



Citizens' Participatory Competence Report

Political Knowledge, Open Government

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2020

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Indicator

Political Knowledge

Question

To what extent are citizens informed of public policies?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Most citizens are well-informed of a broad range of public policies.
- 8-6 = Many citizens are well-informed of individual public policies.
- 5-3 = Few citizens are well-informed of public policies; most citizens have only a rudimentary knowledge of public policies.
- 2-1 = Most citizens are not aware of public policies.

Finland

Score 9

Democracy requires that the public and its representatives have the means to hold government accountable. In this respect Finnish democracy is effective, though not perfect. Information on government policies and decisions is widely available online and many policy fields are debated at great length on television or in other media. Newspaper readership rates are still high in Finland. Nevertheless, while some issues are widely debated in the media and attract broad general attention, other less media-friendly or stimulating issues pass largely unnoticed. The public's evaluative and participatory competencies constitute a weak spot. Survey results suggest that the level of political knowledge among young people, particularly those with a low level of education, is rather low. At the same time, evidence suggests that the degree of interest and participation varies significantly across policy issues and levels of authority. Results indicate, for instance, that young cohorts tend to be familiar with supranational politics, while women are familiar with matters close to people's everyday lives. Recently, the extensive use and consumption of social media for the purposes of political and everyday communication has been said to enhance the public's political knowledge while also endangering the production of independent and broad-based information.

Citation:

Elo, Kimmo ja Rapeli, Lauri. 2008. "Suomalaisten politiikkatietämys." Helsinki: Oikeusministeriön julkaisu 2008:6

Rapeli, Lauri. 2014. "Comparing Local, National and EU Knowledge: The Ignorant Public Reassessed." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 37: 428-446.

Norway

Score 9 The Norwegian public is generally attentive, and well-informed about government policies, measures and operations, and citizens tend to trust decision-makers. This is partly attributable to the country's small size, but also to the population's high level of education, the very high circulation of newspapers and the widespread access to internet and television. Moreover, the Scandinavian tradition of transparency in government helps the free press to report accurately about public policies. However, in Norway, as in many other countries, the pace and complexity of policymaking is increasing, while media habits are rapidly changing and the various media platforms attract different readers and consumers. Although media pluralism is growing, the informational basis for a shared and common understanding of events and developments is weakening.

Sweden

Score 9 The Swedish population has a strong interest in politics. Election turnout is still very high by most international comparisons. The turnout in the 2014 general elections was 85.8%, which was an increase of 1.2 percentage points from the previous election. In 2018, the turnout increased even further to 87.2%, which is remarkably high compared to other European countries. Swedish voters tend to decide very late for which party to vote, which may be interpreted as the voters' desire to gather as much information on political parties as possible before they make their final decision.

The definition of high or low levels of political knowledge is obviously a relative measure. Official data on the knowledge level of Swedish voters is not available. It can, however, be assumed that voters here are not significantly more – or less – knowledgeable than their colleagues in comparable countries.

Recent studies suggest that if voters had been more knowledgeable on political issues this would have changed their party allegiance. Increasing levels of knowledge should reduce the support for the two major parties – the Moderates and the Social Democrats – while most of the other, smaller parties would have benefited. This is a purely hypothetical study, as the perfectly informed voter does not exist.

Citation:

Andersson, Ulrika, Anders Carlander, Elina Lindgren, Maria Oskarson (eds.) (2018), *Sprickor i fasaden* (Gothenburg: The SOM Institute).

Oscarsson, H. and S. Holmberg (2014), *Svenska väljare* (Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer).

Oscarsson, H. (2007), "A Matter of Fact? Knowledge Effects on the Vote in Swedish General Elections, 1985-2002," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30:301-322.

<http://www.val.se>

Denmark

Score 8

Citizens get most of their information on government policy developments through television, radio, newspapers, news websites and social media. Government documents are, as a rule, freely accessible via the internet, and published work is also often free. Documents can further be read in public libraries, easily accessible across the country. Mail from the public is nearly exclusively going to Digital Post mailboxes. These are now mandatory for businesses and for citizens (with a few exceptions for the latter). Already most public services require online applications using a so-called easy ID (NemID). There is ongoing discussions about whether the information provided is comprehensible to most citizens, given the technicalities and complexities involved.

Election campaigns serve the purpose of presenting and debating the policies of the government as well as the opposition. A very high turnout during national elections (84.5% in the 2019 election) suggests a high degree of interest and enough knowledge to consider voting important. In the EU context, Danes are considered among the most knowledgeable about EU issues (partly due to the use of referendums), but turnout at elections for the European Parliament are much lower than for national ones (66.08% in 2019). European Parliament elections tend to be perceived as second order elections. The issues most important for voters, including healthcare, social services, pensions and education, are largely national issues.

Citation:

Lise Togeby et al., *Power and Democracy in Denmark. Conclusions*. Århus: Magtudredningen, 2003

"Voter turnout data for Denmark," <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=DK> (accessed 8 October 2015)

"Denmark mandates digital postboxes," <http://www.itnews.com.au/News/365479,denmark-mandates-digital-postboxes.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2014).

Estonia

Score 8

Extensive media consumption and high internet penetration suggest that citizens may be well informed on major policy topics. Besides news media, the websites of ministries and executive state agencies inform citizens about forthcoming policy changes (e.g., the forthcoming reform of second-pillar pension funds). At the same time, extensive use of social media by political parties and radical social movements likely increases the dissemination of fake news. The recent discussions on foreign and domestic policy issues indicate that information is often trivialized and manipulated for party political purposes. A few recent surveys have suggested that a significant proportion of citizens do not have an opinion or act ad hoc. For example, 41% of respondents in a representative opinion poll (Turu-Uuringute AS 2019) stated that they planned to withdraw their money from pension funds when allowed after the forthcoming pension reform, despite 77% of respondents stating that they would have no idea what to do with the money.

Citation:

Malmstein, K. (2019). Attitudes of Estonian population toward vaccination. A high school student research paper. Tallinn Pääsküla High school.

Iceland

Score 8

Iceland's citizens are generally well informed about government policy. In local surveys, most citizens demonstrate familiarity with public policies, especially with respect to policies that either interest them or directly affect them. This is truer of domestic policies than of international politics, because the complexity of Iceland's political landscape is comparatively low. By international standards, it is relatively easy to develop a comprehensive overview of the politics, parties, and policy issues in Iceland. Extensive interpersonal networks between citizens and Iceland's distance from other countries contribute to the domestic preoccupation of Icelandic politics.

The immediate response of some voters to the 2008 economic collapse demonstrates an ability on the part of some to quickly adapt to changed circumstances. In voter surveys connected to the 2007 and 2009 parliamentary elections, the percentage of voters agreeing with the statement that Iceland was mainly governed in accordance with the popular will, declined from 64% in 2007 to 31% in 2009. Furthermore, the four traditional national parties lost a substantial number of votes in the 2010 local government elections, following a dramatic decline in public trust in politicians and political institutions. In two of the biggest municipalities, Reykjavík and Akureyri, non-traditional parties were elected to power. This trend was accentuated by the publication of the scathing Special Investigation Committee report six weeks before the elections. Even so, in the 2013 parliamentary elections, the Progressive Party (Framsóknarflokkurinn) made the largest proportionate gains, increasing its vote share from 14.8% to 24.4%. This increase was due to the party's election pledge to write off up to 20% of homeowners' mortgage debts at foreign expense. In the same election, the previous governing coalition lost more than half of their combined seats. The cabinet that came to power in 2013 was led by the Progressive Party.

Public debate surrounding two national referendums, in 2009 and 2011, concerning the so-called Icesave dispute, suggests strong public interest in the issue. Similarly, the 2012 national referendum on a new constitution secured a turnout of 49% of the electorate, despite the negative attitude of some of Iceland's traditional political parties. Declining levels of public trust in politicians and the associated increase in political apathy coincide with a noticeable deterioration in how well-informed citizens are about national and international affairs. At 79%, voter turnout in the parliamentary election of 2016 was the lowest recorded since the beginning of the 20th century. Turnout among people aged 18 to 25 years old is especially low, as is the case in many Western democracies. Most current electoral research indicates that a significant proportion of young people do not vote due to a lack of interest.

Citation:

Önnudóttir, E.H., and Hardarson, Ó. Th. (2009), “Óánægðir lýðræðissinnar: Afstaða Íslendinga til lýðræðis,” (Dissatisfied democrats: The Icelanders' attitudes toward democracy), in Guðmundsson, H.S., and Ómarsdóttir, S. B. (2009), *Rannsóknir í félagsvísindum X*. Reykjavík, Háskólaútgáfan.

Eythórsson, G., and Kowalczyk, M. (2013), “Explaining the low voter turnout in Iceland's 2010 local government elections,” *Samtíð*. An Icelandic journal of society and culture, Vol. 1.

Eythórsson, G. T., Önnudóttir, E. H., Hardarson, Ó. T., Valgardsson, V. O., Jónsdóttir, G. A., Björnsdóttir, A. E., and Birgisson, H. E. (2014), “Sveitarstjórnarkosningarnar 2014: Hverjar eru ástæður dræmrar kjörsóknar?” (What are the main reasons for the low voter turnout in the Local Government elections in 2014?).

Eythórsson, G. T., and Önnudóttir, E. H. (2017), “Abstainers reasoning for not voting in the Icelandic Local Government Election 2014,” *Íslenska Þjóðfélagið*, Vol. 8, No. 1. <http://thjodfelagid.is/index.php/Th/article/view/86>. Accessed 22 December 2018.

Ireland

Score 8

In the 2016 general election, electoral turnout dropped to 65.2% from 70.1% in 2011. This fall in turnout came after economic recovery and strong rates of economic growth. In 2020, turnout declined again to 62.9% (down 2.2%) despite the election being held on a Saturday for the first time since 1918.

The proportion of Irish respondents claiming to have heard of various European institutions is consistently higher than the EU average. The level of personal familiarity with elected politicians is very high – it has been claimed that a majority of the electorate have actually been canvassed by at least one person seeking election to the national parliament. In addition, the quality of debate on policy issues is high.

Israel

Score 8

Compared to other countries, Israeli citizens show high levels of interest in politics. In the Israeli Democracy Index 2018 and international comparative indices, Israeli citizens were found to participate widely and be highly interested in politics. Israel also has one of the region's highest internet-penetration rates (according one source, reaching 82% as of January 2019); a lively, pluralistic and independent news media market; and a politically heterogeneous and active civil society.

That being said, the Israeli public appears to be, to put mildly, “unimpressed” by the government's capabilities and its levels of transparency. According to two surveys conducted for the Eli Hurvitz Conventions in 2016 and 2018, the public views the functioning of government and its policies, and aspects of transparency and the government's contact (or connectiveness) with citizens rather critically, ranking these criteria as mostly mediocre at best. According to the Israeli Democracy Index, Israel's Knesset rarely receives a favorable grade for its overall functioning.

But one should not reach conclusions from this too hastily; while the government has made a significant effort to increase its overall transparency (and suffers many shortcomings in this field; see section 9.2), citizens usually rely on the media rather

than official (government) information channels for information about public policies. Indeed, according to several surveys published in January 2019 prior to the first round of elections in April 2019, over 50% of all respondents use traditional news media outlets to access political information, while about 20% of all respondents use social media.

Israeli citizens can potentially be informed about public policy from a wide range of sources, with the specific source dependent largely on an individual's personal interests (how interested is he to learn and know about public policy) and personal involvement (does the policy affect him and to what extent, or alternatively how politically active is he and to what extent does his political activism target public policy).

Citation:

Arlozorov, Meirav. "For the First Time: The Grade the Government Gave Itself in Achieving Goals." The Marker website. <https://www.themarker.com/news/politics/1.4002747>. April 6th, 2017 (Hebrew)

Arlozorov, Meirav. "The Professionalist Revolution of the Government of Israel." The Marker website. <https://www.themarker.com/allnews/1.5846420>. February 25th, 2018 (Hebrew)

Data Israel Survey Database of the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research. Source for data of the surveys for the Eli Hurvitz Conventions. <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il/>

Digital 2019: Israel. A slideshow about Israel's state of telecommunications, by We Are Social and Hootsuite, thinktanks. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-israel-january-2019-v01>

"Freedom of the Press: Israel 2017," Freedom House, 2017 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/israel>

Hermann, Tamar et.al., The Israeli Democracy Index 2016, The Israel Democracy Institute, Jerusalem 2016. <https://en.idi.org.il/media/7811/democracy-index-2016-eng.pdf>

Israel. The State Comptroller. "The Government's Transparency – Actions to Promote the Open Government," Annual Report, 68(3), 2018, Jerusalem, vol. 1, pp. 5-71. (also available here: http://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_627/6dd1ae66-0117-438b-bef5-241d493c6f01/101-shkifut.pdf) (Hebrew)

"Joining the Open Government Partnership and the nomination of the 'Open Government Israeli Forum,'" Prime Minister Office website 2012 (Hebrew)

"The Government approved today the publication of all governmental databases" <http://www.themarker.com/news/politics/1.3053541> (Hebrew)

"The Knesset Presents: Advanced Committee Web Portals Now Available," <http://www.ch10.co.il/news/110674/#.V8R-rv19670> (Hebrew)

"The Special Committee for the Transparency and Accessibility of Government Information," The Knesset Website (Hebrew): <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Committees/GovInfo/Pages/default.aspx>

The State Comptroller's official website in English. Numerous reports are in English and Arabic. <http://www.mevaker.gov.il/En/Pages/default.aspx>

The World Bank internet Users Data <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>

"Yearly Report on the Implementation of the Law of Freedom of Information 2014" Ministry of Justice website – The Governmental Unit for Freedom of Information (Hebrew): <http://index.justice.gov.il/Units/YechidatChofeshHameyda/Report2014/index.html>

Herman, Tamar and Ella Heller, Tzipy Laza-Shoef, Fadi Omar, "The Israeli Democracy Index 2017. Summary," 2017, <https://en.idi.org.il/media/9837/israeli-democracy-index-2017-en-summary.pdf>

Herman, Tamar and Ella Heller, Tzipy Laza-Shoef, Fadi Omar. The Israeli Democracy Index 2018. Israel: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2018. Retrieved from <https://en.idi.org.il/publications/25031> (for the Hebrew version: <https://www.idi.org.il/books/25008>)

Tamar Hermann, "Democracy in Crisis? Israeli Survey Respondents Agree to Disagree," 13.12.2018, Podcast: <https://en.idi.org.il/podcasts/25310>

"Work Book for the Year of 2018." Containing links to all work books since 2011 and goals achievement reports since 2017 (reviewing 2016). <http://plans.gov.il/Plan2012/Pages/newWorkPlan2012.aspx>

Transparency International: "Corruption Perceptions Index 2018,": <http://www.ti-israel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CPI-2018-Executive-summary-PRINT.pdf>

Luxembourg

Score 8

In 2018 and 2019, Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education initiated various measures (e.g., the Ministry of Environment's Zero Waste program) intended to enhance the participation of the population. In addition, a new opportunity for parental participation was created. All parents were actively invited to become involved in a parent council, and elections for the parent council were prepared. Opportunities for public participation in spatial planning, agriculture policy, and culture and heritage protection were also expanded. The CSV, as opposition party, also sought to enhance public participation by touring the country and asking the population about problems

However, knowledge of Luxembourgish has an important role in political participation, as most political debates and information distribution takes place in this specific national language. This may make it more difficult for non-speakers to participate in the political sphere.

Citation:

Fehlen, Fernand (2016): Sprachenpolitik in der Großregion SaarLorLux, in: Wolfgang H. Lorig/Sascha Regolot/Stefan Henn (eds.): Die Grossregion SaarLorLux: Anspruch, Wirklichkeiten, Perspektiven, Springer VS Verlag, pp. 73 – 94.

Switzerland

Score 8

There is some debate as to whether citizens are well informed in Switzerland. One of the first studies on the issue, based on surveys conducted after popular votes, found that only one out of six voters had a high level of policy knowledge. Studies based on larger data sets and relating to more recent data have showed that about 50% of citizens have good knowledge on public policy issues (i.e., they know the issue at hand and can provide reasons for their decisions). A recent study concluded that roughly equal shares of the citizenry lack civic competences, have medium competence and have a high level of competence. In cases where the public feels insufficiently informed, it votes against change. The power of a "no" heuristics was

demonstrated by the 2017 vote on tax reform in which three-quarters of respondents said they had difficulties understanding the proposal (which was of eminent importance to the economy) and a third of those who voted “no” cited their lack of knowledge as a reason for voting against the proposal. The intensity of a campaign is another key factor in the extent to which the public is informed of a bill’s content and in explaining their voting behavior on the relevant issue.

Another recent study found that just 42% of Swiss citizens knew how many parties were in the government (which at the time of the survey had not changed during the previous five decades). Moreover, 36% knew how many signatures were needed to trigger a referendum, and about 45% knew the number of European Union member states. A survey in 2017 showed that 35% of all respondents were able to choose the correct answer about the goal-setting institution of the EU from a list of four possible answers.

In a 2007 comparative study titled “Citizenship and Involvement in Europe,” Swiss citizens scored at the same level as their counterparts in the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway with regard to the importance attributed to politics and interest in politics in general. These four countries demonstrated the highest scores among the 11 countries under study. In another recent study on political interest and sophistication, Switzerland ranked in sixth place (behind Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Germany) among the 21 European countries examined in the European Social Survey. An analysis by Kriesi in 2005 showed that citizens are relatively well informed and rational when making decisions in direct-democratic votes. Either they consider arguments and counterarguments or rely on reasonable heuristics. One of these heuristics is the “no” heuristic (i.e., when the public are in doubt they tend to vote against the respective proposal). Stucki et al. (2018) show that voters are willing and able to actively seek information in making their decision. Thus, in general it seems fair to say that Swiss citizens are as well informed about policies as citizens in other mature and wealthy democracies.

There are, however, limitations to this cue-taking as an effective means of political decision-making. For example, since 2014 a large share of citizens believes claims by right-wing populist politicians that the EU is so invested in Switzerland, that it must renegotiate the bilateral agreements to allow for the constitutional amendment limiting immigration. Based on this argument, a majority of citizens supported the new constitutional amendment. From the very beginning, however, the EU made clear that it would not enter negotiations over the free movement of labor. Notwithstanding these clear messages, in 2017 56% of Swiss citizens thought that the Swiss government could have gotten a better deal in negotiations with the EU. Hence, limited political knowledge on the part of citizens (common to all democracies) and ideological contentions by political elites (trusted as reliable cues by knowledge-poor citizens) may lead to political dead ends in a direct democracy.

With regard to subjective knowledge, about 28% of Swiss citizens claim to be very or quite interested in politics, as well as being at least quite able to take an active

political role in a political party and to be at least quite confident in their own ability to participate in politics. This percentage is similar to that found in neighboring Germany (31%) and Austria (27%), but clearly more than that seen in France (16%) or Italy (16%) (European Social Survey 2018).

Citation:

Hanspeter Kriesi, 2005a: Argument-Based Strategies in Direct-Democratic Votes: The Swiss Experience, *Acta Politica* 40: 299-316.

Hanspeter Kriesi, 2005b: *Direct-Democratic Choice. The Swiss Experience*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

VOTO 2017: VOTO-Studie zur eidgenössischen Volksabstimmung vom 12. Februar 2017, Lausanne, Aarau, Luzern: FORS et al.

Klaus Armingeon and Philipp Lutz 2018: Voting against all odds, Bern: University of Bern, unpublished paper based on MOSAiCH survey 2017.

European Social Survey 2018, 9th wave, published November 2019

Stucki, I., Pleger, L., & Sager, F. (2018). "The making of the informed voter: A split-ballot survey on the use of scientific evidence in direct-democratic campaigns," *Swiss Political Science Review*: 24(2): 115–139. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12290>

Belgium

Score 7

There are few sources of data that allow one to assess the citizenry's level of information with precision. Furthermore, the web of overlapping competencies between different layers of government reduces accountability. However, it is quite clear that, over the last year, the population has become a lot more active in demanding specific policies from the different governments in Belgium.

To take three examples, the "gilets jaunes" movement in France also sparked controversies in French-speaking Belgium. This moment encouraged sections of the population that felt disenfranchised to engage in political debates and demand policies that favor them. Second, young people across the whole country started weekly demonstrations in favor of a significant acceleration of the government's climate policies. In both cases, public demand for political news and participation in public debates with respect to these issues increased. Third, for the first time in Belgium's history, the Federal Planning Bureau was tasked with calculating the budgetary figures of each party's electoral promises. This has allowed the population to see which promises were realistic and which not. Coverage of these figures within the printed press was good and informative, although coverage on television was much less so.

Germany

Score 7

Recent empirical analyses indicate a dramatic decline in public interest in politics and parliamentary debates in Germany. Younger cohorts in particular were unable to mention any parliamentary debate they had followed with interest. Media use is

intense in the younger age groups, but has shifted away from information toward entertainment consumption, with the result that an increasing share of people is almost completely cut off from any information on politics. In addition, policy knowledge correlates strongly with family social status and the socioeconomic environment (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2018). Recent studies make clear that populist sentiments within the citizenry have increased over the years, while at the same time indicating a decline in political knowledge and interest in political details (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018). Schools have been unable to compensate for those deficiencies (Bundestag 2017). Nonetheless, comparative research indicates that policy knowledge in Germany remains at a level comparable to that in Scandinavian countries (Jensen and Zohlnhöfer 2020).

Citation:

Bundestag (2017): Politisches Bewusstsein von Kindern und Jugendlichen sowie ihre politische Beteiligung. Online: <https://www.bundestag.de/blob/531098/1b8f7a13a4e384584fefcbcb07e6c28d/wd-9-035-17-pdf-data.pdf>

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Bertelsmann Stiftung (2018) Populismus-Studie

[https://www.bertelsmann-](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/ZD__Studie_Populismusbarometer_2018.pdf)

[stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/ZD__Studie_Populismusbarometer_2018.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/ZD__Studie_Populismusbarometer_2018.pdf)

<http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/>

wenig-vertrauen-in-

medienberichterstattung/

Carsten Jensen and Reimut Zohlnhöfer (2020): Policy knowledge among 'elite citizens,' European Policy Analysis (forthcoming).

Japan

Score 7

A substantial amount of information about policies is available in Japan. For instance, ministries regularly use so-called white papers to explain the current parameters and content of policies in many areas, often in great detail.

However, this does not necessarily mean that citizens feel satisfied with the information available or consider it trustworthy. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, only 39% of the overall population in 2019 said they trusted the government.

Citation:

Edelman, 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer – Japan, <https://de.slideshare.net/EdelmanJapan/2019-edelman-trust-barometer-japan>

Netherlands

Score 7

Dutch citizens claim to spend slightly more time than the average European citizen on collecting political information. Nevertheless, the broader public does not seem to be well-informed on a wide range of government policies. This is due not to a lack of information, but many people find political information complicated and/or uninteresting, they often do not pay much attention to it. The Netherlands Institute

for Social Research (Sociaal-Cultureel Planbureau, SCP) found in a 2012 survey that 28% of respondents thought politics was too complicated for them to understand, while 60% thought it was too complex for most others.

In addition to disinterest and an increasing knowledge gap between educational levels, increasing (foreign-led) efforts to disseminate disinformation and create “fake news” have had a deleterious effect on knowledge levels regarding political issues and decision-making. Moreover, studies conducted during the 2017 election showed that an increasing number of citizens from the younger cohorts have begun to avoid political news.

Research among voters in local elections shows that citizens hold the national government accountable for local policy. Moreover, they have more trust in local political institutions (mayor, aldermen, political parties) than in their national counterparts. Furthermore, people participate in local elections, but at much reduced rates in more participatory alternatives, while the public views the physical environment as the country's most pressing policy issue.

In 2018 – 2019, the Our Money (Ons Geld) citizen initiative, which managed to put issues of money and (public) debt on the agenda, represented an exceptional case of active citizenship. One of its results was a WRR report recommending more diversity in the financial sector, an end to excessive debts, better preparation for the next financial crisis, and the establishment of a public bank for citizen savings. Another example of civic mobilization involved the 2018 mobilization of residents in areas plagued by airplane noise associated with Schiphol Airport, and the clear impact that activists and lobby groups had on the expansion plan for Schiphol Airport. Research by Bovens and Wille found that differences in education levels have become increasingly salient factors when it comes to citizens' powers in processing policy information, political judgments about the European Union, issues of immigration and integration, and political leadership.

The SCP recently found that Dutch citizens split evenly over the issue of more or less direct influence by citizens. It is the less educated who demand more political influence, whereas higher educated citizens, especially those with tertiary qualifications, do not support the idea. A recent study into citizen attitudes to the European Union, undertaken by TNS/Kantar Nipo and commissioned by the Green Left party, found that Dutch citizens are caught in a dependence-cum-distrust situation: they instinctively distrust the European Union and would resist transferring more national powers to the EU level, but simultaneously believe that the European Union should have greater influence over most policy domains.

There have been a wide and broad range of initiatives across all levels of government in all kinds of citizen engagement projects, from interactive policymaking to citizen-budgets and citizen-juries, youth councils and local referendums, just to name a few. Public apathy in many participatory options and low levels of knowledge on policies co-exists with widespread discontent with politics and governance. A surge in street protests and large-scale demonstrations was evident in 2019. This was driven in part

by the Dutch counterparts of the French “yellow vests,” students and other younger people united in Extinction Rebellion, and climate and animal activists. However, teachers, farmers and building-industry employees (and employers) all launched one or more mass demonstrations against government policies. Overall, it appears that citizen-initiated efforts to exert power outside and beyond government-sponsored participatory policy exercises are gaining in political salience.

Citation:

M. Bovens, and A. Wille, 2011. *Diplomademocratie. Over spanningen tussen meritocratie en democratie*, Bert Bakker

Stichting Kiezersonderzoek Nederland, 2016. *Democratie dichterbij: Lokaal kiezersonderzoek 2016* (kennisopenbaarbestuur.nl)

NOS, Organisaties omwonenden van vliegvelden bundelen krachten, 16 May 2018

B. van den Braak, 28 December 2018. *Demonstreren toen en nu*. (parlement.com, accessed 8 November 2019)

NRC Handelsblad, 17 October, 2019. *Laat zien dat je met veel bent en verstoort de openbare orde*.

WRR, 2019. *Geld and schuld: de publieke rol van banken*.

Jan Kleinnijenhuis, Anita M J van Hoof, Wouter van Atteveldt, *The Combined Effects of Mass Media and Social Media on Political Perceptions and Preferences*, *Journal of Communication*, Volume 69, Issue 6, December 2019, Pages 650–673, <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz038>

<http://nieuwsmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/onderzoeksrapport-MediaPolitiek.pdf>

New Zealand

Score 7

Many New Zealanders appear to appear to be relatively well informed about political issues. According to the 2017 New Zealand Election Study (NZES), 33% of respondents were “very interested” in politics, 49% “somewhat interested.” Roughly two-thirds of citizens make use of the news media to inform themselves about political issues. Asked how often they had followed election news on TVNZ 1, 65% of respondents replied either “often” or “sometimes.” The figure is similar for online sources, with 62% of respondents declaring that they had turned to the internet at least once to find information about the 2017 election. The figures for the 2017 NZES also reveal that political interest and knowledge had increased since 2014.

On issues that have public resonance, relevant select committees – on average – receive a large number of public submissions. For example, in the case of the Smoke-free Environment (Tobacco Plain Packaging) Amendment Bill, the relevant committee received more than 15,600 submissions. The various policy working group meetings that have been undertaken since 2017 have been attended by large numbers of citizens around the country. For example, over 2,000 people attended meetings held by the Mental Health Inquiry team around the country (in 2018).

Citation:

New Zealand Election Study 2017 (http://www.nzes.org/exec/show/2017_NZES+Results)

South Korea

Score 7 The candlelight revolution of 2016 – 2017 revealed a high level of political information and interest among the Korean public. In particular, it is remarkable that many young people and students participated in the protests. Nevertheless, many citizens remain poorly informed about the details of many government policies. Political discussions are often conducted emotionally, and are focused on personalities rather than policy. The spectrum of published political opinions remains very narrow, limiting the scope of political discussion and making it hard for citizens to develop their own opinion. The immense pressure to do well on exams in schools and at universities has left political education and discussions underdeveloped. The low level of trust in government announcements and in the mainstream media provides fertile ground for the dissemination of rumors. Misinformation spreads quickly in Korea, as was evident in the online campaigns against refugees from Yemen. The discussion about refugees also revealed that the public generally knows less about international topics or the international context than it does about purely domestic subjects. However, numerous NGOs and enlightened netizens, acting on behalf of citizens, are playing a pivotal role in monitoring the public and private sectors by getting and sharing information from the government.

Citation:

Korea Center for Freedom of Information and Transparent Society at <http://www.opengirok.or.kr/>

Share Hub. One out of every two Seoul citizens has heard of “Sharing City” policy – results of a survey of the public awareness of Sharing City Seoul policy. July 19, 2016

<http://english.sharehub.kr/one-out-of-every-two-seoul-citizens-has-heard-of-sharing-city-policy-results-of-a-survey-of-the-public-awareness-of-sharing-city-seoul-policy/>

United Kingdom

Score 7 The UK government provides considerable information to its citizens through detailed websites, both at the core executive and the ministerial level. This flow of information has been enhanced in recent years. These websites contain general information, progress reports and statistical data. As part of its online material, the government makes some effort to ensure that citizens use this information by targeting specific groups. For example, a digital voter registration toolkit was developed in conjunction with a single-parent charity, while the “Rock Enrol!@” pack was designed to engage young people. The most important source of knowledge for citizens is TV broadcasting, followed by newspapers and radio.

According to an opinion poll by Ipsos MORI in 2010, 53% of those asked said that they had “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of knowledge about politics, while 47% answered that they had “not very much” knowledge or knew “nothing at all.” The share of those claiming knowledge has risen over the previous decade by about ten percentage points, indicating a subjectively better understanding of politics by citizens in the United Kingdom. A telling figure is that the proportion of citizens

voting in certain television talent competitions is higher than in many national elections. A more recent 2017 Ipsos MORI “peril of perception” poll found the United Kingdom to be at the higher end of knowledge of widely discussed issues, though behind the better-informed Nordic countries.

Citation:

Ipsos MORI 2011: Knowledge of Politics 2003-2010; <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2757/Knowledge-of-Politics-20032010.aspx?view=wide>
<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perils-perception-2017>

Australia

Score 6

Opinion surveys indicate Australians have a moderate level of understanding of government policies, and that their level of knowledge increases substantially during election campaigns when they pay greater attention to policy matters. Media coverage tends to be limited due to the lack of diversity in Australian media, which is potentially a factor hindering citizens' policy knowledge. On the other hand, voting in elections of all levels of government is compulsory in Australia, which on balance is likely to increase the general level of awareness of government and opposition policies. Furthermore, media coverage of policy platforms during election campaigns is substantial. The robust and successful lobbying efforts of interest groups, including the business community, may have contributed to a weakening of confidence in the political system.

After a decade of frequent leadership changes and infighting over important policy issues (e.g., climate change), Australians appear to be disillusioned with politics. According to a September 2019 poll, only 15% of the population follows developments in Canberra with great interest.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/election-2016-voter-turnout-lowest-since-compulsory-voting-began-in-1925-20160808-gqni2.html>
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-07/why-do-we-have-compulsory-voting/7484390>
<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/one-nation-immigrants-in-inner-west-and-south-west-shift-support-to-pauline-hansons-party/news-story/78152502617feb5659ac54ca6313dc97>
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/sep/04/the-big-tune-out-few-australians-follow-politics-closely-guardian-essential-poll-shows>
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/11/australia-is-in-trouble-majority-media-and-lobbying-destroy-trust-in-politics-garnaut-says>

Canada

Score 6

Most citizens have only a rudimentary knowledge of key public-policy issues. In the latest Canadian Elections Study (2015), less than 20% of respondents could correctly identify the name of the governor general or the finance minister. A 2013 study of 10 countries found that Canada is ahead of the United States but lags behind European countries in terms of political knowledge. The same study also found that Canadian women scored 30% lower on average than Canadian men when tested on their

knowledge of hard-news items. Like other established democracies, Canada has issues with regard to young voters' political literacy. A 2017 study by Stockemer and Rocher found that younger people are less politically literate than older people by a margin of 20 to 30 percentage points. The authors concluded that this generational political knowledge gap accounts for approximately half of the difference in turnout between voters in their early 20s and voters in their 50s.

Citation:

Curran, James et al. (2013) *Gender Matters Globally: An Examination of Gaps in Political Knowledge in a 10-Nation Comparative Study*.

Canadian Elections Study, 2015 edition, accessible at <https://ces-eec.arts.ubc.ca/english-section/home/>

Stockemer, Daniel and Francois Rocher. Age, political knowledge and electoral turnout: a case study of Canada *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* Vol. 55 (1), 2017.

Czechia

Score 6

With the increasing accessibility of online information, information on government policies is increasingly available to all Czech citizens. The growing diversity of the media landscape, as well as the Pirate Party's success in the 2017 elections, has increased pressure for transparency and enhanced citizens' ability to come to informed decisions. However, media sources are themselves polarized between those presenting simplistic views and/or broad support for Prime Minister Babiš and those providing a more balanced approach or even demonstrating open opposition to Babiš. The political polarization reflected in the media landscape has deepened societal divisions. Furthermore, Babiš's populist rhetoric tends to obfuscate the motives, effects and implications of policies. According to surveys, about 50% of the Czech population has a general interest in politics, a figure that has remained more or less stable over the last 10 years. However, citizens show distinctly more interest in domestic political affairs (58% of respondents) than in world political affairs (41%) or in the EU (38%).

France

Score 6

Citizens' interest in politics and their participation in the political process have been on the decline in recent decades. Obtaining their information primarily from television, most citizens are poorly informed. Television stations devote little time to any political topic and tend to prefer talk shows where people express their views, rather than using prime-time hours for political information. Information follows mobilization, rather than the other way around, evidenced by the protest movements against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Information is often provided on a certain topic once a group of citizens or political activists have succeeded in attracting media attention. Unfortunately, social networks tend to have substituted for traditional media in this information process. This contributes to the diffusion of unverified and fake news to such a point that, as in many other countries, the overall information issue becomes a problem for the proper functioning of

democracy. There is also a strong bias in favor of petty news to the detriment of more complex informative pieces concerning, for example, healthcare policy or the fight against poverty.

One of the problems with government information is that politicians tend to hide the truth or minimize harsh realities. Ever since the Socialist government's economic policy U-turn in 1983, governments have tried to hide necessary measures or reforms behind a veil of euphemistic language. This kind of action "by stealth" may initially be successful, but it does not enhance political awareness among citizens, and fuels populist feelings at both ends of the political spectrum. During his electoral campaign and in his first months in office, President Macron has introduced a new approach of "speaking truth to people." In practice, this triggered harsh criticism, and was perceived by many as a manifestation of technocratic arrogance and indifference to the situation of the poor. In January 2019, in reaction to the Yellow Vest riots, Macron launched a vast operation organizing 10,000 local citizen debates paired with other (e.g., online) possibilities for citizens to express themselves (Grand débat national). Nearly 2 million citizens contributed to this debate. This pedagogic exercise seems to have worked, since the executive has been able to end the riots and recover a modicum of popular consensus. It remains to be seen whether this exercise might represent a way of transforming governmental methods and fostering greater citizen participation over the long term.

Italy

Score 6

Existing public opinion studies indicate that only a minority of citizens (about 35%) are significantly interested in politics and that about a similar percentage talks regularly about politics and follows TV programs featuring political debate. A large majority (85%), however, regularly follows the TV news where political news has a significant weight. While data show that the level of sophistication and knowledge about parties, personnel and composition of government is not low, data concerning levels of information about policies were not easily available. They probably vary greatly depending on the policy field.

In certain areas used by parties to define their positions (especially major economic and fiscal issues, education, healthcare, and foreign policy), levels of information are fairly high. On other policies, the amount knowledge drops significantly. As Italian politics are fast-moving, unstable and strongly personalized, it is naturally difficult for citizens to be well informed about the contents of government policymaking. Television – by far the most significant information source in Italy – does not provide in-depth information.

Citation:

Vincenzo Memoli, How Does Political Knowledge Shape Support for Democracy? Some Research Based on the Italian Case, in *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2011, 79-102

Latvia

Score 6

There is no local survey data specifically indicating the extent to which citizens are informed of government policymaking decisions. NGOs (which are predisposed to participation) are able to obtain the information and knowledge required to understand the motives, objectives, effects and implications of policy proposals; and make their opinions known through the existing system. However, that same information may not be made available to the general public.

According to USAID's 2015 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the government has a positive attitude toward NGOs and NGOs provide significant input to the policymaking process. As of November 2019, there were 22,869 registered NGOs in Latvia. In 2015, NGOs participated in roughly 1,400 working groups. Latvia scored 2.6 and ranked 3 out of 29 countries in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia region, behind Estonia and Poland and equal to the Czech Republic. In 2016, this score dropped to 2.5, rising again to 2.6 in 2019.

A 2015 Democracy Audit, conducted by researchers at the University of Latvia, noted that overall civic activism in Latvia can be described as poor. The report found that citizens are passive, skeptical and slow to engage with the political process, and are increasingly alienated from democratic institutions and processes. According to a 2015 survey, 50% of respondents claim that they would be able to protect their rights and interests through government or municipal institutions, while 38% claimed they could not. However, 54% of respondents stated that they did not believe that they could influence politics through civic engagement. The most popular methods of participation are online commentary (16%); signing petitions (12%); contacting politicians or state officials (11%); boycotting products, services, or organizations (7%); and participating in an NGO (6%). In addition, 60% of respondents stated that referendums were a good method for deciding important political issues. The Enterprise Register estimates that just 25,000 individuals or 1.2% of the population are members of a political party. This is the lowest level of party membership in the European Union.

The rise of social media and the increasing use of the internet have placed new tools at the disposal of citizens wishing to participate in the political process. An e-petition tool, manabalss.lv, lets any group of 10,000 or more citizens place issues on the parliamentary agenda. The law has been positively affected by 67.5% of the submitted initiatives. In 2018, a total of 153 initiatives were submitted to the platform and 238,812 people signed the initiatives, up from 91,891 signatures in 2015. The parliament is increasingly responsive to these initiatives. An initially successful social-media style website that enabled citizens to engage in direct communication with members of parliament was shut down in 2014 due to a lack of financing.

Citation:

1. Rozenvalds, J. (2015) How Democratic is Latvia? Audit of Democracy 2005-2014, Available at: https://www.szf.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/szf_faili/Petnieciba/sppi/demokratija/ENG_Audit_of_Democracy_2015.pdf, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
2. Baltic News Service (2011), Latvian Political Parties and Associations Estimated to have around 25 thousand Members, Article available at (in Latvian): <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/latvija-partijas-un-politis-kajas-apvienibas-varetu-but-apmeram-25-tukstosi-cilveku.d?id=39523183>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
3. Latvian Civic Alliance (2019), Overview of the NGO Sector in Latvia 2015. Available at: <https://nvo.lv/uploads/201911141454365728.pdf>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
4. Research center SKDS, Survey on central government's image, Available at (in Latvian): https://mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/attachments/atskaite_petijuma_zinojums_vk_112016.pdf, Last assessed 05.11.2019.
6. ManaBalss (2018), Progress data, Available at: <https://manabalss.lv/page/progress>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019

Malta

Score 6

A relatively large amount of policy information is made available to citizens, and this information is in general easily accessible. Several channels exist for this purpose. There is a Freedom of Information, but restrictions mean that information requested is not always available. The ministries received 402 requests from media organizations and members of the public between 2015 and 2017. Under the Freedom of Information Act, 54% of these were upheld in part or in full. Access to contracts between government and private investors remains problematic. The National Statistics Office and the Department of Information regularly make information available to citizens, as do the Ombudsman and the National Audit Office. Some of the more complete reports assessing government policy however come from the European Commission. Competition between media outlets has improved public access to information with leading media outlets hosting their own investigative television series. The June 2019 Eurobarometer Survey found that the public's levels of trust in the media were very low, at 24%, but there was also an above-average level of trust in Maltese political institutions, including parliament, the police and the army. This former weakness can be partially attributed to misinformation or a lack of information on key policy areas; the Central Link Project, a controversial road-upgrade project, is one such example. A better informational campaign on the impact of these new roads on the ecosystem was warranted. A 2019 EU Commission paper indicates that percentage of individuals using the internet to interact with government authorities is below the EU average; however, the share of those using it to obtain information is close to the EU average,

Citation:

Maltese more likely to trust government than the media study shows, Times of Malta 02/06/17
 Standard Eurobarometre 86 Autumn 2016 Media use in the European Union
 Standard Eurobarometre 88 Autumn 2017 Media use in the European Union
 Over 400 freedom of information requests in three years. Times of Malta 30/11/17
<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-02-20/local-news/Maltese-people-trust-political-parties-more-than->

the-written-press-Eurobarometer-survey-6736203951
 Times of Malta 04/09/2019 Central link trees to remain for a little while longer
 European Commission Digital Government Fact sheet 2019 Malta
 European Commission Standard Eurobarometer 91 June 2019

Mexico

Score 6

Socioeconomically, Mexico is a very internally divided country, which translates into uneven policy knowledge across the population. Due in part to its poverty levels, Mexico has the lowest performing students in the OECD and up to a third of the population has little more than primary education. However, at the other end of the scale, literally millions of Mexicans attend universities, and hundreds of thousands of Mexicans have attended foreign universities. There is, therefore, a marked split between a highly educated Mexico, which is concerned with the finer details of politics and policy, and a less politically and intellectually sophisticated Mexico composed of people who are mostly trying to get by. While better educated Mexicans are well-informed, poor and less educated citizens lack knowledge and interest in politics.

In the latest survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (INEGI), 44.5% of respondents said that they were content with the quality of government services in 2017. In the latest National Survey on Political Culture (2012), 65% of respondents stated that they had little to no interest in politics, and 77% thought that government was an instrument of manipulation that benefits only politicians and wealthy people. More recent data is offered by the AmericasBarometer (2016/17): In Mexico, support for democracy fell from 70.2% in 2004 to 49.4% in 2017, while only 26.2% of Mexicans trusted the elections and only 13.8% of Mexicans trusted political parties. President Peña Nieto and his government left office with historically low approval ratings. The new president, López Obrador, enjoys a high level of popular support. In November 2019, 67% of Mexicans approved of President López Obrador. His approval ratings have exceeded 59% throughout his term so far. However, approval of democracy is low, consistently polling at 38% (Latinobarometro).

Citation:

INEGI (2018). ENCUESTA NACIONAL DE CALIDAD E IMPACTO GUBERNAMENTAL (ENCIG) 2017. http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2018/EstSegPub/encig2018_03.pdf
 ENCUP (2012). National Survey on Political Culture. <http://www.encup.gob.mx/>
 AmericasBarometer (2018). THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO AND IN THE AMERICAS, 2016/17. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/mexico/AB2016-17_Mexico_Country_Report_English_V1_05.15.18_W_10.25.18.pdf
 INFORME LATINOBARÓMETRO 2018, <http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

Slovakia

Score 6

Given the liberal legislation on access to public information and the existing media pluralism, information about policymaking is available to all citizens. However, population's overall policy knowledge has suffered from the Fico government's

paternalistic approach. Fico's main message to the citizens was that the government takes care of people's everyday worries as well as the national interests of Slovakia, so that there is no need for citizens to engage in politics and to deal with policymaking. Social media have also had a negative impact on citizens' understanding of public policies, as they contribute to the spread of different "alternative" news and conspiracy theories promoted by low-quality media such as Hlavné správy and Zem a Vek. In the wake of the Kuciak and Kušnírová murders, however, the political interest among broad strata of the population has increased, and this has contributed to a growing interest in policymaking as well. In a recent Eurobarometer survey, 72% of respondents stated that they were highly or moderately interested in politics. Like in other European countries, popular interest in climate change has risen.

Citation:
European Commission (2019): Standard Eurobarometer 91. Brussels
(<https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD>).

Spain

Score 6

Although levels of interest in politics have traditionally been low in Spain as compared with other Western European countries, the crisis and the deep changes in the political landscape have somewhat changed Spaniards' attitudes toward the policy process. The public now demands more information, and the motives behind and implications of government policy decisions are now better explained in the media than was the case in the old two-party system. Research conducted by CIS, a public sociological research center, demonstrates that attentiveness to political information within Spain has improved.

While levels of political knowledge in Spain are generally low, there are also important socioeconomic and gender differences in levels of knowledge. Knowledge is higher among those with higher levels of education, greater socioeconomic and cognitive resources, and, in particular, among men.

Due to Spain's political deadlock, Spaniards are increasingly concerned. According to a CIS survey conducted in September 2019, 45.3% of those surveyed believed that politicians are among the country's three main problems. In addition, almost 77% of respondents believed that the political situation in Spain is "bad" or "very bad" and the majority (60%) was pessimistic about the future.

Citation:
Monica Ferrín, Marta Frailé & Gema M. García-Albacete (2019) Adult roles and the gender gap in political knowledge: a comparative study, *West European Politics*, 42:7, 1368-1389, DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2019.1577069
DOI: 10.5477/cis/reis.147.53
CIS Survey, September 2019
http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=14469

Austria

Score 5

A minority of Austrian citizens are well informed, but the majority is informed only within rather narrow limits. On the one hand, this is because political parties (and the government) do not provide full information on decision-makers' debates and strategic thinking. On the other, it is due to the characteristics of the Austrian print media, with the yellow press (and its often very strong bias) dominating large parts of the print-media market. However, a majority of Austrians show limited interest in politics, a characteristic perhaps reinforced by the comparatively minimal opportunity for direct participation within the political system.

Social media is reinforcing the existing tendency toward fragmentation. Information and communication "bubbles" exist where politically aligned citizens strengthen the opinions of other similarly aligned citizens. In particular, this has been used by politicians (e.g., by Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ chairman until 2019) who interpret the number of "likes" on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) as an indicator of political success.

One thread of political discourse in Austria has focused on increasing citizens' direct role within decision-making processes, a discussion that helped lead to the popular referendum in 2013 over the future of the military draft. In this, a majority opted for keeping the draft system rather than creating a professional army. In spite of the non-binding character of this consultation, all political parties agreed that the result should be respected. The public discourse generally favors more direct-democratic participation. And some particularly sensitive topics, such as the possibility of Turkey's EU membership, lead to promises by most or all political parties to have binding popular consultations before government and parliament determine Austria's final position.

The ÖVP-FPÖ government (2017 – 2019) promised to lower the threshold for securing a plebiscite. However, in practice, the government has shown no interest in fulfilling this promise, as it does not want to be blocked by citizen initiatives. This may have an important impact on decision-making, but it will not change the reality of public knowledge in Austria. Interest in politics is not equally distributed among citizens.

A specific Austrian problem is that there is no general civic education curriculum in the Austrian school system – and this deficit has an impact on the general level of political knowledge.

Bulgaria

Score 5 The distribution of knowledge about government policies in Bulgaria is highly uneven. Citizens who are active, especially through participation in non-governmental organizations or grassroots activities, seem to have a very strong grasp of current policies in their sphere of interest. Businesses are also well informed of government policies concerning their field of operation. The general public, however, seems distrustful and uninterested. Citizens' knowledge of how the government is actually organized and works, the division of competencies and the way decision-making and implementation proceeds is also not high.

Chile

Score 5 Print-media discussion of policy-reform proposals and government programs is relatively widespread, including discussion of reform proposals and options presented by the ad hoc policy-reform commissions. This has been recently displayed following the proposal of education, pension, fiscal and labor reforms. New forms of public communication regarding government policymaking, in many cases through websites and social networks, are on the rise. Yet a large share of the population is excluded from such discussion due to low levels of education, limited understanding of in-depth analysis and/or its lack of exposure to media other than television. For instance, a study conducted by the National Cultural Council in 2011 (Consejo de la Cultura) indicated that 84% of Chileans of all ages did not have an adequate understanding of content they had read. This observation was confirmed by a 2015 PISA study on the reading comprehension of adolescents. Furthermore, Chile's oligopolistic media structures distort the political options offered to citizens (e.g., policymaking regarding ethnic minorities and the associated conflicts).

Disinformation and manipulations hinder public-policy discussions. In addition to these deficits in news coverage, citizens in general show low interest in policymaking. Policy interest within the socioeconomic elite is also generally fairly limited, at least as long as public policies do not substantially affect their lifestyle in a nearly completely privatized environment (discussions of fiscal redistribution, as took place during the 2014 fiscal reform, represent a notable exception). Those elements of the middle class that are interested in these debates tend to have access only to the low-quality information sources mentioned above, while members of the socioeconomically lower-class population often know only about the specific public-subsidy systems they use, and lack broader familiarity with public policies and public policymaking.

:

www.uchile.cl/documentos/2Festudio-sobre-el-comportamiento-lector-a-nivel-nacional_110593_2_2405.pdf&usg=AFQjCNHhAyEyR819xPkhH1ch5LLI0dIGJQ&sig2=yRzmtJFaAIB-Bf3ltxYgsw

<http://radio.uchile.cl/2011/12/14/solo-el-84-de-los-chilenos-entiende-lo-que-lee>

Cyprus

Score 5 Traditionally strong interest and high participation in politics and elections has given way in recent years to political apathy and indeed alienation. This is testified by the low rate of political discussions among the general population, sinking turnout in elections (down from 90% to 66% in 10 years), and low rate of young people registering on electoral rolls.

The reasons may be linked to very low trust in institutions; the latest Eurobarometer (June 2019) shows only 10% trust for political parties, 34% for the parliament and 36% for the government.

Disengagement from politics is likely to affect citizens' level of information on policies. In 2018 and 2019, the media consistently noted the government's failure to properly inform the people or explain important policies and decisions.

Citation:

1. Public's trust in institutions being eroded, president says, Cyprus Mail, 14 March 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/03/14/mps-state-commissioner-with-bad-debts-named/>

Greece

Score 5 Citizens do not really obtain enough information on government policymaking, as the media is strongly partisan or leans toward infotainment, while individual members of parliament rarely discuss substantive policy issues with voters in the electoral districts which they represent. Electoral turnout rates were high until the crisis began, but declined rapidly since (though relevant data should be treated with caution, as the electoral register has not been systematically updated). Greeks rarely turn to policymakers (i.e., government ministers and members of parliament) to voice their opinion on policies. Rather, they mostly rely on interest groups to do so on their behalf.

There is also a tradition in Greece of appealing to government ministers or members of parliament on an individual basis to obtain favors, such as the facilitation of the hiring of a family member in the public sector. After 2010, owing to the depletion of state funds, this tradition was somewhat curbed, but the tendency to engage in patronage relations has not been adequately addressed. Upon ascending to government, political parties continue to staff ministerial cabinets, boards of directors of public entities and the lower echelons of public bureaucracy with their supporters where possible. Voters, for their part, welcome this practice.

Most citizens are not well-informed about government policies. However, those who are voice policy opinions in several ways. For example, citizens can participate in the process of open electronic consultation on new government measures, which each ministry must announce and manage before drafting a bill. Moreover, there is a

strong tradition of organized interest groups voicing opinions on policy matters relevant to their interest areas.

In this context, political participation in decision-making has not improved.

Citation:

The Ministry of Interior reports turnout in elections. The relevant percentage figures are available at the Ministry's <http://ekloges.ypes.gr>. The open-government consultation site is available at www.opengov.gr.

Lithuania

Score 5

Citizens have access to some government information, but the public in large part lacks the civic awareness and policy knowledge that enables an adequate understanding of government policymaking and facilitates participation. Therefore, citizens and other external stakeholders rarely engage in policymaking; indeed, less than one-third participate in solving public issues at the municipal level, according to data from the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior.

Several initiatives aimed at improving the citizens' access of information do exist, however. The Public Management Improvement Program is designed to achieve this goal by defining the scope and content of public information to be made accessible, and by centralizing the provision of information about the government's performance. In addition, the Lithuania 2030 Strategy envisions the implementation of programs devoted to educating responsible citizens. Despite this, Lithuania still faces substantial challenges with regard to increasing its citizens' participatory capacity. In its review of Lithuania's open-government programs, the OECD recommended supporting the development of Lithuania's civil society through capacity-building and collaboration with the activities of the newly established NGO Council, with the ultimate aim of engaging citizens more deeply in government policymaking processes.

Citation:

Reference to the Report of the Ministry of the Interior: vakokybe.vrm.lt/get.php?f.867 Reference to the Public Management Improvement Program: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418407&p_query=vie%F0ojo%20valdymo%20tobulinimo%20programa&p_tr2=2.

OECD, Public Governance Review Lithuania- Fostering Open and Inclusive Policy Making Key Findings and Recommendations. 2015.

Poland

Score 5

Despite recent attempts to improve access to government information, the average level of knowledge regarding government policy within the Polish public remains limited. Many citizens have little knowledge regarding major political and public institutions, and are unfamiliar with basic political facts. Reasons for this low level of policy knowledge include a tendency toward infotainment in many media outlets,

the populist propaganda produced by the government party, and a general detachment from politics among the citizenry. Moreover, political parties (which for the most part lack a broad membership base), trade unions and most other professional associations do not properly perform their socialization function, and do not work to improve their members' policy knowledge. However, a segment of society has become more interested in politics due to strong dissatisfaction with the PiS government's policies and the polarization of society. This became visible, for example, in the increased turnout for the European and national elections.

Citation:

Pazderski, F. (2019): *In the Grip of Authoritarian Populism. Polish Attitudes to an Open Society*. Brussels: Open Society Foundation, European Policy Institute (<https://www.isp.org.pl/pl/publikacje/in-the-grip-of-authoritarian-populism-polish-attitudes-to-an-open-society>).

Gyárfášova, O., C. Molnár, P. Krekó, F. Pazderski, V. Wessenauer (2018): *Youth, Politics, Democracy: Public Opinion Research in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia*. Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.

Portugal

Score 5

As noted in previous SGI reports, the bailout heightened citizens' attention to and interest in policy matters, as did the occurrence of a legislative election in the previous period but one. In the period currently under review, the situation continues to be regressing as the bailout – and ensuing austerity measures – recede from the horizon. In a Eurobarometer survey carried out in June 2019, a total of 52% of respondents in Portugal had a “strong” or “medium” interest in politics, a roughly similar proportion to 2018 and 2017. This is the second-lowest total within the EU-28 with regard to “strong” and “medium” interest in politics, above only France, and well below the EU average of 63%. Moreover, the proportion of respondents attesting to no interest in politics was 34%, second only to Spain (36%).

This result further strengthens our assessment in previous SGI reports that the Portuguese public's policy knowledge is limited and unevenly distributed. The factors limiting citizens' policy knowledge include the insufficient and incomplete explanation of policy by the government, the incomplete and insufficient explanation of policy alternatives by the opposition, a media system that tends to focus more on short-term issues and scandals than on in-depth policy analysis, presentation of policy in terms that tend to be exclusionary for most citizens; and a weak civil society that is unable to socialize and educate citizens on policy issues.

Citation:

Eurobarometer 91 (Data Annex), June 2019. Available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2253>

Romania

- Score 5** Public knowledge of government policy remains low. Most of the population, especially in rural areas and small towns, have no clue as to what government policies are being proposed or implemented. They might know the name of the president, but not the names of the prime minister and individual cabinet members; they know nothing at all about policy, but judge government activity mostly in ideological terms.

United States

- Score 5** With regards to how government works, and the complexity of the issues addressed by policies and policymaking, the U.S. public is generally quite uninformed. Comparing citizens' levels of governmental knowledge across political systems is difficult. In recent years, observers have become most concerned about the strength of "partisan motivated reasoning" on the part of ordinary citizens. An unprecedented series of scandals, failures and deviations from consensus policies have barely affected public approval of Trump, which has held almost constant at around 42% throughout his first three years in office. According to the 2019 Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey, only 39% of U.S. adults could correctly identify the three branches of government (executive, judicial and legislative).

Citation:

<https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-civics-knowledge-increases-2019-survey/>

Croatia

- Score 4** Citizens' policy knowledge in Croatia is limited. Most citizens show only minimal interest in the workings of government and politics. Moreover, the media situation makes it difficult to obtain detailed information on specific government policies. According to the latest Reuters Digital News Report, Croatia has the largest percentage of citizens who actively avoid news (more than 50%) among a sample of 30 countries.

Citation:

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2019): Digital News Report 2019. Oxford (https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR_2019_FINAL_0.pdf).

Hungary

- Score 4** Citizens' policy knowledge has suffered from the government's biased information policies and the lack of transparency that characterizes Hungarian policymaking. The failure of the democratic opposition in the 2018 parliamentary elections initially led

to political apathy. Since the municipal elections in October 2019, however, the political interest of many citizens has increased. Fidesz-fatigue has nurtured a thirst for independent news. The new opposition leadership in Budapest might also be able to improve citizens' policy knowledge by strengthening independent policy institutes, such as Policy Agenda, Political Capital and Policy Solutions.

Slovenia

Score 4

According to a Eurobarometer survey in May 2017, around 70% of Slovenian citizens think they are well informed about what is going on in the country – though their knowledge of government policymaking is rather limited. While both print and electronic media provide mostly adequate information, certain segments of the population lack media literacy, and most citizens are simply not interested in the details of policymaking. The recurring corruption and political scandals have fostered frustration and disenchantment among a majority of the population. Eurobarometer surveys suggest that the interest in politics and the trust in political institutions have increased in 2019. However, trust levels in parliament, political parties and public administration have remained below the EU-28 average.

Citation:
European Commission (2017): Standard Eurobarometer 87. Brussels
(<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2142>).

Turkey

Score 4

Except for the Ministry of Finance and the central bank, the government generally does not adequately inform citizens about the content and development of government policy. The head of government, ministers and high government officials highlight success stories and policies, but do not offer follow-up details. There are few surveys that review how citizens get information on government policy, it is evident that policymaking in Turkey is not transparent or participatory.

The government follows a selective approach defined by perception management when it comes to informing citizens about governmental processes. Although citizens in Turkey do reflect critically on politics in general, they often learn of policies only after implementation has begun. Policy plans are kept largely secret or are subject to last-minute changes, and the parliament's tendency to pass important measures as a part of an omnibus of legislative packages has been increasingly criticized, because it confuses the public. The annual activity reports issued by public institutions provide only data on policy achievements. A recent report on governance in Istanbul's municipalities indicated that municipalities do not provide stakeholders with sufficient information on decision-making processes.

Social media can facilitate input-output and implementation and feedback in governmental processes. However, the accessibility and reliability of social media is a major obstacle. In 2018, the number of broadband internet subscribers reached 71.8 million and mobile broadband penetration significantly increased to 73.1%, though it is still below the OECD average of 102.4%. Moreover, the recent restrictions and bans placed on social media and its limited presence make it ineffective in disseminating policy information.

Citation:

European Commission, Turkey 2019 Report, Brussels, 29.5.2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2019)

T. Gülaslan, Kamu Yönetiminde Sosyal Medya Kullanımı ve Yönetimi: Temel İlkeler ve Öneriler, Phd Dissertation, Hacettepe University, Ankara, 2018.

Bilal Alat, "Türkiye'de İl Belediye Web Sitelerinin İşlevselliği Üzerine Bir Araştırma," Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 28(1), 2018: 93-114.

Belediye Yönetişim Karnesi, http://belediyekarnesi.argudenacademy.org/docs/Arguden-Akademi_Belediye-Yonetisim-Karnesi.pdf, (accessed 27 October 2018)

Digital in 2018: Global Overview, <https://hootsuite.com/pages/digital-in-2018> (accessed 1 November 2018)

Indicator

Open Government

Question

Does the government publish data and information in a way that strengthens citizens' capacity to hold the government accountable?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = The government publishes data and information in a comprehensive, timely and user-friendly way.
- 8-6 = The government most of the time publishes data and information in a comprehensive, timely and user-friendly way.
- 5-3 = The government publishes data in a limited and not timely or user-friendly way.
- 2-1 = The government publishes (almost) no relevant data.

Finland

Score 10

According to the Statistics Act (280/2004), there are four official statistical authorities in Finland.

Statistics Finland, the Natural Resources Institute Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, and Finnish Customs. Each authority is mandated to collect data. In addition, there are a number of other authorities that produce official statistical materials. Statistical figures are published by Official Statistics of Finland, which publishes nearly 300 statistical datasets covering 26 different topics. The basic data of the Official Statistics of Finland is publicly available on the internet, free of charge.

Citation:

Tilastokeskus, "Katsaus kansalliseen tilastotoimeen 2015," https://www.stat.fi/static/media/uploads/org/tilastotoimi/katsaus_tilastotoimeen_2015.pdf
National Statistical Service, https://www.stat.fi/org/tilastotoimi/index_en.html

Norway

Score 10

The government publishes data and information, making it easier for citizens to be informed and to hold the government accountable.

Statistical data is easily available for free online and lots of public data is made publicly available on the internet. Many ministries and agencies help to interpret raw data and publish summaries to make the key aspects of the data more easily accessible for citizens, without providing too much spin. Most governmental bodies

also publish annual reports, which cover financial statements, policy goals and achievements, and risk assessments.

In addition, the annual report from the general auditor, the Transparency Act, weekly parliamentary questions and a lively media landscape ensure that information about government activities (or the lack of activity) is made public.

United Kingdom

Score 10

The United Kingdom is highly committed to its open government agenda. It is a founding member of the Open Government Partnership, which since its beginning in 2011 has become a major global advocate for citizens' free access to government data. Parliament, the government and the civil service reliably and timely publish all not-restricted documents on their websites.

The UK government has a long history of publishing official statistics, and since 2007 this has been governed by the Statistics and Registration Service Act. The act created the UK Statistics Authority, a non-ministerial department, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as an executive agency within the department (ONS previously reported into HMT). The act also created the Office for Statistics Regulation, which sets the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and oversees the accreditation of "National Statistics." Beyond the official statistical system, the government publishes a wide array of data and is a world leader in open data. The UK government publishes an extensive array of transparency data (e.g., senior public servants' salaries, workforce data, special adviser pay, and details of ministerial and senior officials' meetings) – over 9,000 items on the government website (gov.uk) are categorized as "transparency data" and over 10,000 FOI requests have been published. The government also has a dedicated data portal (data.gov.uk), which makes publicly accessible over 47,000 datasets published by the UK government and other public authorities. Furthermore, the United Kingdom alongside Canada ranked 1 out of 30 governments in the latest Open Data Barometer (2016 – 2017) and in the OECD's latest OURdata index (2017) the United Kingdom ranked 4th out of 31 countries.

Committee and working group meetings are streamed via a range of online platforms (e.g., YouTube and FacebookLive). Furthermore, the government provides an efficient online search-engine for government documents (data.gov.uk). Meanwhile, the bi-annual Open Government Action Plans, which set goals and standards for open government in the United Kingdom, are negotiated in cooperation with the UK Open Government Network (OGN), a coalition of active citizens and civil society organizations.

Denmark

- Score 9** All governmental agencies have websites where a lot of information is made publicly available. When new policy initiatives are suggested or approved, the responsible ministers will usually hold press conferences allowing the media – print, online and TV – to inform citizens and debate the proposals. TV2's dedicated news program, TV2 News, is very good at covering new policy events, and broadcasts several programs during the week in which well-informed journalists and experts debate the news. Important parliamentary debates are covered by the media and sometimes directly broadcast by TV channels. Furthermore, Denmark has the "access to public administration files act" of 1985, which replaced the Public Records Act of 1970.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (red.), *Det Demokratiske System*. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

THE DANISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACT, <https://dfcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016-02-29-Ombudsmand-The-Act-of-Public-Administration-1985.pdf> (Accessed 18 October 2019)

Slovenia

- Score 9** The Slovenian government launched a new and unified open data government portal, OPSI (Odprti podatki Slovenije), in late 2016. Further upgraded in 2019, the portal provides a central catalogue of all the records and databases of Slovenian public bodies, and an extensive range of datasets in machine-readable formats and with an Open Data license. Access to data is largely unrestricted and published in user-friendly formats.

Sweden

- Score 9** Strictly speaking, given the extensive rules about public availability of government documents, government does not have to actively publish material but rather simply ensure that it is available. Thus, withholding information that would be relevant to an assessment of the government's performance would be difficult. True, there may be incentives for government to seek to avoid the public disclosure of sensitive information, but to do so government would have to produce the legal justification for such an action.

Switzerland

- Score 9** The government and its institutions – in particular the Federal Statistical Office – pursue a highly user-friendly policy of internet-based access to information. Any citizen interested in public policy and having access to the internet will find a large body of qualitative and quantitative data. The transparency act (Bundesgesetz über

das Öffentlichkeitsprinzip der Verwaltung, BGÖ) ensures full access to public documents apart from classified information.

The official information bulletin is the most important source of information for citizens to make decisions in direct-democratic votes. Overall, government information policy can be considered comprehensive and enables citizens to fully inform themselves about most aspects of the political system and its policymaking.

However, as the case in 2019 of the Supreme Court overturning the outcome of a popular vote makes clear, this information policy is not flawless and is subject to close scrutiny in a direct democracy. The mistakes made by the Federal Council in delivering erroneous information regarding a vote on the taxation of couples compelled the Court to annul the referendum.

Canada

Score 8

The government of Canada has two offices, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), whose mandate is to provide independent analysis on government finances and policies. The PBO is charged with providing impartial information on the state of government finances and its estimates of trends in the Canadian economy. On request, the PBO estimates the cost of any proposal under parliamentary consideration. During the 2019 federal election, the PBO carried out a requested evaluation of the cost of programs contained in the political parties' campaign platforms. The OAG provides independent information and expert advice on government programs and activities, and the management of its Crown corporations. Both offices serve parliament, but – since reports usually become public information – they provide ample and objective evidence on the finances and performance of government policies and institutions. The reports are made available online, including historic reports, and are generally easy to understand for laypeople. The quality of information contained in the reports, however, depends heavily on the data obtained by the offices. In 2013, the PBO took the previous government to court over its refusal to comply fully with almost half of all information and access to information requests.

Government departments and agencies release information in the form of studies and data on their websites, which allows citizens to hold them accountable. Most of this information is available in both official languages in user friendly formats, including for blind people.

In addition, Canada has a large number of non-governmental think tanks, and policy and research institutes that provide additional information on a range of policy areas, including social policy, political strategy, economics, technology, industry, business and national defense.

Estonia

Score 8 In line with the overall e-government approach, all public institutions maintain extensive web resources for public use. There have been attempts to harmonize the website architecture of ministries and agencies, but these efforts have only succeeded to a limited extent. As a result, the user-friendliness of web resources varies across institutions. Available information is generally extensive and kept up-to-date, but often too detailed and sophisticated for citizens' use; retrospective data (both statistics and legal norms) are not always available.

Germany

Score 8 Open government is a relatively new topic in German politics and policymaking. In 2003, the European Parliament and the European Council issued Directive 2003/98/EC on the re-use of public sector information. The directive's objective is to make public sector information more readily available to the public and private information providers with minimal bureaucracy. The directive has been changed several times, and was adjusted in 2015. On 13 December 2006, the German Bundestag passed a bill provided for by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology ("Informationsweiterverwendungsgesetz"). The bill converted the first EU directive into national law. As the European directive was revised, a newer version of the law was adopted by the Bundestag in May 2015. Overall, the legislation requires that public sector information on social, economic, geographic, climate, tourism, business, patent and education issues be made available to private information suppliers and the general public. It has not been changed substantially since 2015. The federal government published a second National Action Plan on Open Data in September 2019 (following the first in 2014), and is currently working on an open data strategy.

Besides this legal obligation, the statistical offices of the federal and state governments are important sources of information for citizens. These offices provide a wealth of high-quality indicators across a large variety of fields that help citizens to assess the country's performance. Statistical offices publish data not only through thorough detailed expert reports but also through readable and concise press releases, which are frequently cited by the media. Statistical offices in Germany enjoy a high degree of independence from politics, and have a reputation for providing undistorted data.

Citation:

Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz (2015):
<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/iwg/BJNR291300006.html>

BMWi-Beirat (2016): Wissenschaftlicher Beirat beim Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, Mehr Transparenz in der Bildungspolitik, Gutachten des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats beim Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie.

<https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Ministerium/Veroeffentl-Beirat/wissenschaftlicher-beirat-mehr-transparenz-in-d-er-bildungspolitik.html>

ichung-Wissenschaftlicher-

Japan

Score 8

E-government issues, particularly services aimed at making public information available to citizens in a secure and timely manner, have been on the government agenda since the 2000s. Current efforts are based on the Basic Plan for the Advancement of Utilizing Public and Private Sector Data and the Policy for Open Data, both released in May 2017. The various branches of government make an overwhelming amount of statistics, data and reports available, with coordinated access through sites like e-Gov, Data.go.jp and e-Stat.

However, ensuring transparency, usability and security remains an ongoing challenge. In late 2018, it was revealed that the Monthly Labor Survey had used an improper methodology for collecting data since 2004, leading to an overestimation of wage growth. Following this exposure, weaknesses in other government statistical measures also became apparent. In a February 2019 survey, 67% of the population indicated that this incident had eroded their trust in government statistics.

Citation:

Government of Japan, Digital Government in Japan, January 2018, <https://de.slideshare.net/hiramoto/170119-digital-government-in-japan>

English-language access points to major sites: <http://www.e-gov.go.jp/en/>, <http://www.data.go.jp/?lang=english>, <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/>

61% think Abe inadequately handles labor survey scandal, The Asahi Shimbun, 19 February 2019, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201902190053.html>

Luxembourg

Score 8

The Luxembourg state publishes data on all relevant topics that every citizen can access, excluding financial data such as corporate tax breaks (“rulings”). However, a lot of data is provided in French, which is hard to understand for germanophone citizens, and there is a shortage of published data in Luxembourgish. Furthermore, journalists and the public are often unable to understand and evaluate the published data.

Citation:

Statistics portal: <https://statistiques.public.lu/en/> Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

Statistikportal des Großherzogtums Luxemburg: <http://adem.public.lu/de/marche-emploi-luxembourg/faits-et-chiffres/statistiques/statec/index.html>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

New Zealand

Score 8 In global comparison, New Zealand performs relatively well when it comes to publishing data and information as a means to strengthening vertical accountability mechanisms. In the 2018 Open Government Index, published by the Open Knowledge Foundation, New Zealand is ranked 8th out of 94 countries. New Zealand enjoys even higher rankings in the 2017 Open Budget Index (ranked joint first out of 101 countries) and the 2016 Open Data Barometer, released by the World Wide Web Foundation (ranked 7th out of 115 countries). New Zealand's position is relatively lower in the 2017 OECD OURdata Index on Open Government Data (ranked 13th out of 34 countries); however, New Zealand's score for ensuring public sector data availability and accessibility is still higher than the OECD average. In 2016, the State Services Commission formed a stakeholder advisory group to work with the government on New Zealand's Open Government Partnership processes. In addition, the government's administrative data, along with census data, has been integrated into the Integrated Data Infrastructure, which researchers can access by application. Additional data sets, co-designed with indigenous peoples have been developed, focusing on capabilities rather than deficits. This data is also publicly available on request.

Citation:

International Budget Partnership, Open Budget Index (<https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/open-budget-index-rankings/>)

OECD, Open government data (<https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/open-government-data.htm>)

Open Government Partnership, Expert Advisory Panel (<http://ogp.org.nz/open-government-partnership/expert-advisory-panel/>)

Open Knowledge Foundation, Global Open Data Index (<https://index.okfn.org/>)

World Wide Web Foundation, Open Data Barometer (https://opendatabarometer.org/?_year=2017&indicator=ODB)

South Korea

Score 8 According to the Open Government Partnership (2018), “the disclosure and usage of public data could make a big impact such as enhancing government transparency, delivering effective and efficient services to public and contributing to the nation's economic growth.” Korea ranks at the top or near the top of OECD countries on the OECD's OUR Data Index, which examines the issue of open, usable and reusable government data. A government information portal has been introduced to provide access to government data and information. However, some institutions have proved uncooperative in providing access to information requested by members of the public, making the government less accountable.

Citation:

OECD, Government at a Glance 2017 Database, OUR Data Index

The Government of Republic of Korea. 2017. “100 Policy Tasks: Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration.” Korean Culture and Information Service: Seoul.

Open Government Partnership. 2018. “10 Open National Priority Data.” Retrieved November 7 (<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries/south-korea>).

www.open.go.kr

Australia

Score 7 Much government data and information is published online and is readily accessible. Through its data.gov.au initiative, the government has an express commitment to improving the availability and use of government administrative data. That said, it is also the case that there is much information not made available. Ostensibly, this is for reasons such as national security and citizen privacy/confidentiality, but there is little doubt that political factors also play a role.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, a statutory government agency, provides a considerable and comprehensive amount of data on economic and social conditions in the country, mostly derived from the census conducted every five years and various additional surveys.

Chile

Score 7 In general terms, the level of digitalization with regard to public information (e.g., commission reports, draft laws, and information on line ministries and government activities) is quite high. Since the implementation of the transparency law of 2008 (Ley de Transparencia), data about the personnel structure and expenditure of public institutions is also publicly accessible. Though some delays in publishing relevant information may occur, and – considering the relatively high educational gap – information and data is not always published in a comprehensive way.

Croatia

Score 7 Croatia began in mid-2011 its formal participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), as a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. A special council known as the Council for the Open Government Partnership Initiative of the government was established as a centralized hub for communication between implementing and monitoring stakeholders. The OGP Council is responsible for the coordination of Croatia's national action plan with expert and administrative support provided by the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs. The implementation responsibilities are spread among a large group of government institutions, including the parliament. In 2015, the Open Data Portal of Croatia was established which tried to offer in a single place all data related to public administration and became an integral part of the e-citizens project. Some key institutions that provide publicly accessible data such as the State Audit Office and the Croatian Bureau of Statistics do so in a comprehensive, timely and user-friendly way.

Czechia

Score 7 The 2016 amendment to the Access to Information Act defined the term “open data” and led to the creation of a National Open Data Catalogue (Národní katalog otevřených dat, NKOD) and a central open data portal (<https://opendata.gov.cz>). Access to government information became a significant issue in the 2017 parliamentary elections and the 2018 municipal elections, largely thanks to the Pirate Party. Due to this effect, coming on top of long-standing pressure by NGOs, information provision has improved. While more information is thus made available to citizens than has been the case in the past, it is not always provided in a user-friendly fashion, and citizens seeking information are often forced to jump through numerous administrative loops.

Greece

Score 7 Before the onset of the Greek economic crisis, there was a problem with reporting statistical and other data regarding government revenue and expenses as well as regarding personnel in the Greek public sector.

The situation has exceptionally improved since then. Barring data on defense and security, which are considered classified, all data produced by the revamped official statistical authority of Greece (Helstat) is accessible. This data is compiled and published according to Eurostat's requirements. Reliable data is also available on public employment, including type of work contract and other information, via a separate website maintained by the Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction (Apogرافي). Moreover, thanks to a law on the issue of transparency, all administrative acts issued by the central, regional and local authorities and other public bodies (the Diavgeia system) are available online. Though this system is not very user-friendly, accessing the data is possible. The government that took power in July 2019 has announced that it would rapidly expand the digitalization of public services as part of an effort to enhance efficiency and transparency. To that effect, it established a new Ministry of Digital Governance, and also founded a new Government Authority on Transparency.

Citation:

The three platforms, cited in the above response, through which one can access data and information are the following:

<http://www.statistics.gr/en/home/>

<http://apogرافي.gov.gr/> and

<https://diavgeia.gov.gr/>

Ireland

Score 7 The government through governmental departments and institutions, such as the Central Statistics Office and the Auditor and Controller General, publishes data and information in a comprehensive, timely and user-friendly way.

Israel

Score 7 In recent years, the government has expanded its efforts with regard to policy transparency. In 2011, Israel joined the Open Government Partnership and, in 2016, the government announced the launch of a program designed to open all governmental databases to public access. This step is part of an ongoing policy of increasing transparency by expanding the authority of and funding for the Governmental Unit for Freedom of Information.

Most (if not all) governmental authorities have an official website and social media presence, some of which are available in languages other than Hebrew (e.g., English and Arabic, as well as Persian in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The websites offer a wide range of services, including information services (like press releases, law drafts for public commentary and policy explanations). One important example of this is the official website of the Ministry of Finance, which publishes the state budget (or more accurately its highlights) in a readable and keyword-searchable PDF format. The website also offers tools to observe changes in the budget and to compare it with the budgets from previous years.

The Knesset has a comprehensive website, offering the option to download all of the Knesset's press releases, general assembly and various committee protocols (although excluding protocols from confidential committees, such as the Committee for Foreign Affairs and National Security Matters, and its many sub-committees), draft and enacted laws, and even research papers that were handed to the various committees. The Knesset's TV channel, which started broadcasting in 2004, broadcasts through this website, and the Knesset's committee and general assembly meetings are usually recorded and made available to watch online. Since 2009, the Public Knowledge Workshop, a non-profit NGO, has been running the Open Knesset website, with the aim to make the information on the Knesset's website more accessible to the public. Currently, the Open Knesset website is not accessible, as an updated version being prepared. In addition, on 22 October 2018, the Knesset announced the launch of the National Legislation Database, with the purpose of making all legislation and legislative processes digitally accessible to the public.

Under the 20th Knesset, a special committee was charged with promoting initiatives to increase transparency and public access to government information. The committee was called the Special Committee for the Application of Governmental

Information Accessibility and Its Transparency Principles to the Public, which has since been dubbed the Transparency Committee. Following the elections to the 21st Knesset, it was decided that the Transparency Committee would cease activity and would not convene during the current Knesset. According to media reports, the decision was made due to bitter relations between that committee's chairman and other members of parliament.

Citation:

Bender, Eric. "The Transparency Committee Headed by MK Shaffir Shall Be Cancelled in the Next Knesset." In Ma'ariv website.. April 18th, 2019. (Hebrew)

Government ICT Authority, "Open Government Action Plan for 2018-2019": <http://yoursay.gov.il/cio/File/Index/nap3english/>

Liel, Dafna. "MK Shaffir's Transparency Committee Will Be Cancelled?." In Mako website.. April 18th, 2019. (Hebrew)

Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2018": <http://www.ti-israel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CPI-2018-Executive-summary-PRINT.pdf>

Tamar Hermann, "Democracy in Crisis? Israeli Survey Respondents Agree to Disagree": 13.12.2018, Podcast, <https://en.idi.org.il/podcasts/25310>

"Transparency International – Israel": <http://www.ti-israel.org/> (Hebrew)

Anna Ahronheim, "IDF comptroller to investigate army's readiness," JPost, 26.09.2018: <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-comptroller-to-investigate-armys-readiness-567994>

Lithuania

Score 7

There are several main reporting mechanisms on the overall performance of the government and its institutions. First, every year the government presents to the parliament an annual performance report where overall performance and performance in the policy areas of individual ministries as well as thematic areas are reported. Second, the Lithuanian government publishes quarterly, semi-annual or annual reports on the implementation of annual performance priorities. Third, every year the institutions that manage appropriations from the state budget publish their annual performance reports on the implementation of strategic-performance plans (including budgetary programs) and the achievement of performance targets (i.e., outputs, outcomes and impacts). However, the National Audit Office found in its 2015 performance report that these government reports failed to include more than half of the outcome-level monitoring indicators whose targets were not achieved, and that information on unachieved outcomes was ambiguously reported. Also, reporting on the implementation of the 2015 priorities was incomplete, with less than half of all performance results presented by the government.

The scope of information presented in the annual performance reports of Lithuanian budgetary institutions is large, but they sometimes omit important information and lack a critical assessment of organizational performance. The Lithuanian government

has committed to taking action to address the challenge of incomplete, selective and biased reporting.

A open-government data initiative is part of a national plan of information society development. The Ministry of Economy and Innovation launched the initiative during the 2008 to 2012 government term, when the potential of opening up government data was first recognized. Parts of the necessary infrastructure have been in place since implementation of the first EU directive on public sector information. For instance, the Information Society Development Committee created a preliminary open data portal (<http://opendata.gov.lt>) where information on available datasets is published. The Ministry of Transport and Communications intends to spend around €4 million on the development of an advanced open data portal. In order to exploit the opportunities presented by government data, government ministries and agencies are encouraged to open up data to the public. Despite a recent increase in the scope of government data published online, Lithuanian authorities should pursue a more experimental approach to discover how data can add value to the public sector, to society and to the economy.

Citation:

Valstybės kontrolė (2016). Programinio biudžeto sistema: strateginių veiklos planų sudarymas ir įgyvendinimo stebėseną, Nr. VA-P-60-2-17.

Netherlands

Score 7

The most important and high-prestige knowledge institutes (CPB, PBL, SCP and WRR) regularly publish comprehensive, timely and accurate data. Such information is used in the annual information packages that accompany parliamentary deliberation and decision-making on the national budget. Throughout the year, government provides topical information about issues pertaining to ministerial policy agendas on the government website. For politically engaged citizens, it is thus quite possible to be well-informed on government policies. In the Edelman Trust Index 2019, the Netherlands scored a relatively high and unchanged 54 with regard to trust in government information, indicating an average “neutral” position falling between trust and distrust. Political parties sometimes openly express distrust in the numbers released by the high-prestige knowledge institutes if these contradict their policy preferences.

In other cases (e.g., the WODC research into drugs policy, the outbreak of Q-fever in rural areas, the continued use of carcinogenic agents in military paint and sensitivity to earthquakes in areas of gas exploitation), the government interfered in the findings of government-sponsored research. Open government regulation offers public access to most routine government information. Though the law also offers decision-makers plenty of opportunities to withhold or delay information if “necessary” for political convenience. There are several blatant cases of government misinformation and/or information delays, frequently because civil servants are alleged to have belatedly or

incompletely informed ministers in order to shield ministers from media scrutiny or to spin the information.

Investigative journalism articles published in *De Correspondent* and *Follow the Money* have disclosed hidden governance issues and government facilitation of structural business lobbying arrangements.

Citation:

NRC-Handelblad, *De eenzame strijd van een klokkenluider bij Justitie*, 18 June, 2018

Volkskrant, *Q-koortsslachtoffers voelen zich niet serieus genomen door de overheid: 'Het is een grof schandaal'*, 26 September 2018

NRC-Handelsblad, *Defensie gebruik nog steeds kankerverwekkende verf*, 22 October 2018

2019 Edelman Trust Barometer (edelman.com, accessed 8 November 2019)

De Volkskrant, 2 October 2019. RIVM reageert op kritiek: stikstofmetingen deugen wel.

Follow the Money, 27 July 2019. ABDUP: al bijna 75 jaar de onzichtbare lobby van Nederlandse multinationals. (ftm.nl, accessed 8 November 2019)

Spain

Score 7

Ministries and public agencies (e.g., the National Statistics Institute, INE, and the Sociological Research Center, CIS) often publish data and information that enables citizens to hold the government accountable. The third Open Government Plan 2017 – 2019 (as modified in June 2018) promoted mechanisms of participation and dialogue with civil society and ensure inter-administrative cooperation. During the period under review, the government adopted the fourth Open Government Plan (2019 – 2021), which aims to improve the transparency, quality and availability of open data in order to increase the accountability of public administrations. The plan will also increase citizens' and public servants' awareness of the values of open government. Besides the activities of the central government, there are a number of innovative open government projects at the regional level.

Citation:

Government (2017), Open Government Plan 2017-2019 plan, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Spain_Action-Plan_2017-2019_UPDATE_EN.pdf

Gobierno Abierto de Navarra, <http://www.gobiernoabierto.navarra.es/es>

Government (2019), IV Plan de Gobierno Abierto, https://transparencia.gob.es/transparencia/transparencia_Home/index/Gobierno-abierto/ivPlanAccion/Que_es_IV_Plan.html

United States

Score 7

In addition to data on the activities of government, the U.S. government publishes a vast amount of social, economic and other data. All major departments and agencies collect and publish important series of relevant data. The Budget of the United States

Government describes all major programs, their funding and levels of activity, and each agency publishes a substantial annual report describing its operations and various measures of performance and outcomes.

Federal agencies often provide data in a form intended to be used by ordinary citizens. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides information for patients separately from that intended for health professionals. For the most part, however, federal agencies do not, and need not, take responsibility for putting data into a form that is best understood by ordinary citizens. Each body of federal data is repackaged and re-purposed by numerous media, service and other organizations.

The Trump administration has discontinued the publication of various data series on matters that challenge administration priorities, ranging from climate change to mental health. Its actions have been described as a “war on data.” Increasingly, the administration cites national security as an argument for withholding information from the public or Congress.

Austria

Score 6

The ÖVP-FPÖ government (2017 – 2019), as its predecessor had, paid lip service to the idea of open government. However, like its predecessor, its promises were not followed by significant new policy actions. The Austrian government is not a “closed shop” – access to government data (e.g., provided by the government’s websites) is possible and the opposition’s right to information concerning significant developments is not disputed. But this is not the high level of open government that may be expected considering the promises given by this and former governments. The proposed freedom of information act remains stuck in parliament and it appears likely that it will stay there for many more years to come.

The government has made an effort to facilitate the provision of scientific micro-data, but it is still much more difficult for researchers to access essential data compared to, for example, researchers in Nordic countries. Any government (rightfully) has to consider the possible contradiction between open government and the principle of protecting sensible (especially personal) data.

Belgium

Score 6

In 2011, Belgium launched an open data platform with the aim of making government information readily available to citizens. In general, Belgium is comparable to the average European country in terms of open data policy. However, perhaps due to a lack of communication, Belgium continues to lag behind its European counterparts in terms of the use and impact of open data initiatives.

Belgium is ranked 22 out of 115 countries in the Open Data Barometer Global Report Fourth Edition (2016) and 22 out of 94 countries in the Global Open Data

Index 2016/2017. The Global Open Data Index highlights Belgium's poor performance regarding the availability of information on government spending, land ownership, election results, draft legislation and national laws.

As a response to the lack of information, Transparencia, a private platform, was created in 2016 with the aim of helping citizens access information held by the government.

Citation:

http://digitaldashboard.belgium.be/sites/default/files/basic-page/files/2018-03/country-factsheet_belgium.pdf

<https://index.okfn.org/place/be/>

https://opendatabarometer.org/data-explorer/?_year=2015&indicator=ODB&lang=en&open=BEL

<https://data.gov.be/fr/info-faq>

Private substitute:

<https://transparencia.be/help/about>

<https://www.sudinfo.be/art/1699151/article/2016-10-19/transparencia-une-plate-forme-bruxelloise-pour-obliger-les-autorites-a-plus-de-t>

Bulgaria

Score 6

The Bulgarian government has adopted a policy of developing citizen access to government data through the establishment of an open data portal. As of late 2019, there were close to 10,000 datasets available, and constant updates take place. All datasets are downloadable in machine-ready format. The data portal provides citizens with a powerful tool for assessing government policies and holding the government accountable. Two major limitations remain, however. First, the supply of data, which would enable citizens to make a preliminary assessment of major government projects and plans, is relatively limited. Second, many datasets are difficult to interpret because of obscure and unclear methodologies.

Citation:

<https://opendata.government.bg/>

France

Score 6

The bureaucratic and political structure of the country overall provides satisfactory information. It is possible to get full access to information directly or through specialized citizens groups, and several media outlets provide critical analyses of governmental action.

However, the political system, both at the local or national level, offers few instruments to help citizens monitor and oversee their administrative and political authorities. The main issue remains the incapacity of individuals to deal with the massive flows of information provided by public bodies. At the local level, the “information” provided by the ruling party or coalition tends to be mere window-dressing or propaganda in support of the adopted or proposed policy.

Mexico

Score 6 Mexico's access to information law from 2003 guarantees the public's right to request and receive information from the federal government. With the law, Mexico created the innovative Federal Institute for Access to Information (Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública – IFAI), which helps citizens to collect data and information. The new government of President López Obrador is pursuing a more transparent policy toward citizens. The president's daily press conferences symbolize this new openness. On the other hand, government communication policies at the national and subnational levels regarding the war on drugs cannot be considered very transparent.

Cyprus

Score 5 The Statistical Service and the Press and Information Office (PIO) systematically publish statistical data and reports, and information on the activities of the president and ministers. Ministries publish information on their work, albeit with significantly differing scope and type of information. The publication of annual activity reports by ministries and departments is often delayed by several years.

In early September 2019, the government website Exandas was launched. It provides access to government tables and gives an overview of all development projects and reforms, political decisions, and national strategies which are being implemented. Data and information available mostly consist of an inventory of all actions undertaken since the current government took office in 2013. Unfortunately, data offered on Exandas bears no dates and no update has been undertaken since the website's launch. Given the lack of comprehensive data on key policies and government activities, citizens remain unable to independently evaluate the government's work.

Citation:

1. Exandas – Report for monitoring the progress of government work (in Greek), <https://exandas.presidency.gov.cy/>

Latvia

Score 5 Latvia joined the Open Government Partnership in 2011, with the State Chancellery as the current assigned contact point. The government has made efforts to ensure Latvia complies with the partnership requirements. Three National Action Plans have been published since joining the partnership, monitoring the progress and proposing future improvements in the field of open government.

Following these recommendations, an online platform was set up in 2017 (<https://data.gov.lv>) to serve as a single point of public access to government data. At the time of writing, the portal contained 318 datasets from 68 data publishers

(compared to 33 datasets from 13 data publishers in 2017). However, it is not mandatory for government data to be published on the platform. Instead, data is only published on a voluntary basis. The Latvian Open Data Portal is linked with the European Data Portal, which means that all data published is also available on the European Data Portal. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance now publishes basic information about the government's budget positions on an interactive platform, which details the spending categories to which funds are allocated and the amount that is spent (in absolute and percentage terms).

In 2017, Latvia ranked 14 (up from 31 in 2015) in the Global Open Data Index. Open public sector data in Latvia is evaluated as meeting the basic criteria of the Open Data Index, but fails when it comes to more advanced criteria, especially when it comes to usability of the data (e.g., publishing documents in a machine-readable format, offering bulk-download options and using open license statements). Importantly, although the law (updated in 2018) regulates what information should be published online by governmental institutions, no unified approach is used when it comes to structuring the information, which often makes locating information difficult.

Citation:

1. State Chancellery (2017), National Action Plan 2017-2019, Available at: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Latvia_National-Action-Plan_2017-2019_LAT.pdf
2. Latvian Open Data Portal, Available at: <https://data.gov.lv/lv>
3. Ministry of Finance, Interactive Budget (2018), Available at: <http://www.fm.gov.lv/valstsbudzets>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019
4. Open Government Partnership (2015-2018), Timeline: Latvia, Available at: https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/ogp_lat_timeline.pdf, Last assessed: 05.11.2019
5. Global Open Data Index (2017), Available at: <https://index.okfn.org/place/>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019

Malta

Score 5

Malta provides a mixed picture with regard to open-government issues. Since the country obtained EU membership, governments have found themselves increasingly pressured to provide information through more open and transparent channels. Malta has a Whistleblower Act. The National Statistics Office (NSO), reformed in the late 1990s in response to Malta's EU membership bid, and reformed again in 2015, regularly makes freely accessible information available on various matters. The NSO also responds to researchers and the media seeking access to information relating to a great diversity of subjects. However, the NSO statistics tend to be used by government entities more than by the media or the public. Every ministry, department, public corporation and public sector board must publish annual reports and information on their websites. Hence, a vast quantity of information can be accessed online through government websites or EU portals. Furthermore, as noted elsewhere, information can be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. However, this remains contested territory. In 2018, there were 367 requests for information, 198 of which received a response and 31 of which were still being

processed as of the time of writing. Governments tend to be reluctant to publish public contracts, citing commercial sensitivity. This can be valid in some cases, but is not in others. A recent information request by the parliament was refused, with a response indicating there were insufficient human resources available to collect the data. The data commissioner, who had to adjudicate a case relating to documents pertaining to the Vitals hospital deal, was not allowed to view the documents in question. The new commissioner for standards in public life recently criticized government ministries for inviting only selected journalists to certain public events. However, the evident capacity of hackers to infiltrate government systems should demonstrate that secrecy is no longer an option. In 2017, the Ombudsman reported that the public administration and public authorities generally have a negative attitude toward disclosing information; this remains a challenge today, undermining the overall openness and transparency of the public administration.

Citation:

Ministers should not only invite selected journalists to public events standards commissioner says. Times of Malta 06/02/19

'Humanly impossible' to establish number of vacant state properties Times of Malta 05/02/19

2017 Parliamentary Ombudsman Report

Times of Malta 16/10/19 Court rejects Times request for hospital deal documents

Ministry of Justice Annual Report 2018

Poland

Score 5

Poland is not a member of the Open Government Partnership and the government is not much interested in fostering a social dialogue about its policy initiatives. Though the government does engage in digital access. In addition, the Ministry of Digital Affairs runs a government data portal and other mechanisms for public access, and is also engaged in opening access to administration via digital means. However, all these actions follow a technological perspective and are not necessarily driven by a motivation to truly enable citizens to participate in politics.

Citation:

Wieczorkowski, J., I. Pawelozek (2018): Open government data, the case of Polish public sector, in: Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management 6(2): 54-71 (http://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/articles/2018/volume6_2/OJAKM_Volume6_2pp54-71.pdf).

Portugal

Score 5

Data and information is published by the government. However, it is not comprehensive nor necessarily regularly updated. It is also not easy to locate information, which is dispersed across agencies, ministries, QUANGOs, public administration bodies, and other state and quasi-state organizations.

In addition to the nature of the information, the government provides access to IT so that the citizens, in theory at least, can access data. Whether the available information is very useful is, however, questionable.

The government of Portugal has tried to improve access by launching the e-Portugal portal (eportugal.gov.pt) that provides public access to government information within the framework of the Strategy for Digital Transformation of Public Administration and which might strengthen the public's ability to hold government accountable.

Citation:

<https://www.dn.pt/.../governo-lanca-portal-eportugal-para-simplificar-o-acesso-dos-po..>

Slovakia

Score 5

Slovakia joined the Open Government Partnership in 2011 and opened an Open Data Portal in 2015 (www.data.gov.sk). In its 2016 government manifesto, the third Fico government pledged to increase public administration transparency and make public information available in the form of open data. It also emphasized its ambition to support a data-based economy and stimulate the business environment. The current quality of published datasets at the open data portal suffers from persistent problems with insufficient updates to some datasets and the non- standardization of formats.

Citation:

Schneider, J. (2015): *Bringing Government Data into the Light: Slovakia's Open Data Initiative, 2011-2015*. Princeton, N.J. (https://successfulesocieties.princeton.edu/sites/successfulesocieties/files/JS_OGP_Slovakia_FORMATTED_012Oct2015.pdf).

Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society (2017): *Open Government Partnership National Action Plan of the Slovak Republic 2017 – 2019*. Adopted by the Government Resolution No. 104/2017. Bratislava (https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/rozvoj_obcianskej_spolocnosti/otvorene_vladnutie/akcne_plany/2017_2019/Slovakia-OGP-nap-2017-english.pdf).

Iceland

Score 4

The government does not systematically or regularly publish data or information that could strengthen the ability of citizens to evaluate or monitor the government. On the contrary, the government is widely seen as seeking to hide information that is readily available to citizens in neighboring countries. For example, the Pension Fund for State Employees has refused to publish the names of those pensioners who receive the largest payments from the fund and the amounts they receive.

Furthermore, the Wage Council, which was tasked with deciding the salaries of members of parliament and senior public officials, granted substantial wage hikes in recent years. The wage increases were so substantial that both the Icelandic Confederation of Labor (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise (SA) publicly complained that the increases threatened to undermine the labor market by

triggering corresponding wage claims across the board. The government responded by disbanding the Wage Council. The Wage Council appears to have kept no minutes of its meetings.

The governing board of the central bank, appointed by parliament, does not publish the minutes of its meetings. This makes it impossible to ascertain whether the board has fulfilled its legal obligations to ensure that the central bank follows the law and investigate allegations of legal violations by central bank officials. In October 2008, the central bank lent the private bank Kaupthing €500 million, just as Kaupthing was about to fail. The loan was not made in accordance with the bank's rules and may have violated the law. It is a matter of record that one-third of the loan amount was deposited immediately in an offshore tax haven. Even so, as no minutes of meetings were kept, there is no way to determine whether the governing board of the bank fulfilled its legal obligations, let alone took appropriate measures.

These examples notwithstanding, the government has for some time run an open consultation web portal (Samráðsgátt, samradsgatt.island.is/um-samradsgatt/) to increase transparency, and opportunities for public and stakeholder participation in policymaking. One can find and access drafts of bills, rules and policy documents via the portal. Everyone can send in comments and suggestions. The extent to which such contributions can affect the actions or intentions of the government is, however, unclear.

Citation:

Samráðsgátt stjórnvalda. <https://samradsgatt.island.is/oll-mal/?FilterDate=LatestChanged>

Italy

Score 4

According to the Freedom of Information principle established in 1990, and further extended in 2013 (Law decree no. 33), citizens have access to all administrative acts with limited exceptions. A government commission oversees the full application of this right.

The government does not have a systematic and comprehensive policy of making information easily accessible for citizens in such a way as would enable citizens to hold the government accountable. The Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the ministries themselves maintain web pages that publish information about government activities. However, the information published on these websites provides a sequence of events (e.g., meetings of the ministers) rather than data-rich documentation.

Romania

Score 4 Romania joined the international Open Government Partnership in 2011, emphasizing the overarching goals of increasing transparency, promoting new technologies and engaging citizens. Within the framework of the partnership, four action plans have been approved since 2011. In 2013, the government established an open data portal (data.gov.ro) which now provides over 1,000 datasets from almost 100 public bodies. From 2015 to 2017, the Ministry of Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue oversaw the implementation of the action plans. Since its disbandment in January 2018, the implementation oversight has rested with the Secretariat General of the Government. A quick look at the website of various ministries and agencies shows that the information provided is patchy, outdated or partial. Some of the websites are hard to access or are difficult to navigate.

Citation:

Romanian Government (2018): Open Government Partnership: National Action Plan 2018-2020. Bucharest (http://ogp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Romania-2018-2020_NAP_EN.pdf).

Turkey

Score 4 Turkey is moderately prepared for public administration reform and demonstrates a strong commitment to a more open administration and the use of e-government. However, there has been serious backsliding in the areas of public service provision, human resource management, and accountability (e.g., with regard to the right to administrative justice and the right to seek compensation). A transparent and effective response still needs to be provided for the large-scale dismissals of public sector employees.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) Steering Committee designated the government of Turkey as inactive in OGP on 21 September 2016. Due to Turkey's failure to meet the requirements, Turkey's participation in the OGP ended in September 2017. As part of its fight against corruption, Turkey prepared an Action Plan 2012 – 2013 that included launching four web portals (i.e., for transparency, expenditure, electronic procurement and regulations), identifying areas at risk of corruption, developing relevant measures, minimizing bureaucratic obstacles, and promoting integrity, transparency and accountability.

A 2019 European Commission report stressed that while Turkey has made progress in the standardization of data collection and achieving EU *acquis* alignment in many sectors (e.g., business, labor, education), it must improve coordination between TurkStat (TÜİK) and other data providers and improve the quality and use of administrative records. Turkey's capacity for data collection and analysis is being strengthened through projects funded under IPA. However, TurkStat's professional independence is questionable in the wake of a presidential decree adopted in July

2018 that cut the mandate of TurkStat's president and changed the appointment procedures of senior officials.

Citation:

European Commission, Turkey 2019 Report, Brussels, 29.5.2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2019)

Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/turkey-withdrawn> (accessed 27 October 2018)

World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index 2019, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/ROLI-2019-Reduced.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2019)

2017 Açık Hükümet Verilerinin Nihai Durum Raporu, <http://www.verigazeteciligi.com/2017-acik-hukumet-verilerinin-nihai-durum-raporu-turkce/> (accessed 1 November 2019)

Hungary

Score 3

The Hungarian government is certainly not an open government, since access to relevant information is very difficult even for members of parliament and much more for ordinary citizens. Hungary quit the Open Government Partnership in late 2016 because the Hungarian government had been heavily criticized for its lack of transparency and its treatment of NGOs in this forum. In December 2016, the Orbán government approved a White Paper on National Data policy that called for strengthening efforts to make public sector information available as open data. As it stands, the datasets available at the central open data portal www.kozadat.hu are limited and difficult to use. The lack of transparency was a major issue in the municipal elections in October 2019.

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