

OPEN DATA AND CORRUPTION

G20 COMMITMENTS

In 2014, the G20 Anti-Corruption Open Data Principles (hereafter G20 Principles) were developed as a first step towards leveraging open data as a crucial tool to enable a culture of transparency and accountability in order to address corruption. At that time, the G20 agreed that the principles should be based on the International Open Data Charter, which focuses on enhanced access to, and the release and use of, government data, so as to strengthen the fight against corruption. The G20 Principles commit each G20 government to release data that is open by default, timely and comprehensive, accessible and usable, comparable and interoperable and that works towards improved governance and citizen engagement and inclusive development and innovation.

The G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan commits the G20 to “promote greater transparency in the public sector, ...through citizen engagement, strengthening anti-corruption authorities, public-private partnerships and the use of open data, building on the G20 Open Data Principles.” Furthermore, the Anti-Corruption Implementation Plan commits the G20 ACWG to “share good practice, new technologies and innovations, including regarding the use of open data and countries’ experiences of bilateral or plurilateral cooperation” and to “conduct analytical work on the opportunities provided by open data, and by improved sharing of data between government agencies, for tackling corruption.”

THE CHALLENGE

As technology advances, the methods of the corrupt are also getting more sophisticated and difficult to foil. It is clear that the digital revolution opportunities for anti-corruption professionals and activists. With millions of gigabytes of data produced every day by governments and businesses worldwide, whole new avenues open up for the fight against corruption. When government and other data relevant to governance is open, accessible and interoperable, the possibilities for scrutiny and accountability increase immensely.

In recent years, governments around the world have increased the availability of their data – creating a growing amount of open data that can be freely used, modified and shared by anyone for any purpose. By enabling increased transparency in government activities, budgets and expenditures, open data becomes a critical ingredient in accountability interventions. The argument is clear: Not only should open data reduce the mismanagement and misallocation of resources, but also helps secure a transparent, more accountable exchange between governments and citizens.

However, the two fields of anti-corruption and open data have been developing independently of each other, thus missing crucial opportunities for value-added through harmonisation. Forthcoming Transparency International and Web Foundation Research into the use of open data in five G20 countries finds that the potential of open data has not been leveraged sufficiently in the fight against corruption. In order to create a well-functioning anti-corruption regime, there needs to be a targeted effort to connect open data to anti-corruption efforts.

THE SOLUTION

There are numerous ways open data can drive anti-corruption. Lobbying registers can show who is spending most time with our elected officials, public procurement data can expose companies that receive preferential treatment at the expense of our national coffers, and political party finances can hint at agendas driven by private interest. What is more, when these datasets can be merged and triangulated, they can reveal patterns or show noteworthy gaps that reflect corrupt conduct.

There is no substantial evidence of programmes, training workshops, tools or guidelines aimed at improving data literacy among anti-corruption professionals and activists in any of the five countries reviewed. This means that

public officials, investigative journalists and civil society may miss opportunities to better prevent or detect corruption. In some countries like Indonesia, this can be attributed primarily to a technological gap, however countries with more advanced ICT capabilities like France and Germany are also struggling when it comes to incorporating open data in their anti-corruption strategies, corruption prevention efforts and training.

In some cases, civil society and investigative journalists have shown the ways open data can be used for anti-corruption. In Germany and France digital tools were developed for citizens to scrutinise donations and contracts that their doctors receive from different pharmaceutical companies. In sum, civil society and media have stepped in where governments have failed to link open data and anti-corruption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To fulfil commitments in the G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2017-2018 and associated Implementation Plan and to address this substantial implementation gap, we propose the following recommendations, based on the common challenges seen across all five countries in applying in practice the G20 Principles:

- 1. The G20 ACWG could convene a workshop within the course of the German or Argentinian presidency with governments, business, tech groups and civil society** to share best practice on projects and methods, to develop use cases and engage in other practical efforts, such as designing tools and guidelines.
- 2. G20 governments should invest in skills, technology and capacity building to facilitate the use of open data for anti-corruption.** The G20 ACWG representatives should promote the use of cross-departmental trainings and courses for all public administration bodies, particularly those tasked with delivering on national anti-corruption commitments (such as law enforcement agencies) in their home governments.
- 3. G20 governments should strengthen the linkages between access to information and open data.** Leverage right to information legislation to advance concrete actions that open up a country's data, such as requiring all publicly released information is 'open by default' and is under an 'open license'.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

We base our policy analysis on a soon-to-be released study of five G20 countries. This report, which was jointly conceived and carried out by Transparency International and the Web Foundation, assessed the extent to which a select group of G20 countries (Brazil, France, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa) have met their commitments to fight corruption by applying and implementing the principles and actions set out in the [G20 Principles](#).

- Transparency International, *Connecting the Dots: Building the Case for Open Data to Fight Corruption*, https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/connecting_the_dots_building_the_case_for_open_data_to_fight_corruption February 2017
- Transparency International, *Open data to fight corruption – Case study: Slovakia's Health Sector*, March 2016 http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/open_data_to_fight_corruption_case_study_slovakias_health_sector
- Transparency International, *Open data to fight corruption – Case study: The EU and lobbying*, March 2016 http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/open_data_to_fight_corruption_case_study_the_eu_and_lobbying
- Transparency International, *Open data to fight corruption – Case study: Lithuania's Judiciary*, March 2016, http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/open_data_to_fight_corruption_case_study_lithuanias_judiciary

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