Public Debt Reports Heatmap: Background and Methodology

Background

The Public Debt Reports heatmap assesses public debt dissemination practices in IDA countries. The assessment, which is updated on annual basis, addresses three main areas: (i) dissemination of public debt statistics; (ii) publication of key debt management reports; and (iii) publication of other debt data, including identification and quantification of contingent liabilities.

The assessment is conducted on the basis of the information available on national authorities’ websites. While dissemination may take several forms (e.g., debt reports, statistical bulletins, Excel files, etc.), governments are expected to make debt statistics regularly available on-line to meet the minimum standards of transparency towards citizens and investors.

The results of the evaluation are presented in a heatmap showing strengths and weaknesses by country and indicator. Country’s performance in each indicator is evaluated under a four-category scale, which ranks standards from low (red) to high (green), according to the criteria presented in Table I.

Methodology

1. **Public debt statistics dissemination practices** are assessed along the following three dimensions: accessibility, completeness, and timeliness. Debt data should cover debt stocks and related debt service flows at the end of the year prior to the date of the assessment to avoid being qualified as insufficient (red).

   1.1. *Data accessibility* analyzes whether information is made publicly available through centralized rather than multiple sources (i.e., documents and websites). The rationale is that the more concentrated the information is, the easier is its accessibility.

   1.2. *Completeness of the statistics* evaluates the coverage by instrument and sector, as well as the availability of information on recently signed external loan contracts.

   1.3. *Timeliness* assesses the frequency of publications and the period between the cut-off data and their publication. The time lag is assessed using to the publication with highest frequency data.

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1 Debt instruments include external debt, domestic debt, and guarantees by central governments.

2 When relevant, central government (CG) debt includes extrabudgetary units and debts contracted by the central bank on behalf of the central government. General government (GG) debt covers debt from the central government and local governments (LG), as well as social security funds operating at each level of government. The public sector debt aggregates debt of the general government and state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

3 Expected information includes the name of the lender, the amount, and the financial terms of the loan.
Notes:

a) Countries publish reports at different times for different purposes. For this analysis, the highest-frequency publication containing the minimum set of debt data requested by the methodology is taken into consideration.

b) Completeness is evaluated relative to the prevailing legal framework and countries’ current borrowing practices. For instance, if SOEs are not legally allowed to borrow or do not have any outstanding debt, they are not expected to be covered in the public debt reports.

c) The timeliness and periodicity indicators are assigned a gray color if they cannot be assessed.

2. **Key debt management documents** that enhance transparency of future debt operations are the medium-term debt strategy and the annual borrowing plan⁴. Both documents should cover the year in which the assessment takes place to meet the minimum standards.

   2.1. *Debt management strategy (DMS)* assesses whether strategic targets for the main cost and risk indicators are provided to inform about the nature and volume of future debt operations and sources of financing (e.g., external/domestic).

   2.2. *Annual borrowing plan (ABP)* focuses on the publication of the nominal borrowing amounts planned for a given year for each category of debt instruments (or lenders for external borrowing). The heatmap assessment evaluates its comprehensiveness and timeliness.

3. **Other debt statistics /contingent liabilities (CLs)** assess the disclosure of central government guarantees (including names of beneficiaries), account payables, collateralization details, and debt-related contingent liabilities. This indicator is assigned a gray color if such reporting is not relevant for a specific country.

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⁴ Both publications are expected to be easily accessible as stand-alone documents or a specific section of an official document (e.g., budget law).
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<td></td>
<td>Completeness</td>
<td>Timeliness</td>
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<tr>
<td>No publicly available / incomplete / outdated debt reports</td>
<td>Instrument coverage</td>
<td>Sectoral coverage</td>
<td>Information on recently contracted external loans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N.A. or incomplete coverage</td>
<td>N.A. or incomplete CG</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple websites</td>
<td>Limited coverage: external or domestic debt only</td>
<td>Limited coverage: complete CG</td>
<td>Limited information: lender name and/or purposes of the borrowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single website &amp; multiple docs</td>
<td>Partial coverage: external and domestic debt (if applicable)</td>
<td>Partial coverage: complete general government (GG) or complete public corporations</td>
<td>Partial information: lender name and amount; no financial terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single document</td>
<td>Full coverage: external and domestic debt and guarantees (if applicable)</td>
<td>Full coverage: GG and public corporations</td>
<td>Full information: lender name, amount and financial terms</td>
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Table 1. Criteria underpinning the Debt Reports Heatmap scores