

Introduction

The main objective of the *Government at a Glance* series is to provide reliable, internationally comparative data on government activities and their results in OECD countries and beyond. In turn, these data can be used by countries to benchmark their governments' performance, to track their own and international developments over time and to provide evidence to their public policy making.

The indicators in *Government at a Glance* are becoming themselves a measuring standard in many fields of public governance. In addition to the core indicators that constitute the trademark of the publication, this third edition includes a selection of new indicators and additional data sources, allowing for a more complete picture of public administrations across OECD countries.

What's new in *Government at a Glance 2015*?

Like in every edition, this 2015 edition of *Government at a Glance* provides a mix between core chapters that are repeated in every edition and new features. The core chapters of *Government at a Glance* are Chapter 2: Public finance and economics, Chapter 3: Public employment and compensation, Chapter 7: Public sector integrity, Chapter 9: Public procurement and Chapter 11: Core government results (entitled "Strategic governance" in the previous edition). In addition to those core chapters, this *Government at a Glance 2015* edition presents a series of new and consolidated features:

- A new chapter on "Institutions" (Chapter 4) is introduced, focusing this year on the centres of government, which play a key role in ensuring strategic foresight and a whole-of-government approach to public policy reform and implementation. Depending on the country, the centre of government institutions correspond to the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Finance and/or Treasury Board. This chapter is based on the responses provided by the delegates of the OECD Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government to a survey conducted in 2013. Data collected through this network represent one of the first cross-national empirical assessments of centres of government. The content highlights the main functions and policy tools of these institutions and provides a unique knowledge base that countries can draw on to benchmark the performance and evolution of their centres of government.
- Chapter 8 on "Regulatory Governance" is not an entirely new chapter but had not been updated for some time (it was last published in 2009). Recent developments in this area have modified in large part the content of the chapter. In this year's edition, the chapter on regulations provides a series of indicators on the regulatory cycle and the process of making regulations including stakeholders' engagement and *ex post* evaluation. These indicators are based on the 2014 *Survey on Regulatory Policy and Governance*, which builds on the 2012 Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance, where countries have agreed to adhere to the principles of open government, including transparency and participation in the regulatory process.

- Chapter 12 on “Serving citizens”, provided as a special feature in 2013, has been consolidated and now provides a broader set of internationally comparable measures on services to citizens. Developed in close collaboration with other OECD directorates specialised in health care and education and in close collaboration with OECD countries, this year’s chapter focuses on three sectors: health care, education and justice. It builds on a consolidated and structured framework to assess the degree of access, responsiveness and quality of services to citizens.
- In addition to the new and consolidated chapters, the publication also provides new indicators in the areas of public finances (financial net worth, gross debt), human resource management (focus on the impact of budget constraints on HRM practices), budgeting (health budgeting, cost-benefit analysis) and digital government (social media use by governments and a new *OURdata* Index: **O**pen, **U**seful, **R**eusable Government Data).

Definition of government

Data on public finances are based on the definition of the sector “general government” found in the *System of National Accounts* (SNA). Accordingly, general government comprises ministries/departments, agencies, offices and some non-profit institutions at the central, state and local level as well as social security funds. Data on revenues and expenditures are presented both for central and sub-central (state and local) levels of government and (where applicable) for social security funds. However, data on employment refer to the public sector, which covers both general government as well as public corporations, such as publicly owned banks, harbours and airports. Finally, data on public management practices and processes refer to those practices and processes in the central level of government only.

Framework and structure of the publication

Government at a Glance covers more than the 34 OECD countries, including data, when available, on accession countries (Colombia, Latvia and Russia) as well as other major economies of the world such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa. For some indicators, data from participant countries to the Public Governance Committee (e.g. Ukraine) have been included. These countries play a significant and increasing role in the world economy and in international political structures.

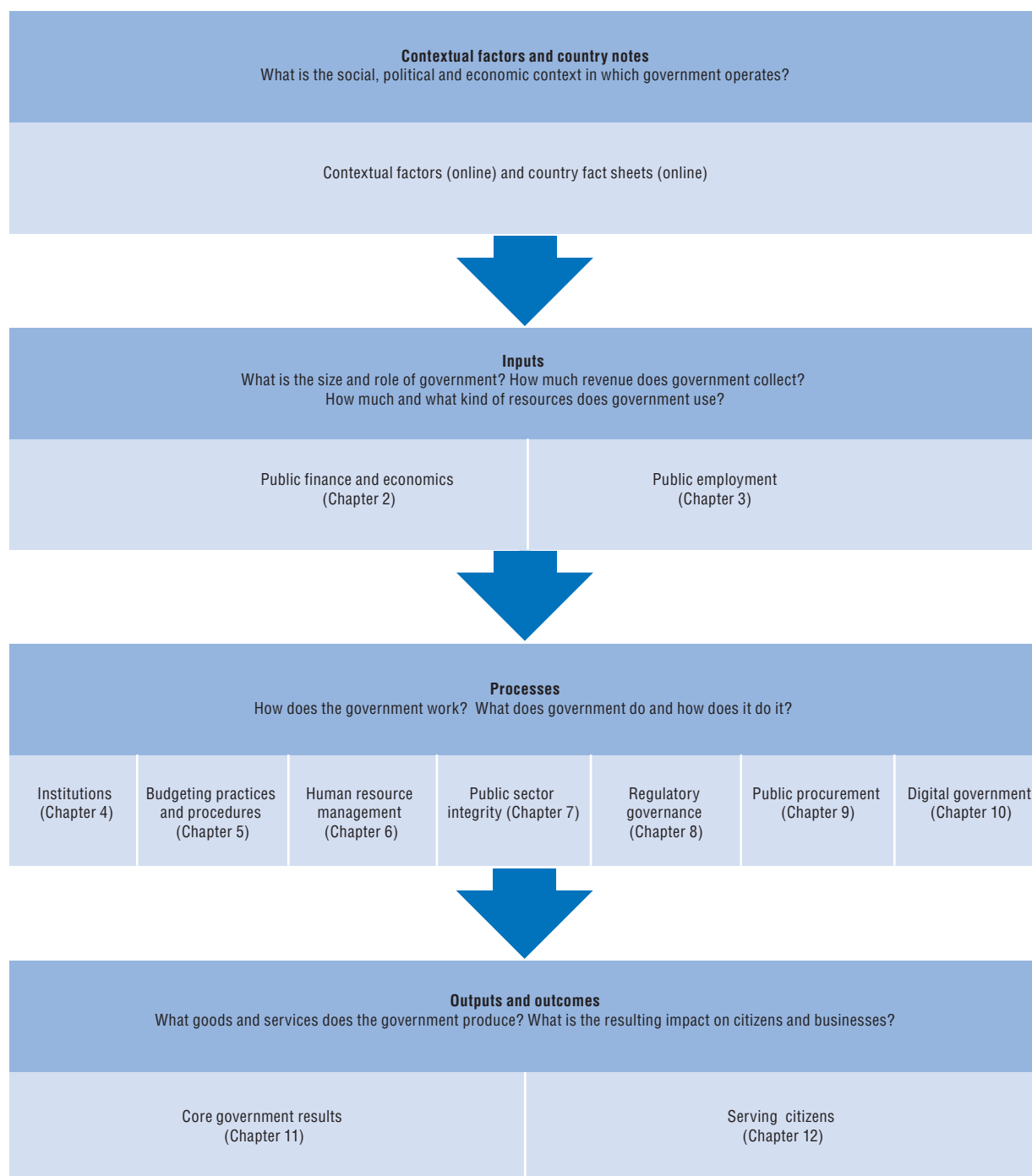
This third edition of *Government at a Glance* includes contextual information as well as input, process, output and outcome indicators. Figure 0.1 presents the conceptual framework for *Government at a Glance*.

Context

Contextual factors (online) present information on some key features of the political and administrative structures for each OECD country. Considering contextual information makes it possible to understand the major institutional differences and similarities amongst countries, and thereby identify better comparators for benchmarking purposes. In addition, the Country fact sheets (online) provide a country-by-country storyline on how the data provided in the *Government at a Glance* publication apply to the specific context of public sector reforms in OECD countries and some accession countries.

Inputs

Inputs refer to the resources used by governments in their production function, as well as the way in which they are mixed; these resources correspond to labour and capital. The

Figure 0.1. **Conceptual framework for Government at a Glance 2015**

chapters that describe these inputs are Public finance and economics, Public employment and compensation, including indicators on government expenditures, production costs, employment, and the role and characteristics of centres of government. Differences in these indicators can help to understand the different capacities of governments in producing and delivering public goods to citizens.

Processes

Processes refer to the public management practices and procedures undertaken by governments to implement policies. These address the means used by public administrations to fulfil their duties and obtain their goals. In consequence, they are often essential for ensuring the rule of law, accountability, fairness and openness of government actions. Public sector reforms are usually targeted towards the improvement of processes; as such they capture most of the public's attention. This edition includes information on institutions (centre of government), budget practices and procedures, human resource management in times of austerity, public sector integrity (managing conflicts of interest, lobbying rules and procedures, and asset disclosure of public servants), regulatory governance, public procurement and digital government.

Outputs and outcomes

The dividing line between outputs and outcomes can be blurry. While outputs refer to the amount of goods and services produced by governments, outcomes show the effects of policies and practices on citizens and businesses. The success of a given policy should be measured, at a first stage, by outputs but should ultimately be judged by the outcomes it achieves. Generally speaking, outcomes refer to the effects of public programmes and services on citizens, in terms of welfare gains, health gains, educational/learning gains, and so on. While these outcomes can certainly be affected by the quality of programmes and services provided, they can also be affected by other factors, such as the socio-economic background of the population and individual behavioural factors.

In *Government at a Glance 2015*, the measures of outputs and outcomes are provided in two distinct chapters:

- The Core government results chapter focuses on whole-of-government aspects such as the confidence of citizens in their national government, perception of corruption, the rule of law, income redistribution and broad measures of public sector efficiency (output-based) and cost effectiveness (outcome-based).
- The Serving citizens chapter follows a sectoral approach to measuring outputs and outcomes of public sector activities. Based on a consolidated framework developed horizontally with other OECD directorates and in collaboration with OECD countries, the chapter provides measures of services to citizens in terms of access, responsiveness and quality. This year's edition focuses on three sectors: health care, education and the judicial system.

Future activities

In order to produce *Government at a Glance*, the OECD works in close co-operation with other organisations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Justice Project, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), Gallup and the European Commission, to provide a comprehensive view of what governments do and how they do it, while avoiding duplication of data collection.

Co-operation is to be strengthened as a way of ensuring the comparability of data across countries that are covered in the publication.

For future editions of the publication, the *Government at a Glance* team is planning to:

- Map public sector agencies and their characteristics.
- Update and expand the data collection on the characteristics of the public sector workforce through the strategic HRM survey (age, gender, education level, etc.).

- Repeat the data collection on public sector compensation.
- Collect new data on open government practices and stakeholder and citizen engagement mechanisms in public administrations.
- Collect data on the efficiency and performance of judicial systems for all OECD countries, using the survey instrument of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice.

Regional and country-focused editions of *Government at a Glance*

For the first time in 2014, a regional edition of *Government at a Glance* was released. *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2014: Towards Innovative Public Financial Management* focused on the most relevant policy issues and topics in the region. In addition, a country-focused edition, *Government at a Glance: How Hungary Compares*, was released in May 2015, focusing on the key aspects of public sector reforms in Hungary and comparing trends to neighbouring countries. More regional and country-focused editions of *Government at a Glance* are expected to be published later in 2015 and in 2016.

All data and indicators on public governance now accessible online!

Another new feature this year is that all data collected by the OECD Public Governance Directorate for the production of *Government at a Glance* (including the previous editions) and for other purposes are available online on the OECD website. Readers interested in using the data presented in this publication for further analysis and research are encouraged to consult the full documentation of definitions, sources and methods presented in the *Government at a Glance* publication and online. This database includes both qualitative and quantitative indicators on public sector inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes and will be updated on a regular basis as new data are released.



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