



## Session Report

*Please know you may design the structure of this report to better suit the session. It's important to capture the key outcomes and solutions proposed for the future.*

**Session Title:** Political Integrity 2.0: Bringing the Public Interest back into Political Leadership

**Date & Time:** Thursday, 06.12.2022, 5:00 pm- 6:30 pm GMT -5

**Report prepared by:** Carissa Munro, Team Lead – Political Integrity and Democracy, OECD

**Moderated by:** Julio Bacio Terracino, Head of Division, Public Sector Integrity, OECD

### Panellists:

- Jorge Valladares - Policy and Research Expert, Political Integrity, Transparency International
- Marie Lintzer - Head of International Partnerships, Haute Autorité pour la Transparence de la Vie Publique (HATVP), France
- Julio Bacio Terracino - Head of Division, Public Sector Integrity, OECD
- Radivoje Grujic - Democratic Governance Officer, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

## Share the thematic focus of the session, its purpose and corruption risks?

Political integrity is an inherent value of democracy; it ensures the political leaders govern in the interests of the people. Integrity is about everybody having a voice, from elections to the policy making process, and preventing undue influence of government policies.

Political leaders – both elected and appointed – are essential to political integrity: by setting the “tone at the top”, they demonstrate to society that integrity is a

governance issue the government takes seriously. Moreover, how political leaders themselves behave directly impacts the quality of policymaking: when political leaders guide their decisions based on the public interest, society benefits. Yet when political leaders do not uphold political integrity standards, suboptimal policies result and society suffers.

At a minimum, ensuring that political integrity is at the centre of policymaking requires codifying standards in legislative and regulatory frameworks. More importantly, it requires establishing oversight and accountability measures that can ensure political leaders are accountable for these standards, and consequences for when the lines are crossed.

This panel unpacked the key standards that are essential for upholding political integrity for elected and appointed officials, including standards on managing conflict of interest, post-public employment and lobbying. It also explored the different institutional arrangements that can provide accountability and oversight, and the necessity of consequences for helping political leaders uphold integrity standards.

## Summary of panellists' contributions & discussion points (please be as detailed as possible)

**Jorge Valladares - Policy and Research Expert, Political Integrity, Transparency International** shared insights on why Transparency International was working on the issue of political integrity, and what standards TI was advocated for. He noted that TI's definition of political integrity is "power-holders exercise their power consistently with the common good or public interests, not to sustain their own position or wealth".

This lead to three dimensions:

- 1) Inclusive power. Access to office should be free from undue influence.
  - Political finance including corporate political engagement.
  - State neutrality in elections
  - Blank spots on the financing of online political advertising.
  
- 2) Equal Influence of power
  - COI
  - Lobbying
  - Incompatibilities
  
- 3) Power is held accountable.
  - Legal and administrative liabilities
  - Political checks and balances
  - Social oversight
  - International instruments (sanctions, conditionality)

**Marie Lintzer - Head of International Partnerships, Haute Autorité pour la Transparence de la Vie Publique (HATVP), France** shared about the experience of the HATVP in establishing and strengthening the integrity standards of officials. She

noted that the HATVP is responsible for:

- 1) Controlling asset declarations of 18,000 public officials. To check illicit enrichment.
- 2) Control declaration of interests they have at the beginning or end of mandate. 10 years ago focus was much more on assets but now the discussion has shifted more to interests.
- 3) Revolving door between public and private sector.
- 4) Regulation of lobbying and interest representation. Tracking legislative footprint. High authority is in charge of the lobbying register.

On the issue of independence, Ms. Lintzer shared that the independence of the HATVP is ensured by the board made up of a president appointed by the Republic president and 2 houses of parliament. All decision are taken by this board made of 12 members plus. 12 members are from judiciary, administrative and court of audits and individuals appointed by the government, National Assembly and Senate. This diversity on the board ensures independence.

On the issue of undue influence and the major challenges that arise, Mr. Radivoje Grujic noted that most people perceive that any lobbying is undue influence. Standards should also ensure that lobbying is not stigmatised. Lobbying is nothing bad intrinsically. Mr. Grujic also noted that capacity and resources for oversight are missing – independence isn't simply achieved by passing a law. If the subjects don't see the agency as independent, the law will not be sufficient.

**Julio Bacio Terracino - Head of Division, Public Sector Integrity, OECD** touched on what was meant by the term “undue influence”, sharing that at the OECD, it refers to an act of attempting to influence the design, implementation execution and evaluation of public policies and regulations administered by public officials, whether by providing covert, deceptive or misleading evidence or data, by manipulated public opinion, or by using other practices capable of manipulating the decisions of public officials.

Mr. Bacio Terracino shared that when it came to trust in parliamentarians, on average in OECD countries only 39% trust the legislative, with 55.5% trusting in political parties. A key question was raised – how to ensure a balance between the independence of the elected officials, while also ensuring appropriate oversight mechanisms were in place?

Panellists shared several considerations:

- the need for less norms and more values, as public opinion is no longer shocked by scandals.
- A balance between institutions, and a scope that covers elected officials. Panellists noted that self-control of parliamentary commissions is common in many countries that do not have an independent commission.

In the final round of the discussions, panellists looked at the relevant institutional arrangements and actors in more detail.

Mr. Valladares shared that independence is an issue. Rules and integrity standards can be used and abused. He stressed the need to also look at external and soft accountability mechanisms that ensure independence and enable political contestation (like opportunities for the opposition to debate and discuss policies). He touched on the role that political parties can play to exercise an external oversight function, as they play a role in the recruitment of political personnel. Research shows that number of mechanisms is often negatively correlated with perceptions of corruption. Therefore standards alone do not suffice.

Picking up on the role of political parties, Mr. Grujic shared that “it starts and ends with political parties”. The challenge is that parties are not an institution like parliaments, and there needs to be a bridge to work with parliamentary parties.

**Radivoje Grujic - Democratic Governance Officer, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights** stressed that it is important to change the narrative. ODHIR is mapping what already exists out there in terms of integrity mechanisms within political parties, which has found that parties are bigger, more informal and less transparent than institutions. ODHIR has found that vetting is very basic – there is no honest push and will to have clean candidates. Often party managers do not trust vetting commissions so the role gets centralised.

Looking beyond political parties, Mr. Grujic also stressed that central electoral commissions play a key role, as they oversee political finance obligations. Mr. Grujic also stressed that standards should also apply to media and content creators, since the influence of electoral outcomes applies to them as well. Online advertising and other new forms of undue influence need new skills and capacities of the oversight bodies.

Concerning the question of how accountability works in practice, and how officials not covered by existing accountability mechanisms could be included, Ms. Lintzer noted that very large scope of the HATVP (18K public officials – including elected officials, local executives, as well as non-elected officials, ambassadors and senior civil servants.) Panellists discussed in particular the challenges of a broad scope, with the risk of a very broad scope leading to reduced control. Key elements, such as resources, were underscored as essential.

## Main outcomes of session (include quotes/highlights and interesting questions from the floor)

- Panellists agreed that standards are key. Most political leaders want to do the right thing, but a firm foundation of principles helps them achieve this: it gives them clear values to base their decisions and actions upon.
- Panellists also agreed that institutions are necessary to ensure political leaders are held accountable for these standards. These institutions need to raise awareness about the standards, and also hold leaders accountable for them. The role of political parties was underscored as an essential institution for building a culture of integrity.

- Discussions with the audience raised interesting points, such as:
  - Why citizens re-elect officials convicted of wrongdoing, and how to address this challenge: panellists stressed the need to change perceptions and values to make integrity abuses unacceptable.
  - How effective political party vetting is when there are limited resources available: panellists shared interesting findings, noting that of the political parties reviewed, only 10 per cent had an human resource unit that was responsible for vetting.
  - The need for international standards of integrity for political parties: a member of the audience pointed out that while integrity standards for public officials exist at the international level, the same is not the case for political parties, and this gap could be filled.

### **Key recommendations for the future and concrete follow-up actions**

- Governments could strengthen integrity standards for elected and appointed officials by setting, enforcing and overseeing integrity standards
- Political parties could integrate integrity standards into nomination and vetting processes, build capacity for political parties to carry out these processes, and strengthen a culture of integrity within political parties

### **What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session? And by whom?**

- Guidance on relevant integrity standards can be adopted at the international level to provide insights for governments on setting, overseeing, and enforcing integrity standards. International standard-setting organisations, like the OECD, are well-placed to carry out this work.
- Guidance for political parties on setting integrity standards in nomination and vetting procedures, as well as cultivating a culture of integrity in political parties, can be prepared and implemented. Key actors to further this work include international organisations, political parties and civil society organisations.

### **Rapporteur's name and date submitted**

Carissa Munro, 07.12.2022