



# Delivering for People in Vulnerable Situations

Public Governance for  
Integrated Policies and Services



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## Public governance reforms are key to deliver for vulnerable groups



In 2021, just over four in ten people (41.4%) responding to the 2021 OECD Trust Survey expressed trust in their national government on average across OECD countries, compared to 41.4% that do not trust the government and 14.8% that hold a neutral position (Figure 1). According to the OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, citizens' trust in government is driven, among others, by the availability of efficient, quality, affordable, timely and citizen-centred public services that are co-ordinated across levels of government and satisfy users (Brezzi et al., 2021<sup>[1]</sup>).

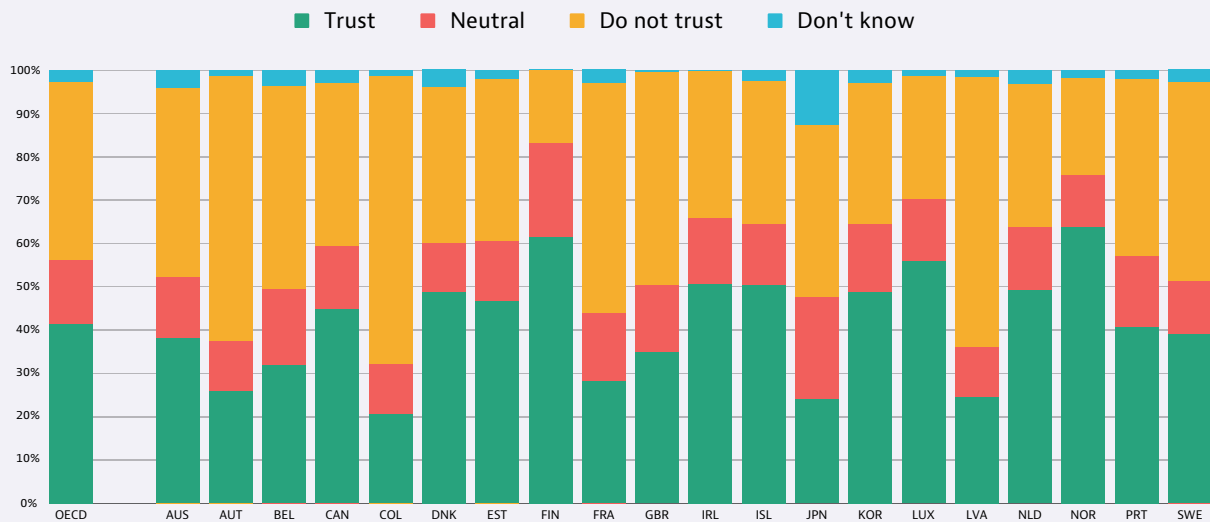
These drivers are even more significant for those in vulnerable situations who tend to rely on public services to a larger extent. In this sense, **investing in developing personalised and integrated quality policies and services for vulnerable groups is critical to address their multiple and complex needs, promote inclusive growth and help strengthen democratic institutions.**

Delivering for people in vulnerable situations requires strong public governance arrangements as shown in Figure 2. It requires frameworks that define target groups and identify **clear roles and responsibilities** of different ministries and service providers. **Strategic planning of policies and**

**services** for vulnerable groups can help in setting common objectives, defining measurable targets and outlining specific measures and programmes to ensure coherent and co-ordinated action across stakeholders. **Effective co-ordination across (levels of) government and with service providers (including public, private and non-profit ones)** is indispensable to support vulnerable people across different policy/service areas. Co-ordination with local stakeholders can help translate national policies and frameworks into programmes and tailored services at the local level, while also informing national policy and service design. Co-ordination with service-providers and non-governmental organisations is also important to strengthen outreach to the target groups, promote access to services and increase government accountability. In addition, designing and delivering policies and services that are tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups requires relevant ministries, agencies and municipalities to be equipped with **adequate financial and human capacities**. Finally, **monitoring and evaluating policies and services** for vulnerable groups is critical to understand what works and what does not, identify bottlenecks or duplications and take appropriate action.

**Figure 1. Trust in national government, 2021**

*Share of respondents who indicate different levels of trust in their national government (on a 0-10 scale), 2021*



Source: (OECD, 2022<sub>[2]</sub>).

**Figure 2. Key areas of public governance for integrated policies and services for vulnerable groups**



This document provides insights and policy recommendations on public governance to deliver for vulnerable groups from the case of Lithuania, drawing from the 2023 OECD report “Personalised Public Services

for People in Vulnerable Situations in Lithuania: Towards a More Integrated Approach” (Box 1.1).

## Box 1.1. Personalised Public Services for People in Vulnerable Situations in Lithuania: Towards a More Integrated Approach

### The project

Lithuania’s Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL) had requested technical support to develop a new approach to personalised services for people in vulnerable situations in Lithuania as well as increase the involvement of NGOs in policy design and service delivery. The project was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD, in co-operation with the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission. As part of the project, the OECD undertook: (1) an analysis of the governance of service delivery for people in vulnerable situations and NGOs’ involvement; (2) a mapping of the relevant services across policy fields; (3) an analysis of operating models and Information Technology (IT) infrastructure of employment and social services; (4) a series of in-country focus group discussions with service users and service providers; and (5) a series of workshops and notes on international good practices. The evidence to inform the different activities was collected through virtual consultations with Lithuanian stakeholders, desk research, a review of administrative

data, a series of questionnaires and focus group discussions. The OECD also organised two virtual learning events with experts from different EU/OECD countries (including Finland, Latvia and the UK) for representatives of the MSSL, municipalities and NGOs to share knowledge on good practices.

Source: (OECD, 2023<sup>[4]</sup>)

### The report

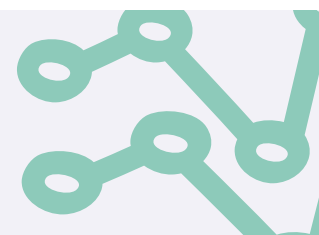
The report has contributed to the OECD’s programme of work on public sector effectiveness and public governance for inclusiveness. The analysis on public governance contained in the report was carried out under the auspices of the OECD Public Governance Committee and it was informed by the work and legal standards of the OECD Public Governance Committee, the Committee of Senior Budget Officials, the Regulatory Policy Committee and their sub-bodies.



Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania



## Lithuania: towards a more integrated approach

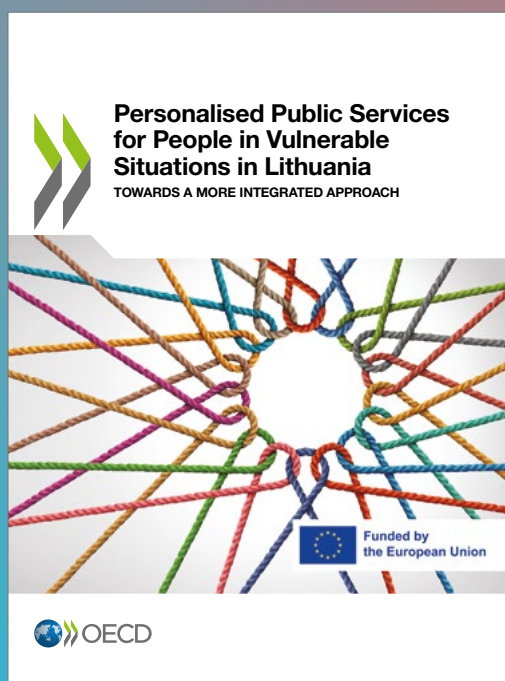


Over the last 25 years, Lithuania has made significant advancements to make the public administration more result-oriented, more effective in the provision of services, and more open towards its citizens.

In the context of an ongoing deinstitutionalisation process and the transfer of service provision from large institutions to community-based services, the Government of Lithuania has demonstrated commitment to ensuring services for people with disabilities, young people leaving care, and people leaving prison are well-integrated and tailored to meet recipients' individual needs. The Programme of the 18th Government of the Republic of Lithuania also features

specific commitments to strengthening personalised social services tailored to the individual needs of people in vulnerable situations and encouraging the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in policy design and service delivery (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>).

This section gathers insights and policy recommendations on key areas of Lithuania's public governance arrangements for the design and delivery of integrated public policies and services for people in vulnerable situations, with a specific focus on people with disabilities, people leaving prison and young people leaving care.



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## Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

In Lithuania, there is no single overarching framework covering all groups considered “vulnerable.” In terms of policy design and service delivery, the governance arrangements in place are specific to each target group.

OECD analysis finds that definitions of “people with disabilities” differ between the Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Republic of Lithuania, 2005<sup>[6]</sup>) and the Law on Social Services (Republic of Lithuania, 2006<sup>[7]</sup>); “ex-prisoners” are defined for the purpose of the social re-integration procedures but not through a legal instrument providing a common definition; and the definition of “young people leaving care” as a target group of pub-

lic services remains vague and diverges across policy and service areas.

There is also a lack of clearly assigned roles and responsibilities in some areas: while the support structures for people with disabilities are defined in the Law on the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Republic of Lithuania, 2005<sup>[6]</sup>), no such framework exists to clarify roles and responsibilities for the support to ex-prisoners and young people leaving care, both in terms of policy design and service delivery, notably for social, housing, employment, health, justice and education policies and services.

## To support the definition of roles and responsibilities and target groups

*the Government of Lithuania could consider:*



**Conducting consultations** with national and sub-national government, civil society organisations, service providers and target groups to understand service needs, expectations, capacities and map current contributions of stakeholders across policy and service areas.



**Revising/formulating legal frameworks** as necessary to assign clear roles and responsibilities to stakeholders across policy and service areas (notably social, employment, housing, health, justice and education) to support each of the three target groups.

## Strategic planning of policies and services

General government action in the areas of employment and social policies and services is guided by the Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the strategy of the Public Employment Service. The current SAP includes objectives, measures and targets for vulnerable groups, in particular for people with disabilities and

young people with fewer opportunities. At the same time, the use of strategy documents to plan and co-ordinate action for vulnerable groups across the whole of-government remains limited mainly to efforts in support of people with disabilities.

### To strengthen strategic planning of policies and services

*for a wider spectrum of groups in vulnerable circumstances, including young people leaving care and ex-prisoners, the Government of Lithuania could consider:*



**Broadening the focus of government action for people in vulnerable situations** beyond social and employment policies and services.



Encouraging other governmental stakeholders (notably in the housing, health, justice and education areas) to also **define specific objectives, measures, targets and key performance indicators for vulnerable groups**, as appropriate.

## Co-ordination across (levels of) government

While the MSSL plays a leading role in the design and delivery of social and employment policies, all relevant stakeholders must work together to achieve a coherent and co-ordinated approach. The Council for the Affairs of People with Disabilities for instance has played a significant role in strengthening co-ordination across relevant stakeholders. Instead, the activities and scope of the inter-institutional working group for people leaving prison remains limited. Moreover, there is no institutional mechanism in place to promote a more integrated approach to

policy design and service delivery for young people leaving care.

Co-ordination across levels of government is often carried forward through ad hoc mechanisms. In addition, survey results from municipalities and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour highlight the importance of strengthening vertical co-ordination through clear incentives for staff, adequate institutional capacities and effective co-ordination mechanisms among others (Figure 3).

### To strengthen a co-ordinated approach

*to supporting vulnerable groups at the national and the local level and across levels of government, the Government of Lithuania and municipalities could consider:*



Providing a solid basis for institutional co-ordination by establishing **cross-sectoral policy frameworks and strategies**, using **inter-ministerial action plans** for implementation and creating/strengthening **formal inter-institutional bodies** for different target groups.



Strengthening co-ordination on policies and services for vulnerable groups at the local level, for instance by **strengthening inter-institutional co-ordinators for specific target groups** or **establishing them for people in vulnerable situations more widely**.

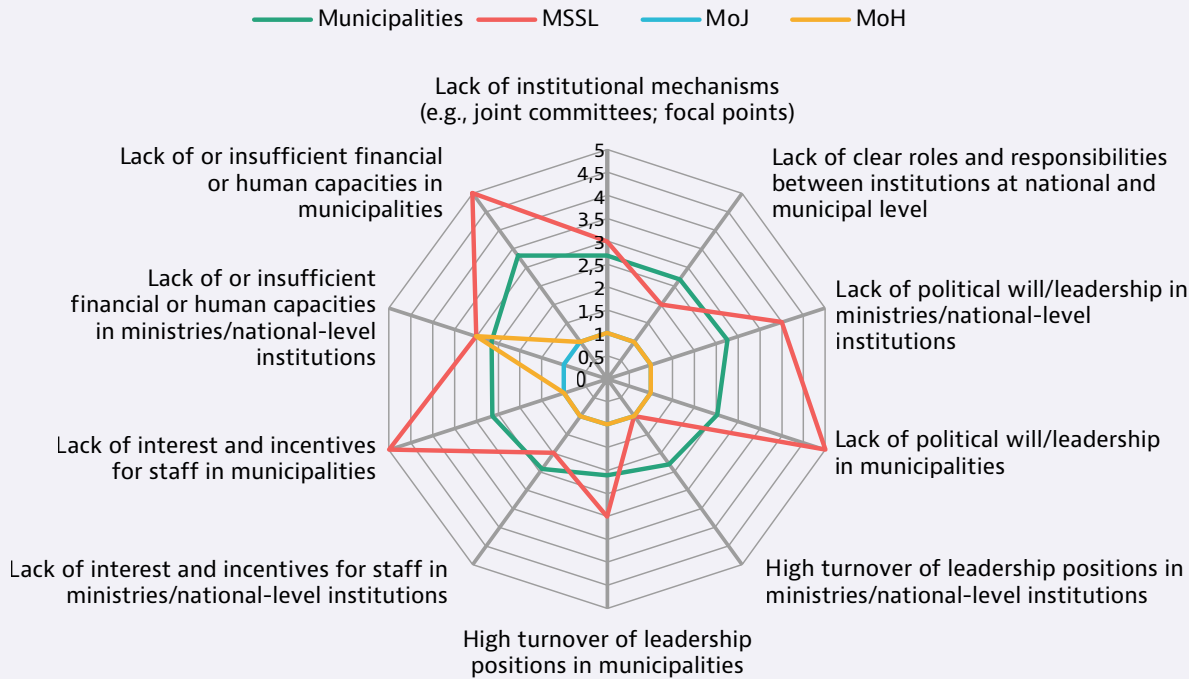


Promoting co-ordination between the national government and municipalities on policies and services for vulnerable groups by **including selected municipalities in national inter-institutional bodies for vulnerable groups** and **by conducting broader consultations**.



### Figure 3. Reported challenges in co-ordinating the provision of public services across levels of government

*Extent to which the following elements represent a challenge for co-ordination of public services across levels of governments, on a scale from 1 to 5 [1: it is not at all a challenge; 5: it is a major challenge]*



Note: The figure shows the replies of the Ministries of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), Justice (MoJ) and Health (MoH) and the average score across the replies of 57 municipalities to the question “In your municipality/ministry’s opinion, from a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do the following elements represent a challenge when co ordinating the design and provision of public services with national-level institutions (notably Ministries)/municipalities? [1: it is not at all a challenge; 5: it is a major challenge].”

Source: OECD municipality survey and OECD Policy Questionnaire on Personalised Services for Vulnerable Groups.

## Financial and human capacities

Lithuania allocates fewer resources to the delivery of social services compared to other OECD countries (5.8% of GDP in 2017 compared to 8% on average across the OECD). The lack of staff with appropriate skills and competences is also considered a key challenge by ministries, municipalities, and the Public Employment Service. For instance, in 2020, around 25 social workers co-ordinated

reintegration services for an inmate population of over 4,500 under the co-ordination and oversight of one staff in the re-socialisation unit of the Prison Department. Municipalities also reported facing challenges in recruiting staff equipped with the appropriate skills and methodological tools.

### To secure adequate financial and human capacities

*to deliver services for vulnerable groups, the Government of Lithuania and municipalities could consider:*



**Assessing budget needs** for relevant ministries, agencies and municipalities to deliver on the needs of vulnerable groups **and ensuring adequate financial resources to meet them.**



**Ensuring adequate numbers of staff** in policy design and service co-ordination and delivery in all relevant institutions at national and local level.



**Ensuring the appropriate mix of competencies, managerial skills and specialised expertise**, and, in the case of staff working directly with service users, the necessary qualities and communication skills.

## Monitoring and evaluation

At the national level, the MSSL monitors the implementation of its bi-annual Strategic Action Plans (SAP) and, to some extent, action plans and programmes for specific vulnerable groups. At the local level, the scope of monitoring activities varies significantly across municipalities. As shown in Figure 4, slightly less than half of responding municipalities (49%) prepare monitoring reports on a regular basis (e.g. at least annually) or gather information on key performance indicators. Furthermore, only 9% of responding municipalities reported having a dedicated unit for monitoring social services as mandated by Law on Social Services (Republic of Lithuania, 2006<sup>[7]</sup>) and 60% of responding municipalities reported they do

not use the evidence produced through monitoring activities to inform decision making.

Significant challenges to monitoring efforts at both the national and local level concern the lack of specialised staff, monitoring frameworks, guidelines and manuals, as also highlighted by 65% of municipalities. In addition, cross-stakeholder co-ordination in monitoring efforts remains ad hoc and evidence produced through monitoring activities at the local level does not systematically inform decision-making. There also remains significant scope to include considerations of the needs and user experiences of vulnerable groups in ex-ante and ex-post policy evaluations at national and local levels.

### To strengthen monitoring and evaluation

*of policies and services for vulnerable groups, the Government of Lithuania and municipalities could consider:*



**Establishing and disseminating national monitoring and evaluation frameworks**, including quantitative and qualitative metrics, key performance indicators, benchmarks and user-satisfaction surveys for policies and services for people in vulnerable situations.



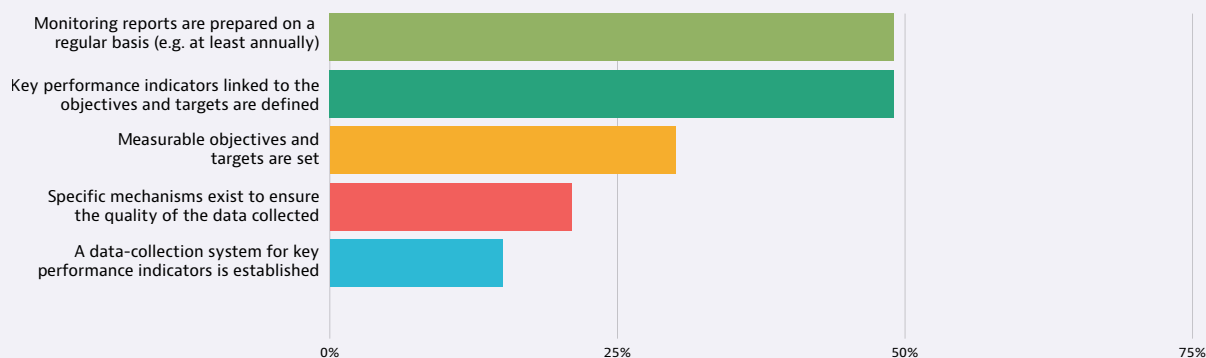
**Strengthening institutional skills and capacities** to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities on policies and services for vulnerable groups, and **establishing institutional mechanisms and processes to ensure that the evidence produced informs decision-making.**



Considering integrating needs and experiences of service users in **ex-ante and ex-post policy evaluations** at national and local level.

## Figure 4. Elements of monitoring activities in municipalities

*Share of municipalities reporting different elements that apply to their monitoring activities*

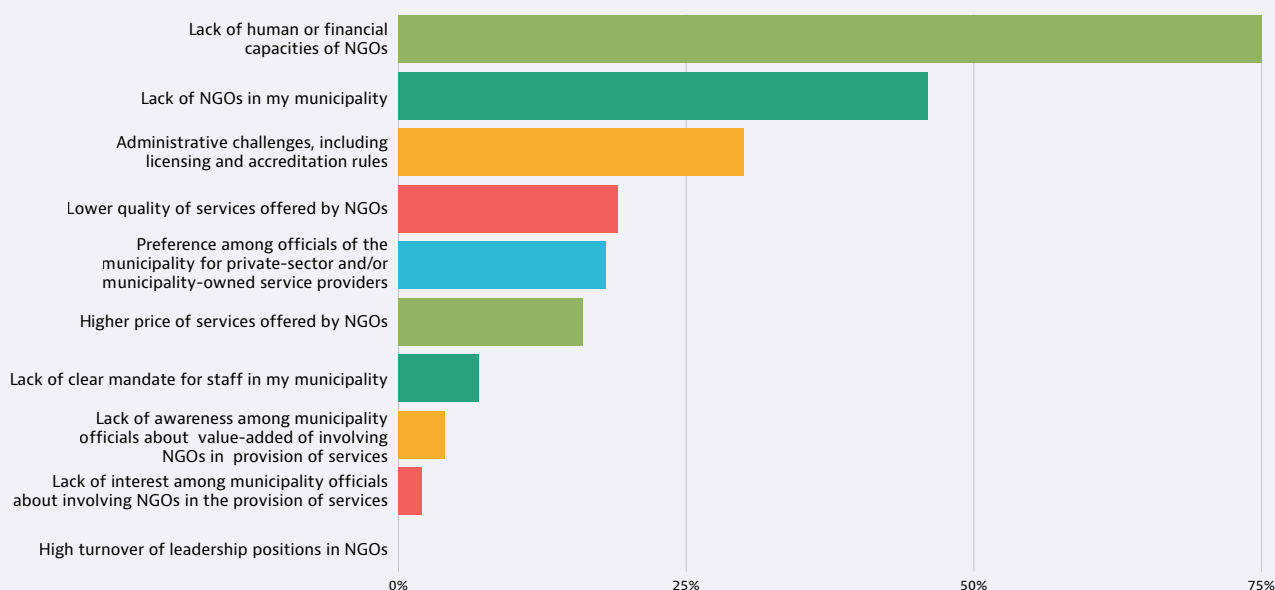


Note: The figure shows the share of municipalities (among the 53 responding ones) that reported different elements that apply to their monitoring activities when answering the question "Which of these statements apply to your monitoring activities? Please check all that apply."

Source: OECD municipality survey.

## Figure 5. Reported challenges in involving NGOs in the delivery of social services

*Share of municipalities reporting elements as a challenge in involving NGOs in the provision of social services*



Note: The figure shows the share of municipalities (among the 57 responding ones) that reported each element to be a challenge when answering the question "In your opinion, what are the main challenges in involving NGOs in the provision of social services in your municipality? Please select ALL options that apply."

Source: OECD municipality survey.

## The role of NGOs in policy making and service-delivery for vulnerable groups

The involvement of NGOs in policy making and service-delivery for vulnerable groups relies on a protected civic space, adequate human and financial capacities as well as enabling governance structures. Co-ordination between NGOs and public institutions is enabled through national and municipal councils of NGOs. However, municipal councils of NGOs remain under-used and lack of awareness and skills among public officials for engaging NGOs in decision making remains a challenge. NGOs are also commonly consulted at the municipal level on Social Services Plans (SSPs), but their engagement in defining the strategic objectives of SSPs is limited.

According to OECD survey replies, NGOs are currently involved in the provision of social

services in 96% of responding municipalities. However, a number of factors appear to pose significant challenges for municipalities in involving NGOs in the delivery of services, in particular when it comes to social services.

Figure 5 shows that 75% of municipalities mentioned that the lack of human and financial resources in NGOs is a key challenge and 46% of municipalities highlighted the lack of NGOs is a problem in itself, especially in more rural areas. In addition, difficulties for NGOs to take part in public procurement processes remains a barrier to greater involvement. In this context, an NGOs Fund is being set up to further support development of the NGO sector.

### To strengthen co-ordination with NGOs

*in policy-making and service-delivery for vulnerable groups, the Government of Lithuania and municipalities could consider:*



**Investing in measures to protect and promote civic space and supporting the development of the NGOs sector**, notably by enhancing the impact of the NGOs Fund.



Making specific efforts to reach out to NGOs advocating for or serving relevant target groups, by **conducting consultations, leveraging Councils of NGOs and promoting awareness and relevant skills among public officials.**



Considering measures to **facilitate NGOs' access to procurement opportunities.**



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Additional analysis on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice at <https://www.oecd.org/gov/youth-and-intergenerational-justice/>



