

## Governance at a Critical Time for Public Policies

This fourth edition of *Government at a Glance* offers a comprehensive panorama of the capacities and performance of government in OECD countries and key partners at a moment when many are grappling with huge economic challenges and painful trade-offs. Ambitious goals contrast with the reality of a recovery that is still fragile in many places. Reforms and other essential programmes must proceed in a context of limited public investment. At the same time, societies have to urgently confront long-term challenges, including sustainability and climate change. Rising inequality is also excluding large segments of society from the benefits of growth and is constraining the return to full economic potential. The fact that trust in public institutions is strained does not make the task easier.

Governments are striving to leave the crisis behind and build the foundations for strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. They are also trying to restore the trust of citizens in their institutions. Government processes can help make policy outcomes more effective and inclusive by fostering transparency and engagement, generating evidence on the distributive effects of policies and reinforcing the system of checks and balances to ensure that policies and regulations both serve the public interest. Open government data (OGD) strengthens inclusiveness by proactively providing access to information, thereby increasing transparency and creating opportunities for citizens, businesses and civil society organisations to reuse the data in new ways.

*Government at a Glance 2015* demonstrates that there is substantial scope for improving stakeholder engagement in making and evaluating policies – a critical component of inclusive growth. The report underlines that information and communications technologies (ICTs) are not sufficient on their own to give citizens a greater role in decisions that affect their quality of life. The new OECD *OURdata* Index reveals that many countries have made progress in making public data more available and accessible, but large variations remain, not least with respect to the quality of data provided. Governments need to make participation initiatives more accessible, targeted, relevant and appealing.

The publication also underscores that public sector integrity remains an area of particular attention in the eyes of citizens and business. More can be done to avoid policy and regulatory capture by vested interests. Governments must provide effective protection to whistle blowers and extend private interest disclosure requirements to the judiciary branch and “at risk” actors including tax and customs officials, procurement agents and financial authorities.

These themes and others are reflected in the set of indicators presented in this edition. They enable evidence-based decision making and allow governments to compare their practices and performance to others. By extending the scope and timeliness of our governance indicators and analysis, and providing them in a variety of electronic formats, *Government at a Glance 2015* will be a critical resource for policy makers, citizens, and researchers in their pursuit of better governance and more inclusive policies for better lives.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angel Gurría', with a horizontal line extending to the left.

Angel Gurría



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