“Men are disturbed not by things,
but by the view which they take of them.”
– Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 5

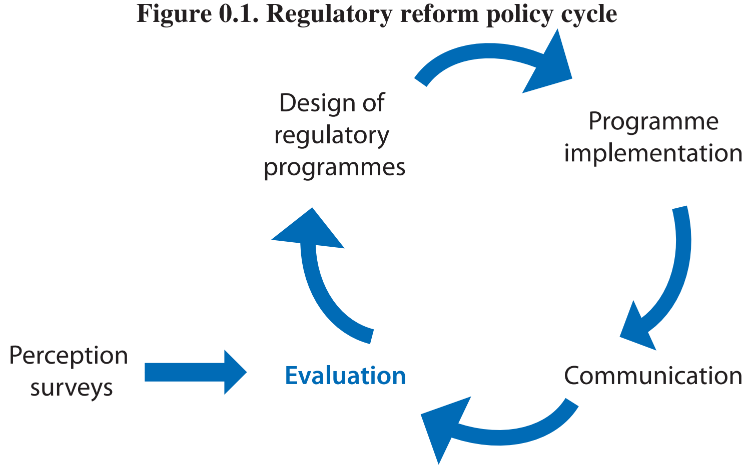
Introduction

Evaluation and communication in the regulatory reform cycle

As OECD countries continuously strive to improve the quality of their regulations, significant resources have been invested in regulatory policies and reform. In line with the rise in resources allocated, there is increasing pressure for greater accountability and the use of performance information to demonstrate the effectiveness of regulatory programmes.

OECD principles promote the evaluation of the effectiveness of regulatory reform programmes. Figure 0.1 represents the idealised regulatory reform policy cycle showing the links between programme design, programme implementation, communication and evaluation. In this diagram, the aims of reforms are communicated to stakeholders. The quality and results of regulatory programmes are then evaluated and the results of the evaluation should feed back into the subsequent design and implementation of regulatory programmes and communication strategies.

Figure 0.1. Regulatory reform policy cycle



The role of perception surveys in evaluation and communication

Governments want to know how those most affected by regulations – businesses and citizens – perceive the regulatory environment and whether they see the benefits of regulatory reforms. Positive perceptions and stakeholder support are crucial for the success of regulatory reform initiatives, in great part because perceptions of the quality of regulation can influence the investment decisions of firms, and their compliance with regulatory requirements. For example, a household survey of entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom found that individuals' perceptions of business regulations influenced business start-up decisions (Kitching, 2006). Moreover, the Bloomberg-Schumer Report of 2007, which compared perceptions of regulation in the United States and the United Kingdom, reported that financial firms made investment decisions between the United States and the United Kingdom based, in part, on perceptions of three factors associated with regulatory quality: regulatory structure, regulatory approach, and regulatory enforcement (McKinsey & Company, 2007).

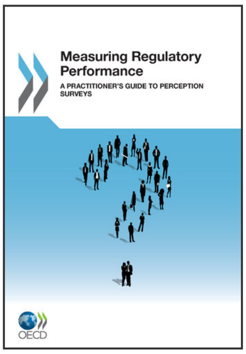
Perception surveys can serve three major purposes:

- to evaluate the success of a regulatory reform programme from a user's perspective;
- as a diagnostic and communication tool to identify areas of concern to citizens and businesses, and thus inform future regulatory reforms; and
- to obtain information on citizens' and businesses' level of awareness, confidence, interest, and recognition of regulatory obligations, regulatory reform programmes and regulatory bodies. In some countries, this information serves to evaluate and inform communication strategies.

Structure of the guide

Countries face a number of important interrelated challenges in the design, interpretation and use of perception survey findings. This guide's five chapters explain these challenges and ways to address them. All chapters are written for a broad audience in non-technical language, drawing on examples from the regulatory field.

Chapter 1 provides an overview on the ways OECD countries use regulatory perception surveys. Chapter 2 discusses the pitfalls in designing surveys and Chapter 3 provides step-by-step guidance for designing sound methodological surveys. Chapter 4 analyses the drivers of perceptions that may explain the “perception gap” that arises between the perceived and actual quality of regulations. It also provides guidance on tools to bridge the gap. The last chapter discusses the strategies used by OECD countries to get the most benefit from stakeholder surveys for evaluative and diagnostic purposes and for the communication of reform.



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