

7.3 Professionalisation of public procurement

As public procurement processes become more strategic about achieving governments' social and economic goals, professionals in the field need to acquire specific skills and competencies. It is thus in the best interest of governments to provide specialised capacity building and development programmes for public procurement officials. In fact, most inefficiencies in public procurement such as delays, and overpricing are related to the capacity of the public procurement workforce. These inefficiencies cause estimated losses in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region of an average of around 1.4% of GDP annually (Muñoz Miranda et al., 2022). Professionalising this workforce has become a top priority in public procurement reforms; at its most basic, creating an environment that enables such professionalism means cultivating the values and principles of a fair and transparent public procurement system (OECD, 2023). Consequently, the starting point for any procurement system must be a team of professionals who value the public good, the rule of law and transparency (Cruz and De Michele, 2022).

In 2022, 17 out of 19 surveyed LAC countries (89%) did not recognise public procurement as a standalone profession in the public administration, with Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago the only countries to do so. This contrast with 39% of OECD countries. This lack of recognition in LAC prevents countries from identifying the right skills and competencies in the hiring process, and it can also make it challenging to attract and retain qualified personnel. Recognition may help procurement professionals to identify possible career paths and understand the capabilities they need to develop to meet their career aspirations (OECD, 2023). Paraguay offers an accreditation programme for the technical competencies of staff working in the various operational procurement units, while Trinidad and Tobago sets training standards, competency levels and certification requirements to promote best practices in procurement (Figure 7.7).

Eleven out of the 19 surveyed LAC countries (58%) have implemented at least one of a range of targeted measures to professionalise their public procurement workforces. For instance, 6 out of 19 (32%) have competency models, which define the critical skills necessary to enter a given procurement function. The same number apply certification processes for public procurement officials. These include Peru, which has conducted an impact assessment of its certification processes, helping to improve them and in turn improve the professionalisation of its officials (Figure 7.8).

Finally, conflict of interest is one of the most crucial risks for public procurement officials. To identify, prevent and manage

this issue, 14 out of 19 countries (74%) require public officials to declare that they have no conflict of interest or notify any potential conflict of interest for each public procurement process. The same proportion of countries limit certain public officials from participating in public procurement opportunities. In contrast, only 3 out of 19 LAC countries (16%) prohibit officials from holding certain positions after leaving office. Costa Rica has the most measures in place (six), followed by Colombia, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago, which each reported implementing five measures (Figure 7.9).

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the 2022 IDB-OECD Survey on the Implementation of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement in 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries and reflects the situation as of April 2022. The survey focused on the 12 principles in the recommendation, covering issues such as performance management, procurement workforce capacity and integrity in public procurement. Respondents were officials responsible for procurement policies at the central government level and senior officials in central purchasing bodies that are part of the Inter-American Network on Government Procurement (INGP).

Elements that contribute to recognising public procurement as a profession include job classification in the legal framework, a professionalisation strategy, a competency model, a certification framework, capacity building systems, and incentive mechanisms such as clear career paths and professional networks.

Further reading

Cruz, J. and R. De Michele (2022), "From fishing to catching: Developing actionable red flags in public procurement to prevent and control corruption", Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0004595>.

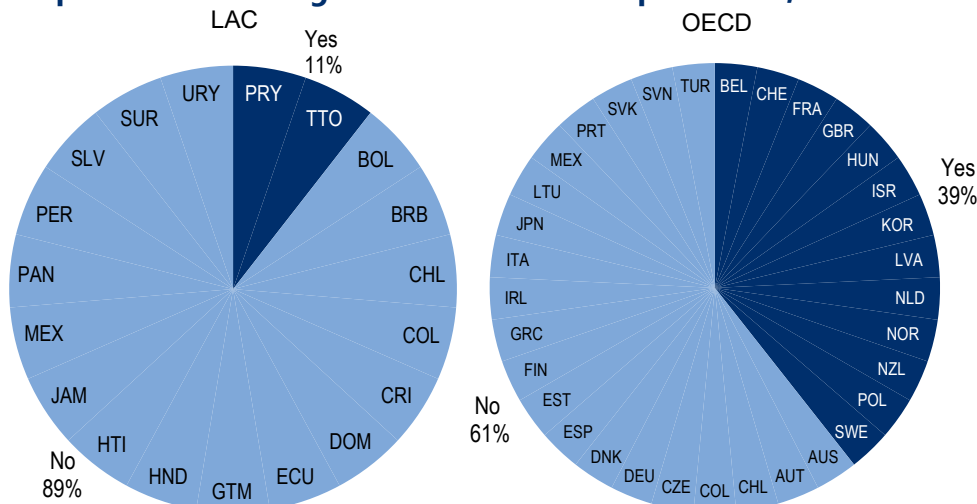
Muñoz Miranda, A. et al. (2022). "Digital transformation of public finances in Latin America and the Caribbean", Interamerican Development Bank, Washington, DC, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0004271>.

OECD (2023), "Professionalising the public procurement workforce: A review of current initiatives and challenges", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 26, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e2eda150-en>.

Figure notes

Figure 7.7. Data for OECD is from 2020.

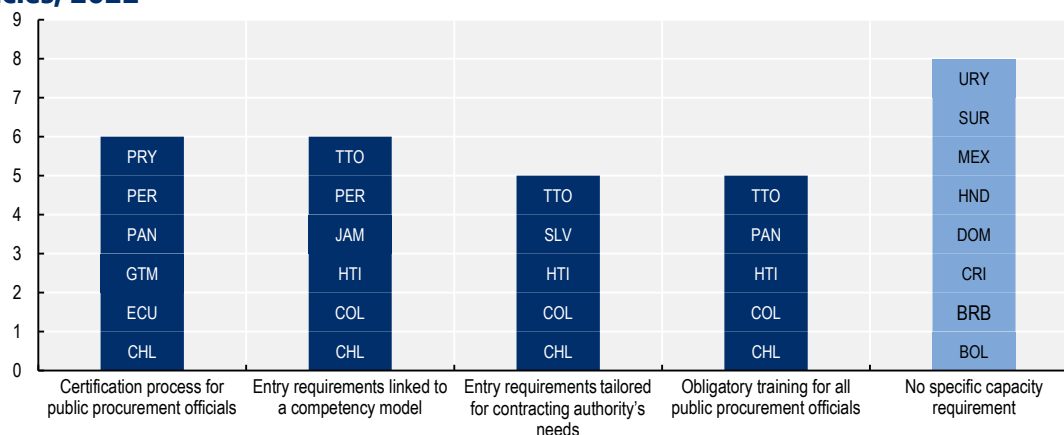
Figure 7.7. Public procurement recognised as a standalone profession, 2022



Source: IDB-OECD (2022), Survey on the Implementation of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement; OECD (2020), Survey on the Professionalisation on Public Procurement.

StatLink <https://stat.link/ka783i>

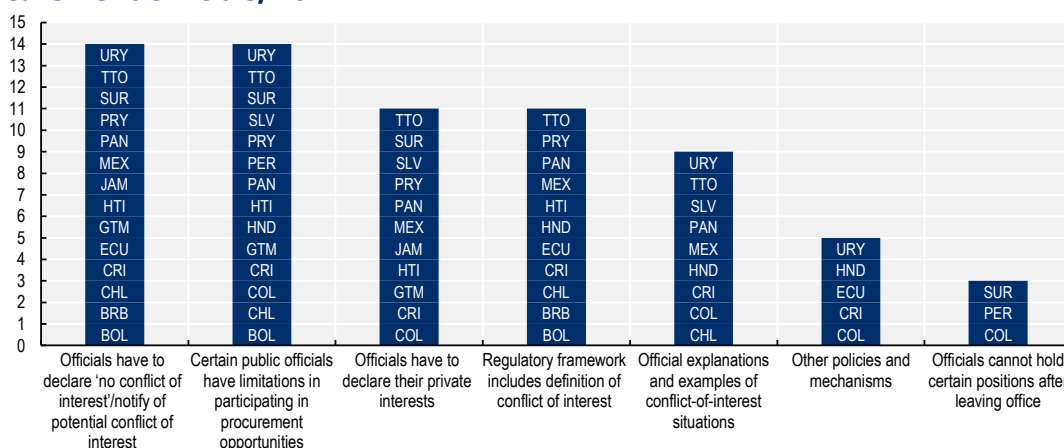
Figure 7.8. Measures in place to ensure that public procurement officials have adequate competencies, 2022



Source: IDB-OECD (2022), Survey on the Implementation of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement.

StatLink <https://stat.link/ug7hkd>

Figure 7.9. Policies and mechanisms to identify, prevent and manage conflicts of interest of public procurement officials, 2022



Source: IDB-OECD (2022), Survey on the Implementation of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement.

StatLink <https://stat.link/32zw6e>



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