration’s reform agenda and took a major step forward in the fight against corruption in Mexico. The law brought to fruition a constitutional amendment which embodied the NACS into the highest law of the land and signalled a decidedly tougher stance on a problem that has plagued the country for far too long.

If successful, Mexico’s new national and local anti-corruption systems have the potential to be “game-changers” for the country’s anti-corruption agenda by addressing fragmentation in policies, improving co-ordination for more effective implementation, and ending impunity. The groundwork has been laid for success, with few other reforms enjoying such resounding support from citizens and civil society alike.

Passage of the General Law of the NACS – strengthened by a range of complementary laws and secondary policies – could not have come at a better time. Mexican citizens have roundly rejected what they perceive as a political and governance system with high levels of corruption that limits their opportunities for better lives and social mobility. Indeed, recent scandals and allegations against top political figures have made calls for change all the louder. In a 2015 Gallup Poll, over 70% of citizens reported they believed corruption to be widespread in government.

Plummeting confidence and high levels of corruption have, in turn, spilled over onto economic performance. The renowned annual competitiveness report by the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO) estimates that 5% of Mexican GDP is lost to corruption yearly; other reports place losses closer to 9% of GDP.

While bleak, this picture demonstrates both the stakes and the challenges facing the NACS. The *OECD Integrity Review of Mexico* shows that if corruption is not tackled effectively, it will be impossible to effectively address many of the other dire challenges facing the country: slumping productivity and competitiveness, stubborn inequality, serious regional security issues and more. Corruption is unfortunately a culprit behind many of these obstacles.

While the new reforms deserve to be acknowledged, whether they lead to real change will depend on the extent and success of their implementation. While recognising progress, the present review warns of the challenges of implementing such large-scale reforms. Important investments in awareness-raising, capacity-building, and institution-building must soon follow. Key steps include: providing ethics committees with permanent staff and clearer mandates, further refining the Procurement Protocol to make it more feasible, clarifying conflict-of-interest policies, protecting the rights of those who report wrong-doing, and equipping internal controllers for disciplinary investigations and risk management.

To support the Government of Mexico in achieving successful implementation, the review draws on international good practices and lessons learned from lead peer reviewers across the OECD, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany and the United States. The review process has also included a series of workshops on the key elements of strong public sector integrity systems, such as ethics, conflict of interest, control and audit, disciplinary systems, reporting mechanisms and whistle-blower protections. Moreover, the OECD is already working with several subnational governments (Coahuila, Mexico City, and Nuevo León) to support the implementation of Local Anti-corruption Systems.

The letter of the law must now translate into extensive institutional, behavioural and cultural change. While it will take time and doggedness to usher in changes, the new system must not fail. Looking ahead, the OECD remains a partner in supporting implementation and will monitor progress on the achievement of the policy recommendations of this report in 2018.



Angel Gurría
OECD Secretary-General

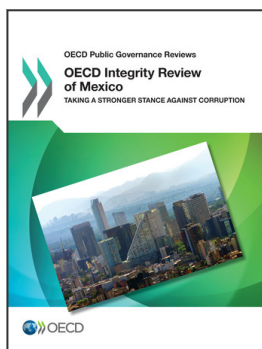
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