

Foreword

Good regulatory outcomes depend on more than well-designed rules and regulations. They also require bodies to administer these rules to ensure that the right policy outcomes are realised. Regulators are at the delivery end of the policy cycle and their job is inherently a complex one, requiring neutral engagement with a variety of actors, including government, citizens and regulated entities.

The model of arms-length regulators, based on strong technical capacity, transparency, autonomy and constructive engagement with stakeholders, can help regulators tackle this complex landscape. However, regulators need to be correctly equipped to carry out these fundamental tasks and stay abreast of evolving contexts. The good governance of regulators helps ensure that regulatory decisions are made on an objective, impartial and consistent basis, without conflict of interest, bias or improper influence.

To support regulators as they face these challenges, the OECD has developed a framework to assess and strengthen their organisational performance and governance structures. The framework analyses regulators' internal and external governance, including their organisational structures, behaviour, accountability, business processes, reporting and performance management, as well as role clarity, relationships, distribution of powers and responsibilities with other government and non-government stakeholders.

This report applies this Performance Assessment Framework to Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency. This is the first time that the OECD has applied the framework to an environmental regulator, rather than an economic regulator, demonstrating its versatility across different contexts and sectors.

The report finds that the EPA is a highly trusted and respected institution. However, the context in which it operates is evolving rapidly. For example, a significant new environmental policy has recently been introduced, and pressures on licensing and enforcement functions are increasing as economic activity in Ireland picks up. These changes demand a well-thought-through strategic response by the organisation about its future role and objectives. This report identifies opportunities for the EPA to build on its strong reputation and continue to ensure its effectiveness as a modern regulator and employer.

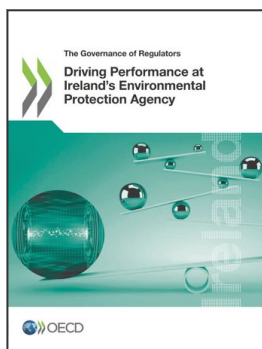
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