

Stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making

Citizen and stakeholder participation can improve the design and public acceptance of infrastructure projects. In an era of multiple crises, using citizen and stakeholder inputs in infrastructure decision making can help countries address long-term challenges such as climate change, and promote minority inclusion, gender equality and biodiversity protection. The OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Infrastructure highlights the need to inform, consult, and engage with stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure planning and investments are informed by citizens' needs.

The OECD Infrastructure Governance Indicator (IGI) on stakeholder participation gives an overview of countries' performance in *developing national guidance, promoting effective participation, and ensuring stakeholder oversight over infrastructure projects*. The OECD average score is 0.52 but country scores range widely from 0.23 to 0.83 (Figure 8.1). While countries have shown some good practices, there is room to improve in all three aspects covered by the index.

Most OECD countries have put in place some mechanisms for citizens and stakeholders to influence public decisions throughout the infrastructure life cycle. Twenty-seven out of 31 OECD countries (87%) have developed participatory mechanisms for spatial planning and its relation to infrastructure development. For example, in Colombia, public participation in land use planning is mandated by law and takes the form of public hearings, petitions, and discussions during the planning permit process. More than half of OECD countries (20 out of 33 or 61%) have a formal requirement to consider and respond to inputs from consultations as well as to publicly disclose the inputs and responses (Table 8.2).

However, more could be done in the area of monitoring and oversight. Just over half of OECD countries with data available (17 out of 32 or 53%) give stakeholders a role in oversight and monitoring such as through participation in procurement, assessing and mitigating the risks of corruption (Table 8.2). In 11 of these countries, however, this role is not formal (established in legislation or regulation or part of a formalised process).

To ensure that participation is systematic and effective, countries can provide central guidance on how to design, implement and evaluate such processes. Most OECD countries have adopted such type of guidance (27 out of 33, or 82%). Only 24% (8 out of 33) have guidance specific to infrastructure or sectors. Countries can get more relevant and actionable inputs by improving the way citizens and stakeholders are identified and targeted, i.e., ensuring their role reflects the extent to which they are affected by the project. Countries should also take steps to ensure that under-represented or traditionally marginalised groups are heard and their views considered in decision making. Currently, 27% of OECD countries (9 out of 33) mandate outreach to under-represented groups, such as minorities, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities (Table 8.2).

Methodology and definitions

Data are drawn from the 2022 OECD Survey on the Governance of Infrastructure, conducted in May 2022, with responses from 34 OECD countries (Denmark, Hungary, Israel and the Netherlands did not answer to the survey). The survey monitors policies and arrangements in place at the national/federal level during the survey implementation (from May until October 2022) and does not cover practices at subnational levels. Spain and the United States have reported changes since then. Respondents were predominantly senior officials in the central/federal ministries of infrastructure, public works and finance, as well as in infrastructure agencies and other line ministries. The IGI on stakeholder participation is composed of three sub-pillars: participation guidance, participation practices and oversight, each with an equal weight (33%). The overall index ranges from 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest).

Stakeholder participation refers to all the ways in which stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery. Information is an initial level, characterised by a one-way relationship where the government disseminates information to stakeholders, both on demand and proactively. Consultation is a two-way relationship between stakeholders and the government. It is based on the prior definition of the issue on which views are being sought and requires governments to provide relevant information and feedback on outcomes. Engagement is a more advanced level of participation where stakeholders are given the opportunity and the resources needed (e.g., information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy cycle and in service design and delivery (OECD, 2017).

Further reading

- OECD (2022), *OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f765caf6-en>.
- OECD (2020), "Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Infrastructure", *OECD Legal Instruments*, OECD, Paris, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0460>.
- OECD (2017), "Recommendation of the Council on Open Government", *OECD Legal Instruments*, OECD, Paris, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0438>.

Figure notes

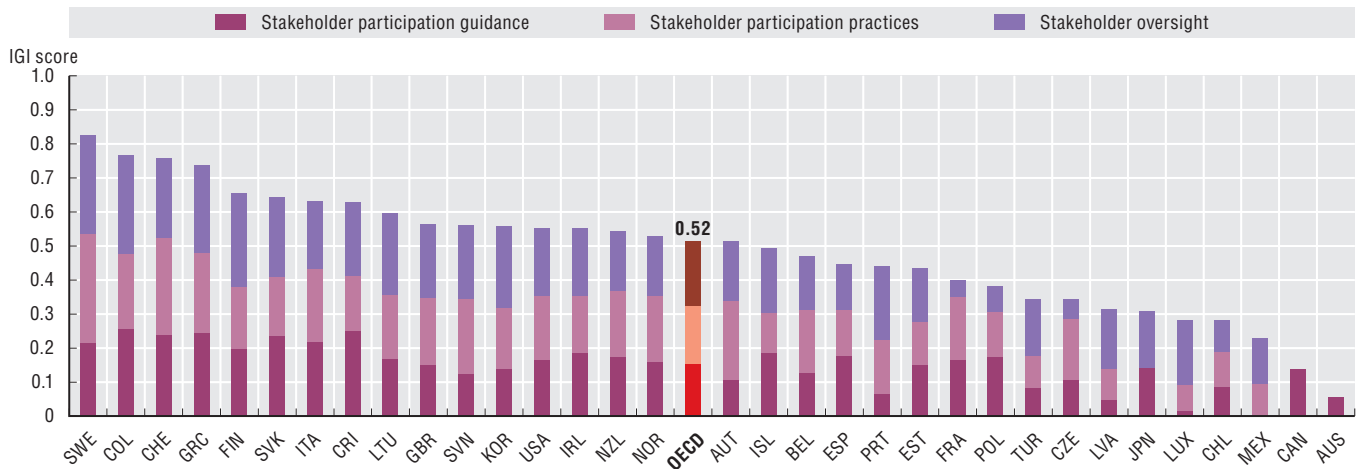
Data for Germany are not available. Data for Belgium are based on responses from Flanders only.

8.1. Japan does not have complete data for this indicator. For Australia and Canada, only the sub-pillars applicable at the federal level are presented. Only the sub-pillars with complete data are included (countries with incomplete data are not included in the OECD average).

8. INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

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8.1. Stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making, 2022



Source: OECD (2022), Survey on the Governance of Infrastructure – Part I: Ensure transparent, systematic and effective stakeholder participation.

StatLink <https://stat.link/xhe9mb>

8.2. Promoting stakeholder participation to better inform infrastructure decision making, 2022

Country	National guidance on stakeholder participation	Mechanisms for stakeholder participation on spatial planning	Consideration of and response to inputs from consultations	Mandatory outreach to under-represented groups	Stakeholder oversight and monitoring of public infrastructure
Australia	×	–	×	✓	×
Austria	○	✓	▲	×	×
Belgium (Flanders)	○	✓	▲	×	×
Canada	○	–	△	✓	–
Chile	×	×	△	✓	×
Colombia	●	✓	▲	✓	✓
Costa Rica	○	×	△	✓	✓
Czech Republic	○	✓	▲	×	×
Estonia	○	✓	▲	×	×
Finland	●	✓	▲	✓	✓
France	○	✓	▲	×	×
Greece	●	✓	△	×	✓
Iceland	○	✓	▲	×	×
Ireland	●	✓	▲	×	×
Italy	●	✓	▲	×	✓
Japan	○	×	△	×	✓
Korea	●	✓	▲	×	✓
Latvia	×	✓	×	×	✓
Lithuania	○	✓	▲	×	✓
Luxembourg	×	✓	×	×	×
Mexico	×	×	×	×	✓
New Zealand	○	✓	▲	✓	×
Norway	○	✓	▲	✓	×
Poland	●	✓	▲	×	×
Portugal	×	✓	△	×	✓
Slovak Republic	○	✓	▲	×	✓
Slovenia	○	✓	▲	×	✓
Spain	○	✓	△	×	×
Sweden	○	✓	▲	×	✓
Switzerland	●	✓	▲	×	✓
Türkiye	○	✓	△	×	✓
United Kingdom	○	✓	△	×	×
United States	○	✓	▲	✓	✓
OECD Total					
✓ Yes		27		9	17
×	No	6	4	24	15
● Infrastructure/sector-specific guidance	8				
○ General guidance	19				
▲ Required, and mandatory public disclosure			20		
△ Required, but no mandatory public disclosure			9		
– Not applicable		2			1

Source: OECD (2022), Survey on the Governance of Infrastructure – Part I: Ensure transparent, systematic and effective stakeholder participation.

StatLink <https://stat.link/jyp064>



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