With its strong enforcement record, the United States confirms its leading role in the fight against transnational corruption

17/11/2020 – The United States continues to demonstrate an increasing level of anti-bribery enforcement, having convicted or sanctioned 174 companies and 115 individuals for foreign bribery and related offences under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) between September 2010 and July 2019. The United States is thus commended for a significant upward trend in enforcement and confirming the prominent role it plays globally in combating foreign bribery.

The 44-country OECD Working Group on Bribery has just completed its Phase 4 evaluation of the United States' implementation of the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and related instruments.

Given developments since the United States' last evaluation in 2010, the Working Group made a range of recommendations to the United States, including to:

- Consider ways to enhance protections for whistleblowers who report potential FCPA anti-bribery violations by non-issuers and provide further guidance on available whistleblower protections;
- Continue to further evaluate and refine policies and guidance concerning the FCPA;
- Make publicly available the extension and completion of NPAs and DPAs with legal persons in foreign bribery matters as well as the grounds for extending DPAs in FCPA matters;
- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Corporate Enforcement Policy in particular in terms of encouraging self-disclosure and of its deterrent effect on foreign bribery; and
- Continue to address recidivism through appropriate sanctions and raise awareness of its impact on the choice of resolution in FCPA matters.

The report praises the United States for its sustained commitment to enforcing its foreign bribery offence as well as its key role in promoting the implementation of the Convention. This achievement results from a combination of enhanced expertise and resources to investigate and prosecute foreign bribery, the enforcement of a broad range of offences in foreign bribery cases, the effective use of non-trial resolution mechanisms, and the development of published policies to incentivise companies' co-operation with law enforcement agencies.

The report also notes a large number of positive developments and good practices, such as the DOJ's reliance on several theories of liability to hold both companies and individuals responsible for foreign bribery, and the United States' successful co-ordination that has allowed multi-agency resolutions against alleged offenders in FCPA matters. In parallel, the United States has increasingly sought to co-ordinate and co-operate in investigating and resolving multijurisdictional foreign bribery matters with other jurisdictions. Finally, the United States has helped foreign partners build their capacity to fight foreign bribery through joint conferences and peer-to-peer training thus enabling the law enforcement authorities of these countries to better investigate and sanction prominent foreign bribery cases.

The United States' Phase 4 report was adopted by the OECD Working Group on Bribery on 16 October 2020. The report lists the recommendations the Working Group made to the United States on pages 111-113, and includes an overview of recent enforcement activity and specific legal, policy, and institutional features of the United States' framework for fighting foreign bribery. In accordance with the standard procedure, the United States will submit a written report to the Working Group within two years (October 2022) on its implementation of all recommendations and its enforcement efforts. This report will also be made publicly available.

The report is part of the OECD Working Group on Bribery's fourth phase of monitoring, launched in 2016. Phase 4 looks at the evaluated country's particular challenges and positive achievements. It also explores issues such as detection, enforcement, corporate liability, and international co-operation, as well as covering unresolved issues from prior reports.

For further information, journalists are invited to contact the OECD's Media Relations Division on (33) 1 45 24 97 00 or news.contact@oecd.org. For more information on the United States' work to fight corruption, please visit http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/unitedstates-oecdanti-briberyconvention.htm.

Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

UK: spending to address COVID-19 and Brexit should fit with productivity, social and environmental goals

14/10/2020 – The United Kingdom faces major challenges from the COVID-19 crisis and leaving the EU Single Market. Ramping up investment in the digital economy, the service sector, green infrastructure and adult skills would strengthen the recovery and help to boost productivity and environmental sustainability for the long term, according to a new OECD report.

The latest OECD Economic Survey of the United Kingdom underlines the importance of the emergency support measures put in place to address the coronavirus crisis, but also stresses the need to address longer-term challenges. Active labour market spending for displaced and low-skilled workers should be increased to help workers in sectors with uncertain futures move into quality jobs, and infrastructure spending should focus on the most deprived regions. Low interest rates mean there is room for more stimulus, if needed. Public investment should build on existing efforts to revive productivity growth and transition to a low-carbon economy.

“The combination of COVID-19 and the exit from the EU Single Market makes the UK outlook exceptionally uncertain. Actions taken to address the pandemic and decisions made on future trading relationships will have a lasting impact on the UK’s economic trajectory for years to come, so they should be in line with long-term objectives,” said **OECD Chief Economist Laurence Boone**. “Productivity growth in service sectors will have to accelerate significantly for the recovery to be long-lasting and sustainable.”

The coronavirus crisis erupted against a background of subdued growth, stagnant productivity and flat investment in the United Kingdom and triggered one of the most severe falls in output of OECD countries, reflecting the economy’s deep integration in the world economy and the fact that the hard-hit service sector makes up around 80% of UK output and employment.

While a rapid and massive emergency response has helped to steady the economy, the United Kingdom still faces a prolonged period of disruption to economic activity, which risks exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and regional disparities. Most households have reported a drop in income since the crisis. Economic activity will only recover gradually, with several years of high unemployment likely due to business closures and delayed investment. The Survey, assuming a smooth transition to an EU Free Trade Agreement, projects an unprecedented fall in GDP in 2020 of 10.1%, with activity still below its pre-crisis level by the end of 2021. The unemployment rate is projected to be 7.1% in 2021, up from 3.8% in 2019.

Leaving the EU Single Market at the end of year will require firms to adapt. Avoiding a “no deal” outcome would benefit both the United Kingdom and the European Union. Were there to be an EU exit with no free trade deal, the government should be ready to provide targeted support for affected firms and workers and put in place trade facilitation measures to smooth disruptions at the border.

While the increase in barriers to trade resulting from any form of exit from the EU Single Market will lower growth over the medium term, a disorderly exit would be more costly and disruptive. Managing a disorderly exit would be complicated by the fact that firms have diverted their attention to dealing with COVID-19, and those with reduced earnings will be less able to invest in new systems, staff and training.

The UK’s Industrial Strategy should help to revive productivity growth – which is key to sustaining jobs and wage growth – yet more could still be done to encourage innovation and reduce gaps in adopting new technology between leading firms and laggards. Overall public investment has been lower than in other leading economies in recent years, and investment in digital infrastructure still lags investment in transport, energy and utilities. These are all areas where the UK lags the best-performing OECD countries and which are likely to bring high productivity gains. Planned spending to improve digital skills could also be more ambitious, as the COVID-19 crisis makes the low level of adult training in the United Kingdom a more urgent concern.

See an Overview of the UK Survey with key findings and charts (this link can be included in media articles).

For further information, journalists are invited to contact Catherine Bremer in the OECD Media Office (+33 1 45 24 97 00).

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Economy: in the United States, extending support and lowering regulatory barriers could energise the recovery from Covid

09/07/2020 – Swift action by the U.S. government has helped shield households and businesses from the immediate economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, even as efforts continue to bring the spread of the virus under control. Continuing this exceptional support to unemployed workers and struggling firms – while taking steps to lower barriers to labor mobility and competition – would help to strengthen the recovery, share the benefits across society, and reduce the risk of long-lasting scars, according to a new OECD report.

The latest **OECD Economic Survey of the United States** says that even as some businesses reopen with the lifting of coronavirus confinement measures, hard-hit sectors like hospitality and leisure will continue to need support, as will newly unemployed or displaced workers who may need to look for jobs in different sectors. The recent extension of the US Paycheck Protection Program by five weeks to August 8 is a welcome move to help small businesses struggling with the crisis. Extending exceptional unemployment benefits beyond the end-July cut-off date would offer a similar lifeline to the millions of households at risk of falling into poverty, as would assistance for job search (such as employment placement services) and support for geographic mobility.

“The U.S. economy is battling a health and economic shock that threatens to set back the significant economic achievements of the past decade and leave permanent scars,” said **OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría**. “Exceptional support to people and businesses should be continued as long as it is needed. And helping people to return to work by removing unnecessary regulatory hurdles to employment and mobility would energize the recovery and help ward off a drop in living standards and equality.” Read the full speech.

The Survey projects only a gradual recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic brought a decade-long expansion to an abrupt halt and knocked the employment-to-population ratio to its lowest level on record. The best-case scenario sees GDP growth recovering to 4.1% in 2021 after a drop of 7.3% in 2020, whereas a second wave of outbreak scenario would see GDP growth at just 1.9% in 2021 after an 8.5% drop in 2020.

Improving health policy co-ordination across levels of government, ensuring health insurance systems do not let large population groups fall through the gaps that exist between different programs, and reducing regulatory barriers, would all help to tackle the ongoing health crisis from Covid-19. To minimize the risk of a second wave prompting another large-scale lockdown of the economy, developing testing, tracking, tracing and isolating procedures will be key. Augmenting the capacity of health systems and identifying people who have acquired antibodies will help mitigate the economic impact of a second wave.

On the economic front, all efforts should focus on reviving growth and jobs for the long-term, with concrete policy measures to remove barriers hindering access to employment and future opportunities.

Addressing occupational licensing and non-competition covenants in job contracts that impose barriers to job mobility on roughly one in five workers, particularly those from low-skilled or disadvantaged groups, is a top priority. While regulation is important to ensure the safety and quality of services for workers and consumers, state-level labor market regulation has contributed to a decline in labor market fluidity since the late 1990s, alongside a period of sluggish productivity growth. (See Survey Chapter 3 for an analysis of variations in licensing stringency by state.)

States should be encouraged to delicense occupations where there are limited concerns for public health or safety and act against anticompetitive behavior. Federal law can be used to impose recognition of out-of-State licensures, allowing States to set stricter requirements only if they can prove it is necessary to protect the public. People who face difficulties finding work, for example those without a college education, should be supported through more flexible rules on job qualifications and access to adult training.

Restrictive building policies have also created a barrier to labor mobility just as a shift from industry to high-tech and services is changing the country’s economic geography and creating a need for more elastic housing supply. In the current climate, it is all the more important that people can move easily to take up new jobs. Tax incentives can be a way to loosen over-restrictive building laws, the Survey says.

The Survey also notes that vulnerabilities in the highly leveraged corporate sector will need to be monitored. Over time, given the pre-existing pressures of an ageing population, reforms to pension and healthcare spending to reduce cost pressures and inefficiencies and measures to broaden the tax base will be needed to ensure long-run sustainability of public debt.

See an **Overview of the Survey** with key findings and charts (this link can be included in media articles)

For further information or queries, journalists are invited to contact Miguel Gorman in the OECD Washington Centre.

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£600,000 support package to help young care leavers build a better future

Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans and Housing and Local Government Minister, Julie James announced 2 streams of funding – £243,000 from the Welsh Government's Invest to Save fund and £400,000 of Innovate to Save funding – during a visit to the accommodation for young people.

The 2 projects will be delivered by Swansea-based organisation, FABRIC, who already provide accommodation for young people aged 16-17 in the area. The £243,000 support package will help FABRIC to expand its services to the Neath Port Talbot area, providing a home for a further 6 people in the care system.

The second package, worth £400,000, will provide semi-supported accommodation for young adults over the age of 18 leaving the care system and taking their first steps into adulthood – giving them the space to develop their independence whilst offering a support network to fall back on.

Both projects aim to generate cost savings to local authorities by providing a housing solution for young people in care, avoiding the local authority having to use expensive emergency accommodation.

Minister for Finance and Trefnydd said:

> "I am pleased that the Welsh Government's Invest to Save fund, along with Innovate to Save funding, is helping support care leavers as they make their transition into adulthood and independent living.
>
> "The evidence tells us that young people leaving the care system are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, or to end up in the criminal justice system. As well as being terrible for the young people involved, it inevitably leads to costly interventions for the government. This innovative idea seeks to go some way to

> breaking this cycle by providing young people with help and support when they need it most.”

Minister for Housing and Local Government added:

> “This is a great example of how Innovate to Save funding can support some of Wales’ most vulnerable young people at a crucial time in their lives. I look forward to seeing more young people fulfilling their potential thanks to help from these projects.”

Together these 2 projects will provide a consistent pathway from care to independent living for some of Wales’ most vulnerable young people, supporting them to develop the required living skills, engage in education and training, employment and address personal development.

Director of FABRIC, Harri Coleman said:

> “Combining the goals of achieving equal opportunities and improving outcomes for young people alongside the financial savings which our approach delivers, was the basis of our involvement in Innovate to Save. It is FABRIC’s aim to be a part of eliciting positive change in the FABRIC kids and creating alternative positive outcomes in adulthood. Whilst it may not be possible to achieve equal outcomes for all, FABRIC aspires to see “Equal Opportunities for Care Leavers” in Wales and across the UK.”