EUROPE

Political corruption has tremendous consequences worldwide. Transparency in political finance, political influence, and state administration can help reduce corruption and make democratic processes more legitimate, more pluralistic, and more representative. Open data on decision-making and decision makers can be a powerful tool to identify whose interests shape how governance decisions are made and implemented.

New data from 67 OGP countries, including 28 countries from Europe, shows that there are significant gaps in data frameworks and data availability across a variety of areas related to countering political corruption. This module is part of the *Broken Links: Open Data to Advance Accountability and Combat Corruption* report[1] which offers an overview of data frameworks and data availability in OGP countries across eight policy topics using data from the *Global Data Barometer (GDB)*.[2] The goal of the report is to identify areas for improvement and generate recommendations for future OGP commitments.

This module focuses specifically on the state of data frameworks and availability in the 28 OGP countries assessed by the GDB across Europe (see *Countries in this Analysis*). This regional analysis includes:

- A summary of GDB's assessment of the state of anti-corruption data in the region

- An overview of OGP commitments across policy areas assessed

- Highlights in featured policy areas with data from both GDB and OGP

- Examples of regional innovations

Countries in this Analysis

OGP Countries Assessed by GDB and Included in this Analysis

- Albania
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Malta
- Republic of Moldova
- Netherlands
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovak Republic
- Spain
- Sweden
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

OGP Countries Not Assessed by GDB[3]

- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Luxembourg
- Montenegro
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Serbia

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[1] You can find the report *Broken Links Open Data to Advance Accountability and Combat Corruption* here: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/broken-links/.

[2] View more details about the Global Data Barometer here: https://globaldatabarometer.org/.

[3] Due to inability to find researchers, 10 of the 77 OGP countries were not included in the Global Data Barometer's assessment.

Open Government Partnership

Key Takeaways

- **While Europe has generally high rates of data availability, some countries still lack publicly available data on key anti-corruption priorities.** For example, many countries do not publish data on right to information (RTI) performance or lobbying.

- **Data quality is an area for improvement.** Across policy areas, European countries typically do not publish high-value information, such as data on money spent by lobbyists. Most datasets lack usability, such as machine-readability, and are not interoperable with other key anti-corruption data.

- **While OGP action plans in Europe have led to several transformative reforms, most countries have yet to make commitments in many key policy areas.** For example, just one-fifth of countries in the region have made a commitment on political finance transparency.

Alessandra Costarella, a nineteen-year-old girl from Calabria, Italy, is one of many student volunteers who help track government spending via Italy's OpenCoesione platform. Corruption is the most serious problem in Calabria and by using this online tool, Alessandra was able to identify missing government expenditures that were supposed to help clean up the environment and fight organized crime. Photo by OGP.
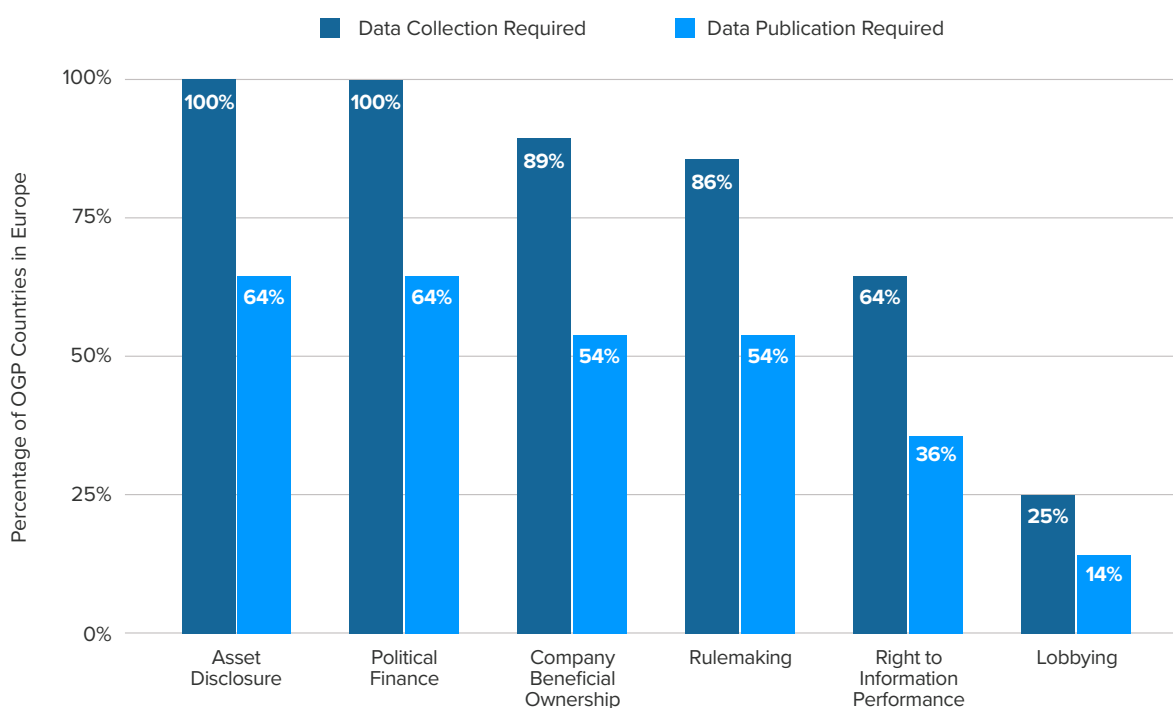
Overall State of Data to Combat Political Corruption

Legal Frameworks

While a majority of countries have laws requiring the collection of data across these policy areas, many countries do not legally require that data be made publicly available (see Figure 1).[4] On one end of the spectrum, about two-thirds of European countries have laws or regulations requiring the publication of asset disclosure and political finance data. At the other end, only four countries legally require collecting and publishing lobbying data.

FIGURE 1: Gaps between required data collection and publication

This figure shows the percentage of OGP countries in Europe with data collection and disclosure requirements across policy areas. The sample includes the 28 OGP countries in the region assessed by the Global Data Barometer.

Note: This analysis only considers binding laws and policies that exist and are operational.[5]

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[4] The Global Data Barometer assesses whether countries have set requirements to publish data through binding policy, regulations, or law. Legal frameworks governing public procurement and land tenure data have not been assessed by the GDB. However, information on the availability of procurement and land tenure data was collected (see *Data Availability and Usability*).
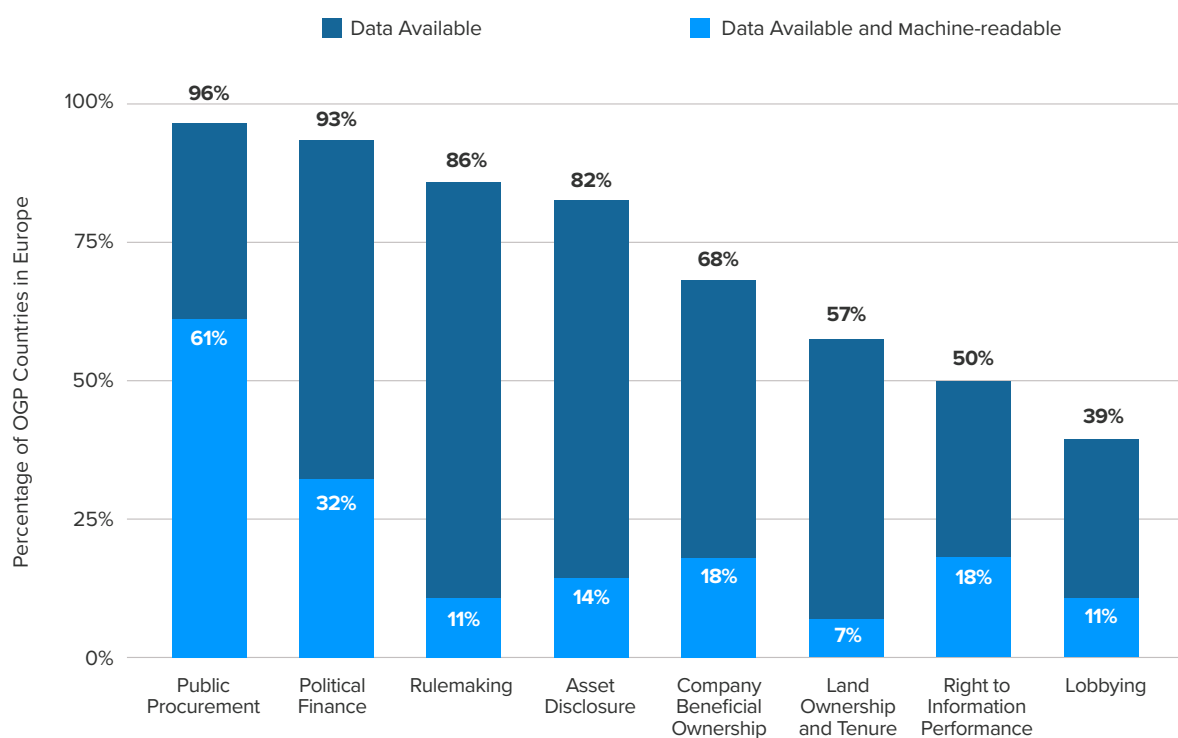
[5] For more details see the *About Broken Links* section of the report: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/broken-links/.

Data Availability and Usability

Many countries in Europe lack publicly available data on key anti-corruption priorities. Where countries do publish data, making this data available to the public in an open format remains a challenge. In most areas, a small minority of countries publish data in a machine-readable format, which makes it difficult for users to analyze the data for monitoring and accountability purposes (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: **Gaps between data availability and usability**

This figure shows the percentage of OGP countries in Europe with available data and the percentage with machine-readable data. The sample includes the 28 OGP countries in the region assessed by the Global Data Barometer.

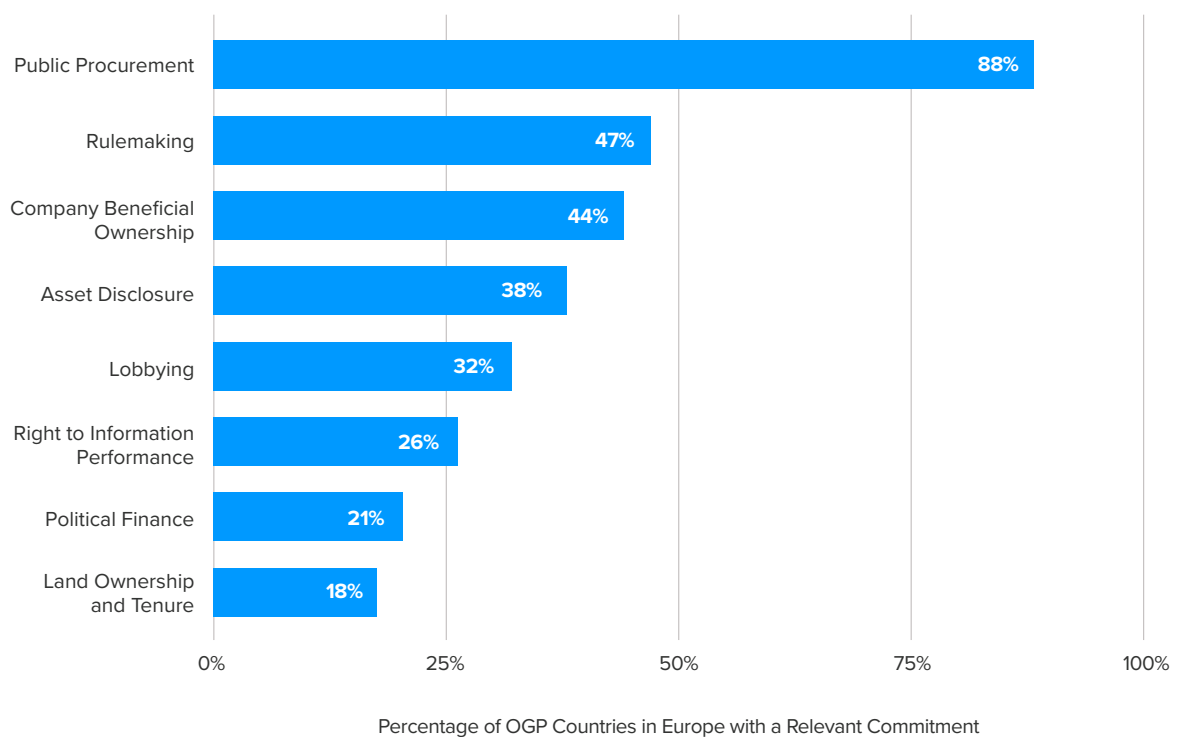*Note: For this analysis, countries with "partial" disclosure are considered cases of "no" disclosure.*[6]

State of Progress Through OGP

While many OGP countries in Europe have advanced open government reforms to counter corruption, many countries have not used OGP action plans to advance commitments in this area (see Figure 3). For example, most countries in the region have not made at least one commitment related to key areas like lobbying or political finance. And similar to other regions, few countries in Europe have committed to publish better RTI performance or rulemaking data.

FIGURE 3: **Progress made through OGP commitments**

This figure shows the percentage of OGP countries in Europe that have made at least one relevant OGP commitment across each area assessed in this report. The sample includes all 34 OGP countries in the region.

Percentage of OGP Countries in Europe with a Relevant Commitment

Featured Policy Areas

The following policy areas were selected for a more detailed analysis based on a variety of factors, including regional priorities, areas of momentum, and areas for growth.

Company Beneficial Ownership

Publishing digital registers with beneficial ownership information helps shine a light on secretive legal structures that can be exploited to launder the proceeds of corruption and other corrupt activities.

Key Findings from the Global Data Barometer

- **Most countries have a law on beneficial ownership transparency.** Nearly all countries in the region have rules or guidance requiring beneficial ownership data to be collected in a central register. Fifteen countries legally require the data to be published. Many of these countries' laws can be attributed to the European Union directive that requires member countries to collect and publish beneficial ownership data.[7]

- **In most countries, data is either not available or not usable.** Two-thirds of countries in the region have publicly available beneficial ownership data, but most do not publish according to open data principles. Only four countries publish data that is openly licensed, machine-readable, and bulk downloadable (Denmark, Latvia, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom).

- **Interoperability is an area for improvement in the region.** Currently, two European countries (Estonia and Latvia) include unique identifiers in beneficial ownership datasets that are common to other anti-corruption datasets, strengthening opportunities to monitor public officials' interests and activity.

State of Progress Through OGP

- **Beneficial ownership transparency is a growing area of reform in Europe.** Fifteen countries in the region have made 22 total commitments on beneficial ownership transparency.[8] Six countries are currently implementing a commitment through their 2020 or 2021 action plans.

- **Commitments generally do not focus on open data.** Most commitments focus on establishing public beneficial ownership registers but do not specify doing so in open data format. Three countries (Armenia, North Macedonia, and Lithuania) have committed to publishing beneficial ownership information as open data through their OGP action plans.

Regional Innovations	
Latvia	Beneficial ownership information is published on Latvia's Open Data Portal[9] according to the Beneficial Ownership Data Standard.[10]
United Kingdom	The United Kingdom was one of the first OGP countries to publish a national beneficial ownership database, leading the way for other members.[11]

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7   EUR-Lex, "Document 02015L0849-20210630," n.d., https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02015L0849-20210630.

8   As of June 2022, 34 national and 23 local OGP members from Europe had submitted at least one action plan. See an updated list of OGP national and local members here.

9   "Patieso Labuma Guvēju Dati Atbilstoši BODS Standartam," n.d., https://data.gov.lv/dati/eng/dataset/plg-bods.

10 Open Ownership, "Beneficial Ownership Data Standard (v0.2)," n.d., https://standard.openownership.org/en/0.2.0/.

11 Companies House, "People with Significant Control (PSC) Snapshot," n.d., http://download.companieshouse.gov.uk/en_pscdata.html.

Lobbying

Lobbying is an essential part of a democracy. But, often, interest groups with more resources get to influence policy-making more effectively. Knowing who influences the law, who they represent, and how much they spend becomes fundamental to shaping their advocacy strategy and determining how they should engage leaders.

Key Findings from the Global Data Barometer

- **Most countries do not have a lobbying law.** Seven countries in the region have an operational law requiring the collection of lobbying data (Estonia, France, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom). Four of these countries (Estonia, France, Ireland, and Israel) require the publication of lobbying data.

- **Existing lobbying data lacks high-value information.** Few countries publish data on lobbyists' goals and the topics of their interactions with public officials, and no countries have available information on money spent by lobbyists. Two countries (Lithuania and Spain) use unique identifiers for lobbyists, which is critical for linking lobbying data to other datasets.

- **Existing lobbying data is often hard to use.** Eleven countries in the region have lobbying data freely available online. However, data is timely and updated in only five countries (Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom). France is the only country in the region with lobbying data that is openly licensed, machine-readable, and bulk downloadable.

State of Progress Through OGP

- **Many OGP members in Europe have made commitments to improve lobbying transparency.** Eleven members in the region, including those at both the national and local levels, have made 18 lobbying commitments. Four members (Estonia, France, Ireland, and Spain) are currently implementing a commitment through their 2020 or 2021 action plans.

- **Lobbying commitments generally do not focus on open data.** Only two lobbying commitments made by European members (Finland[12] and Madrid[13]) reference open data principles. Other commitments focus on transparency in lobbying more generally and passing legislation to regulate lobbying.

- **Most commitments are fully implemented.** Eleven of the fourteen commitments assessed by OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) for completion have been substantially or fully implemented. Three commitments have achieved strong early results in opening government.[14]

Regional Innovations	
France	France's user-friendly directory displays information on over 2,000 lobbyists that can be downloaded in open data format.[15]
Lithuania	Lithuania's lobbying register contains unique identifiers for each lobbyist and information on lobbyists' goals.[16]

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[12] Finland, "Open Procedures (FI0021)," n.d., https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/finland/commitments/fi0021/.

[13] Madrid, Spain, "Creation of a Mandatory Lobby Registry (MAD0001)," n.d., https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/madrid-spain/commitments/mad0001/.

[14] Learn more about how the Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses commitments here.

[15] Haute Autorité Pour La Transparence De La Vie Publique, n.d., https://www.hatvp.fr/le-repertoire/.

[16] Skaidris, n.d., https://skaidris.vtek.lt/public/home/main.

Public Procurement

Opaque contracting processes show higher levels of corruption and inefficiency, decreased competition, and reduced opportunities for smaller companies. Alternatively, open procurement processes, otherwise known as open contracting, produce greater competition, improved public service delivery, and significant cost savings for governments.[17]

Key Findings from the Global Data Barometer

- **Nearly all European countries publish procurement data online.** Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight European countries evaluated by the GDB publish procurement data online in some form. Sweden is the only country without publicly available data. Except for Romania, all of these countries publish their data free of charge.

- **Procurement data currently lacks essential details.** While most countries publish data on contract tender and award stages, data on contract implementation is only available in six countries (Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Israel, and Ukraine). Eleven countries do not use unique identifiers to connect across the stages of a single contract.

- **Data usability remains an area for improvement in many countries.** Only four countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom) meet all five criteria for open data (freely accessible, up to date, openly licensed, machine-readable, and bulk downloadable). Half of European countries are missing two or more elements of open data. And only three countries link procurement data to other key datasets using common identifiers (Czech Republic, Estonia, and the Republic of Moldova).

State of Progress Through OGP

- **Public procurement and open contracting have been popular areas for reform among OGP members in Europe.** Thirty-two countries have made over 100 commitments related to public procurement. Half of these commitments specifically reference open contracting principles. Denmark and Estonia are the only two countries in the region that have not made a commitment related to public procurement.

- **According to the IRM, many commitments have achieved strong early results in opening government.** One-third of commitments involving open contracting reforms have achieved strong early results. This is higher than commitments in other areas, which points to the effectiveness of these reforms.

Regional Innovations	
Estonia	Estonia's procurement data is published according to open data standards, includes data on all contracts since 2017, and contains unique identifiers for every procurement.[18]
Ukraine	Ukraine's innovative procurement platform, ProZorro,[19] has won multiple awards and features data published according to the Open Contracting Data Standard.[20]

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17 Open Government Partnership, "The Skeptic's Guide to Open Government," 2022, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/skeptics-guide-to-open-government-2022-edition/#toc_3.

18 Riigihangete Register, "Tere Tulemast Riigihangete Registrisse," n.d., https://riigihanked.riik.ee/rhr-web/#/.

19   ProZorro, n.d., https://prozorro.gov.ua/en.

20 Open Contracting Partnership, "Open Contracting Data Standard," n.d., https://standard.open-contracting.org/latest/en/.