Reader's guide

Objectives of the publication

The main objective of the *Government at a Glance* series is to provide reliable, internationally comparable data to compare government activities and their results across OECD member countries. Compared to other OECD publications (e.g. economic surveys, country reviews) the main objective **is not** to provide detailed analysis and tailored policy advice and recommendations but to present in a clear and synthetic way a set of indicators on public sector activities and performance. Four editions of *Government at a Glance* have been released (2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015) as well as one regional edition focusing on Latin American and Caribbean countries (2014) and one country-focused edition on Hungary (2015). This publication is the second in this new series of country-specific editions of *Government at a Glance*.

Country comparison

In this publication, Korea is compared mainly to G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) and the G7 and OECD averages. Australia is also included as a country comparator due to geographical proximity. The choice of country comparators and topics were selected in collaboration with the Korean Development Institute to provide a relevant benchmarking for Korea. The G7 and OECD averages are presented as weighted averages in *Chapter 1: Public finances in Korea* and as simple averages in all other chapters.

Structure of the publication and data sources

This publication describes a range of activities and results of the Korean government compared with other OECD countries and G7 countries. It focuses on some of the main objectives defined by the Korean government for its public administration in the 2013 strategic plan to promote economic revival, happiness for the people, cultural enrichment and foundation for peaceful reunification. As in other *Government at a Glance* publications, the indicators provided review the full production chain of government activities, including inputs, processes and outputs/outcomes, with a particular focus on some high-priority areas (Figure 0.1).

1) Contextual factors

The introduction chapter provides some background information on the main policy challenges and priorities to strengthen public governance in Korea. It provides an overview of the current economic and social environment as well as background information on the Korean government's objectives and priorities for public sector reforms. Annex C provides a brief overview of the political system in Korea.

2) Public resources

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the two main resources (inputs) supporting government activities: public finances (to pay for different services) and human resources (public employment to develop and implement government policies, programmes and services).

Chapter 1 provides recent data from the System of National Accounts (SNA) on the government's fiscal situation (fiscal balance, debt, financial net worth etc.), trends in public revenues and expenditures as well as on production costs, outsourcing and fiscal decentralisation. The definition of "general government" under the SNA 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 levels of government and (where applicable) for social security funds. Data on public finance were extracted from the OECD National Accounts Statistics database in November 2015 (data related to financial government accounts have been updated in January 2016). In most cases the data cover the period before, during and after the global financial crisis.

Chapter 2 reviews recent trends in general government employment in Korea and in compensation of public employees using mainly data from the OECD-ILO questionnaire on public employment, SNA data and data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Parline database).

3) Administrative processes

Process indicators refer to a range of public management practices and procedures undertaken by government to implement its policies. This publication focuses on two categories of processes relevant to the Korean context and current government objectives.

Chapter 3 focuses on open and transparent practices in the Korean government to promote interactions with citizens and businesses and promote integrity and accountability. This chapter provides a set of indicators on digital government, open government data, use of social media by government, availability of private interests declarations of public officials and mechanisms to manage conflicts of interest in government mainly coming from OECD data collections.

Chapter 4 focuses on administrative burden and regulatory governance. After reviewing some of the main international benchmarks of administrative burden for businesses provided by the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the OECD, the chapter analyses the process and mechanisms through which regulations are designed and evaluated in Korea using the OECD iREG indicators. In particular, it focuses on the level of stakeholder engagement and on the extent to which regulatory impact assessment and ex-post evaluation are carried out systematically to evaluate trade-offs and synergies among different pieces of regulation.

4) Sectoral outcomes

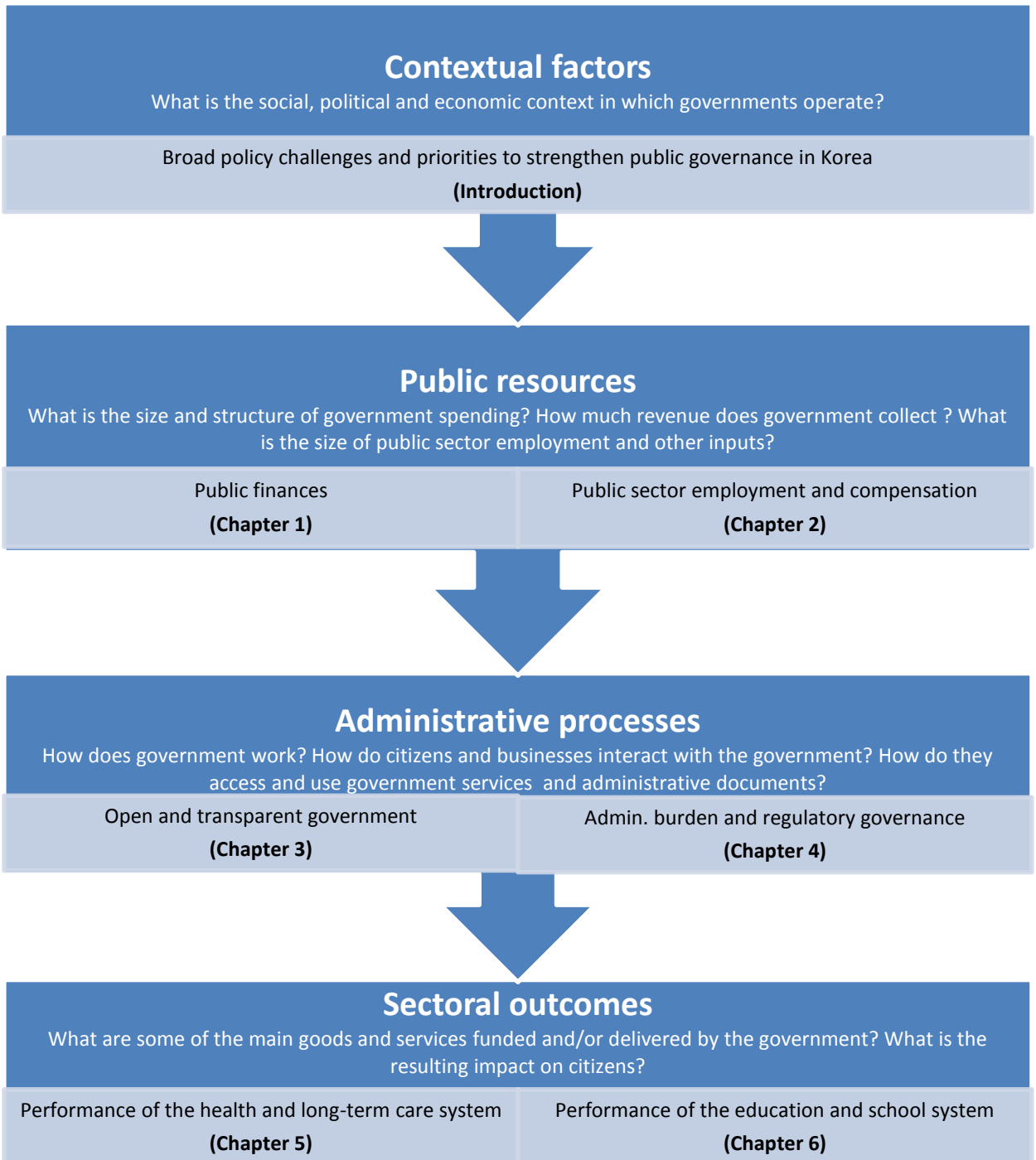
Finally, chapter 5 and chapter 6 focus on two sectors of importance for the Korean government: health care and education.

The chapter on health care reviews the performance of the health and long-term care system in Korea, using to a large extent some of the main results from *Health at a Glance 2015*. After reviewing the remarkable progress achieved in recent decades in increasing the life expectancy of the Korean population, the chapter outlines some persisting

challenges to further improve access to and efficiency of the health care system in Korea. Two specific sections are also included on prevention policies and long-term care, due to their particular relevance in the current Korean context to promote healthy ageing and respond to the needs of a rapidly ageing population.

The chapter on education presents and analyses the most recent data around the performance of the education system in Korea, summarising some of the main findings presented in *Education at a Glance 2015* but also drawing on other sources. It provides an overview of public satisfaction with the education system and schools, and then assesses the level of private and public expenditure on education and discusses issues around access to upper secondary education and tertiary education. Using the results from the 2012 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other data sources, this chapter also presents indicators on the performance of Korean students on international standardised tests on mathematics, science and reading as well as indicators of equity in learning outcomes. It also uses other data sources to look at the transition from school to work in Korea.

Conceptual framework



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