

Introduction

Objectives

The recent economic crisis has highlighted the role of governments as major actors in modern societies. Governments are expected to set the conditions to generate economic growth that will increase the well-being of their citizens, regulate the behaviour of business and individuals in the name of the common good, redistribute income in order to promote fairness, and deliver public goods and services to their populations, while being faced with fiscal constraints and demographic pressures. The ability of governments to operate effectively and efficiently depends in part on their management policies and practices in diverse areas such as budgeting, human resources management, procurement, etc.

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 member countries and beyond. In turn, these data can be used by countries to benchmark their governments' performance, track their own and international developments over time, and provide evidence to their public policy making.

The indicators in *Government at a Glance* are becoming 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 member countries.

What's new in *Government at a Glance 2013*?

Compared with *Government at a Glance 2011*, the 2013 edition presents several new features. To start with, it includes three new chapters: "Strategic governance" (Chapter 2), which aggregates elements from previous versions but also includes new indicators on trust in institutions, risk management and the rule of law; "Women in government" (Chapter 6), which analyses the participation of women in all areas of government, public administration, the judiciary and parliament; and "Special feature – Serving citizens: Accessibility and quality of public services" (Chapter 9), which is built on a new quality framework that contains the key dimensions of service quality (access, responsiveness, reliability and satisfaction). Some key features of these quality dimensions are measured for the policy sectors of education, health care, justice and tax administration.

Data on public finances are presented for 2001, 2009 and 2011 showcasing years prior, during and after the economic crisis. New indicators on debt, fiscal balance and investment are presented by sub-levels of government, as a way of deepening the understanding of the fiscal structure in member countries and the responsibility of states and municipalities.

The Budget Practices and Procedures, Performance Budgeting, Public Procurement and Compensation surveys were administered in 2012 allowing for the inclusion of a renewed set of indicators on these topics. The updated versions of the surveys collected more detailed and better quality information. For example, in the Compensation survey, data for key service delivery occupations have been collected for the first time, allowing comparison across OECD member countries of compensation levels and structures for police inspectors and detectives, police officers, immigration officers, customs inspectors and tax inspectors. As a special feature to this edition, an indicator on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) expenditures is included.

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 for both 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 includes general government and public corporations, such as publicly owned banks, harbours and airports. Finally, data on public management practices and processes refer to those practices and processes at the central level of government only.

Framework

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

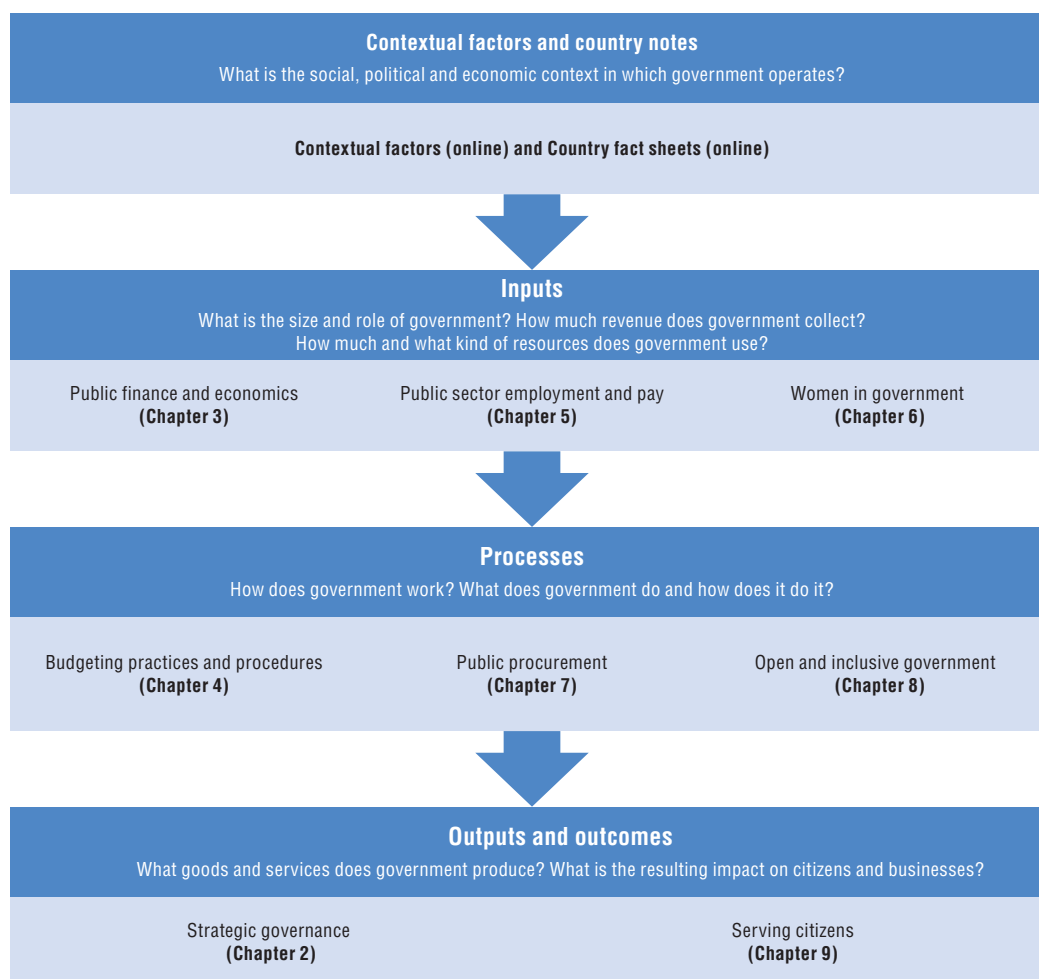
This third edition of *Government at a Glance* includes contextual, input, process, output and outcome indicators. The 2013 edition contains a broader set of indicators on key aspects of governmental performance related to outputs and outcomes in selected sectors, including for the first time the justice sector and dimensions of the quality of public services in health care, education, justice and tax administration. Figure 0.1 presents the conceptual framework for *Government at a Glance*.

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 chapters that describe these inputs are “Public finance and economics”, “Public sector employment and pay”, and “Women in government”. They include indicators on government expenditures, production costs, employment and work-force characteristics. Differentiating these indicators can make it easier to understand different capacities of governments in producing public goods and delivering them to citizens.

Processes

Processes refer to the public management practices and procedures undertaken by governments to implement policies. They directly address the means used by public administrations to fulfil their duties and obtain their goals. In consequence, they are often

Figure 0.1. **Conceptual framework for Government at a Glance 2013**

essential for ensuring the rule of law, accountability and fairness, as well as openness of government actions. Public sector reforms are usually targeted towards the improvement of processes; as such, they capture most of the attention of the public. This edition includes information on budgeting practices and procedures, public procurement, and open and inclusive 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. This edition has made an effort to incorporate an increasing number of indicators on outputs and outcomes. Aware of the difficulties in measuring outcomes, the previously mentioned quality framework was developed as a tool to evaluate several dimensions in place when governments deliver services to citizens. Examples of these indicators can be found in the “Special feature – Serving citizens: Accessibility and quality of public services” (Chapter 9).

Structure

Government at a Glance 2013 is structured as follows: it starts with a policy chapter that focuses on trust in government, the current situation concerning trust in government and the upcoming challenges faced by OECD member countries.

Chapters 2-9 include data on the following areas of public administration: “Strategic governance”, “Public finance and economics”, “Budgeting practices and procedures”, “Public sector employment and pay”, “Women in government”, “Public procurement”, “Open and inclusive government”, and a special exploratory chapter called “Special feature – Serving citizens: Accessibility and quality of public services”. These chapters highlight the need for better evidence on the impact and usefulness of the various public management tools adopted. The publication closes with a “Glossary” and several annexes on methodological aspects.

Future challenges

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 ensures the comparability of data across the countries that are covered in the publication.

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

- Mapping of public sector agencies and their characteristics.
- New data collection on regulatory management practices and their performance.
- Indicators on the structure, functions, powers, responsibilities and priorities of the centre of government [the unit(s) that supports the collective work of the executive and the prime minister or president].
- Possibly comparing private and public sector compensation levels and structures.
- New indicators on lobbying and political funding.
- A repeat of the survey on strategic human resources management practices.



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