

Preface

Over the past two decades several countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region have made great strides to reform their economies and improve the performance of their public sectors. As shown in the first edition of *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean*, these reforms contributed to strengthening public institutions and laying the policy foundations for more egalitarian societies. In order to sustain inclusive growth, LAC countries need to build on past achievements and continue to implement policy reforms.

Compared to the previous edition of *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean*, which placed special emphasis on public financial management, this second report covers additional countries as well as a wider range of public management areas, including: the redistributive impact of fiscal policy; the role and influence of the centre of government; open government and open government data policies; digital government; regulatory governance; cost-benefit analysis in the appraisal of public investment projects; and budgeting in health systems. Data for many of these areas has been collected for the first time in the region.

Through taxes and spending, fiscal policy plays a key role in reducing income inequality. However, tax-benefit systems tend to be less redistributive in the LAC region than among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. This publication argues that in-kind transfers (e.g. health and education) are the most powerful tool for achieving income redistribution in the LAC context, and, as such, are areas where most countries in the region have focused their efforts. However, these transfers are not sufficient, and to further improve income redistribution there is a need to better monitor the overall quality of public expenditure, strengthen the design of social protection systems and improve the incidence of targeted spending in some sectors.

Governments can help guarantee equitable access to services by ensuring transparency and promoting inclusive policy making. For example, most countries in the region have implemented open government strategies and are increasingly using Information and Communications Technologies to streamline government processes and facilitate interactions between citizens and governments. Over the past decade, open government has evolved from being an objective in itself to being an instrument for achieving broader policy goals such as inclusive growth and the sustainable development goals. Still, to fully reap the benefits of open government there is a need for more and better co-ordination by the centre of government, particularly at the policy design and evaluation stages, as well as more effective use of different tools for engaging citizens.

Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017, provides a dashboard of 45 internationally comparable indicators to help governments benchmark their practices and performance, not only across countries in the region, but to the OECD member countries as well. It can also inform public debate on public sector reform policies.

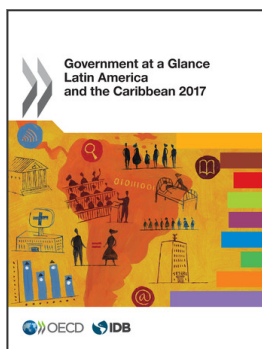
This publication is the result of a fruitful collaboration between OECD and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It brings together OECD methodology and expertise developed in collecting information on public governance practices from government officials, and OECD and IDB policy networks, and in-depth analytical and country knowledge, in almost all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.



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From:

Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264265554-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2016), "Preface", in *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264265554-2-en>

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