

### Open government strategies and objectives

Countries are acknowledging the role of open government reforms as catalysts for democracy, inclusive growth and more efficient public governance. The open government principles of transparency, accountability and participation have the potential to change the relationship between public officials and citizens, making it more dynamic, mutually beneficial and based on reciprocal trust. If implemented in a well co-ordinated manner, open government reforms can provide a tool to achieve broader policy objectives, rather than being an end in themselves. In the Report *Open Government: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, the OECD has updated its definition of open government as “a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth.”

The multitude of policy objectives that OECD countries intend to achieve by implementing open government initiatives reflects the diverse and horizontal nature of open government reforms. For example, the principal objective in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Germany is to improve the transparency of the public sector. Other countries, such as Australia and Canada, go beyond the traditional approach by acknowledging the impact that open government can have to generate economic growth. Greece implements open government initiatives with the primary objective to prevent and fight corruption and Korea seeks to increase citizens’ trust in public institutions.

In this multifaceted context, a shared definition of open government at national level and comprehensive national strategy enable countries to better harness the positive contributions that open government reforms can make to national policy objectives, while avoiding ill-defined policy goals. Hence, agreeing upon a single definition by all stakeholders involved is crucial for a successful implementation. Seventeen of all OECD countries (49%) have a single definition for open government. Among them, ten (29%) have created their own country-tailored definition, such as Canada, Chile, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. For instance, the Netherlands define open government as a : “transparent, facilitative and accessible government” whereas for Canada it is a “governing culture that holds that the public has the right to access the documents and proceedings of government to allow for greater openness, accountability and engagement.” While having a single national definition is crucial, its full recognition and acknowledgement by the whole public sector as well as by all relevant stakeholders becomes paramount for it to achieve the intended outcome, namely to provide a strong basis for a comprehensive open government strategy that allows countries to reap the benefits that open government reforms can yield.

A medium- to long-term comprehensive and coherent national open government strategy is needed to provide

clear guidance to the executive at central level and to the concerned institutions at the local level. In the OECD, 17 (49%) of all countries have a single strategic document (i.e. national strategy, national action plans, etc.) at their disposal. Thirteen of these countries (76%) use their open government partnerships biannual action plans as a strategic basis for open government initiatives. While these action plans have the advantage to be implementation focused and impact oriented, only a comprehensive open government strategy ensures the alignment of the various scattered initiatives contained in these plans with national policy objectives and is essential for effective whole-of-government co-ordination.

#### Methodology and definitions

In 2015, the OECD conducted the Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle, which was answered by 54 countries. All OECD countries answered the survey, together with thirteen countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, Indonesia, Lithuania, Morocco, Philippines, Romania and Tunisia. Senior government officials in charge of the national open government agenda responded to the survey. The survey was split into two parts: the first part focused on the existing approach to open government at the national level and was answered by the main institution responsible for open government. The second part was answered by the countries’ ministries of health and finance and focused on detecting the current approaches to citizen participation throughout the policy cycle.

#### Further reading

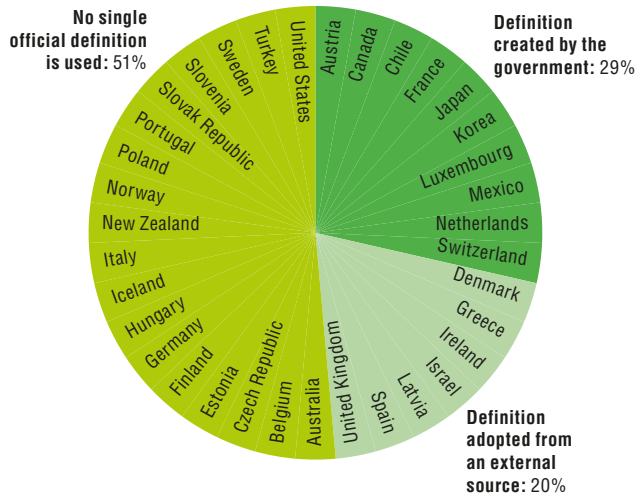
OECD (2016), *Open Government: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264268104-en>

#### Figure notes

10.3: The New Zealand government has not undertaken a prioritisation exercise against the priorities listed. There are elements of all these priorities across a range of government programmes including the Better Public Services Results Programme, and New Zealand’s Open Government Partnership Action Plan (the selected OGP grand challenges in New Zealand’s Action Plan are improving public services, increasing public integrity and more effectively managing public resources).

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

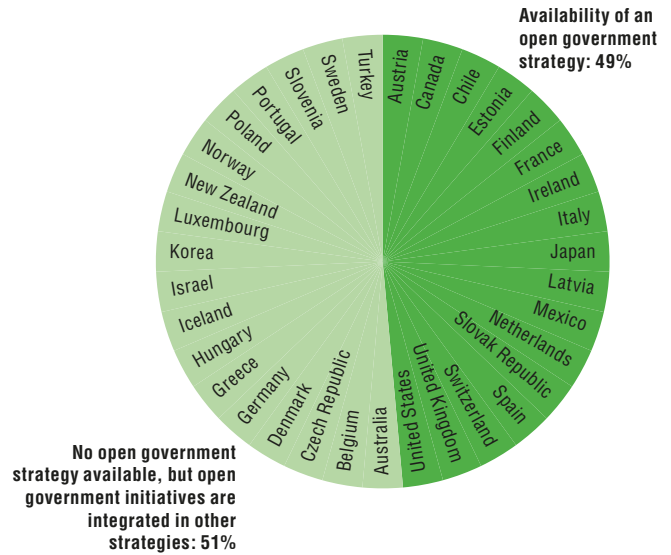
### 10.1. Existence of a single definition of open government in the country, 2015



Source: OECD (2015), "Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle", OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/88893353264>

### 10.2. Existence of an open government strategy in the country, 2015



Source: OECD (2015), "Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle", OECD, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/88893353283>

### 10.3. Main policy objectives of open government reforms, 2015

Main objective to implement open government initiatives	Country	OECD Total
Improve the transparency of the public sector	Belgium, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey	15
Improve the accountability of the public sector	France, Iceland, Israel	3
Improve the responsiveness of the public sector to the needs of citizens and business	Luxembourg, Sweden, United Kingdom	3
Increase citizens' trust in public institutions	Ireland, Korea, Slovenia	3
Improve citizen participation in policy making	Estonia, Finland	2
Improve the effectiveness of the public sector	Austria, Norway	2
Improve the efficiency of the public sector	Portugal, United States	2
Generate economic growth	Australia, Canada	2
Prevent and fight corruption	Greece	1
Contribute to solve public challenges and to positively impact the quality of life of citizens and generate social benefits	Mexico	1
Other	New Zealand	1

Source: OECD (2015), "Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle", OECD, Paris.



**From:**  
**Government at a Glance 2017**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
[https://doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2017-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2017-en)

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**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2017), "Open government strategies and objectives", in *Government at a Glance 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2017-64-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2017-64-en)

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