



**OECD/GOV Webinar Series: OECD  
Building A New Paradigm For Public  
Trust**

**Measuring Public Trust After A  
Pandemic And Economic Crises**

**Remarks by Jeffrey Schlagenhauf,  
Deputy Secretary-General  
OECD**

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*(As prepared for delivery)*

**Good afternoon and welcome** to all participants joining us from so many different locations. I am delighted to introduce the **first webinar** in our series on “**Building a new paradigm for public trust**”.

**Trust in public institutions is a critical topic for the OECD.** Trust is the foundation upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built and a key element of people’s well-being. Trust plays a key role as a precondition for collective action to ensure that governments can perform their tasks. But governments are operating in an increasingly complex global environment.

**Tackling the Coronavirus has required unprecedented responses** from national and local governments, the European institutions, financial institutions and non-political institutions. In many countries, this has involved enforcing restrictions of movement, and interventions in policy areas and services where the private sector was playing a leading role. In an environment where rapid reaction was required, **public institutions relied heavily on the trust and support of the public** for these measures to be truly effective.

Likewise, the medium-term recovery will depend on governments' capacity to harness people's trust as a force to emerge from the crisis.

At the same time, **the crisis is revealing and exacerbating existing inequalities**, with potential impacts including public disengagement, polarization and social unrest. Even before the pandemic, we have seen widespread anger over increasing inequalities and government's inability to address corruption, tax evasion, regulatory capture and other problems.

Such feelings were reflected in data showing that in 2018, only 37% of the population in European countries felt like they have a say in what the government does. In countries most severely affected by the economic crisis of 2008, trust in public institutions has been hit hard, and it has taken more than 10 years for the OECD area to return to the pre-crisis levels of 45% people trusting their government.

So, trust in institutions is key to enable effective public policies, even more so in times of crisis. **How can we advance in developing relevant and accurate measurement of trust?**

The **OECD Guidelines on Trust Measurement** offer a series of questionnaires with the highest criteria of statistical quality for National Statistical Offices. As more countries adopt these instruments, we will have more and better official evidence on trust.

Our work on the **drivers of trust** is summarised in the **report “Trust and Public Policy”** and in **country case studies** that combine quantitative and qualitative methods to understand drivers of trust and provide concrete actions for restoring trust. The first case study was conducted in Korea and today, we will hear from **Ms Katju Holkeri from the Finnish Ministry of Finance** on the study we are currently carrying out with Finland.

Our research shows that people grant their trust on two broad attributes: **Government Competence and Values**. By **Competence**, we mean government’s ability to deliver high-quality public services, which bring well-being and opportunity to people and translate into better lives, as well as their capacity to anticipate new needs as they arise in a responsive and reliable manner.

And when I say **Values**, I refer to the principles that guide government action in terms of openness, integrity and fairness. These findings present very important insights for our role as public administration leaders. By implementing policies and processes that improve competence and values, **we can help rebuild trust in public institutions.**

Let me conclude by saying that **maintaining trust in institutions** during these challenging times will be vital in ensuring a coordinated, comprehensive and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other key societal challenges that could arise because of it. Maintaining trust will require a broad-based cooperation and active engagement with citizens, and a clear understanding of what the recovery will entail for certain population groups, firms, and society as a whole.

We hope that this series of webinars will provide useful input for policy makers, practitioners and academics to verify relevance of our analytical frameworks and lessons learned.

I wish you all a successful discussion. Thank you.