

## CEP Magazine – July 2024



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## Corruption and the environment

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By Gerry Zack, CCEP, CFE, CIA

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently released the first edition of its *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook*, and the report provides an interesting glimpse into the anti-corruption and integrity frameworks for the 38 OECD member countries in a variety of areas, including anti-corruption, lobbying, conflicts of interest, political finance, and transparency of public information.<sup>[1]</sup>

One chapter, “Green transition,” addresses certain integrity issues that affect the environment. In particular, OECD reports that the scale and pace of the green transition has stressed the public integrity systems of OECD countries. The report calls out “evidence of lobbying and other influence practices aimed at blocking progress on climate change policies.” Several specific examples are provided.

Complicating matters is the lack of transparency associated with lobbying in many countries. Only 17 of the 38 OECD countries even define lobbying and lobbyists in their regulatory frameworks. And of those 17, only eight require public disclosure of the type of lobbying and the specific legislation targeted by lobbying efforts. I haven’t seen any similar study on lobbying regulations and frameworks in non-OECD countries, but I sense that it probably isn’t any better.

Lack of transparency makes it easy for companies in many countries to conceal lobbying efforts aimed at blocking climate change policies while publicly claiming support for these efforts or appearing to be neutral. Further, OECD notes that the green transition is vulnerable to manipulation by foreign (non-OECD) entities, citing one report that Russian energy companies used German politicians and lawyers to ensure dependence on Russian gas. Other reports showed that foreign states used misinformation campaigns and infiltrated academic institutions and think tanks to gain support for purchasing from their markets.

OECD’s conclusion is difficult to argue against. For a green transition to succeed, a stronger performance of lobbying and conflict of interest frameworks is essential. When a company publicly takes a stance that conflicts with science or stated climate goals and strategies, that’s one thing; it’s part of a public discussion on the topic. However, the task becomes considerably more difficult when efforts designed to undermine climate goals and strategies can be so easily concealed.

<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/publication/anti-corruption-and-integrity-outlook/2024/>.

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