

OECD Public Governance Reviews

The OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative

MONITORING REPORT – ASSESSING PROGRESS
AND CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD



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Foreword

Democracies are under growing internal and external pressures, including political polarisation, the spread of disinformation and the rise of populism. Governments must act to preserve and strengthen their democracies, build trust in public institutions, and better serve their people – while managing the digital and green transitions and other policy challenges.

This report, *The OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative: Monitoring Report - Assessing Progress and Charting the Way Forward* responds to call from Ministers at the November 2022 meeting of the OECD Public Governance Committee at Ministerial level. The meeting, held in Luxembourg, established an OECD Global Forum on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy (Global Forum) as a platform to share knowledge about how to assess and improve public governance to meet the challenges facing democracies. Ministers also asked the OECD to monitor and analyse collective progress amongst OECD Members as part of its Reinforcing Democracy Initiative (RDI). This report maps progress against the five key pillars of the Initiative, in line with the Action Plans [on Public Governance for Combating Misinformation and Disinformation](#); [Enhancing Participation, Representation and Openness in Public Life, and its Annex on Gender Equality](#); and [Governing Green](#), all adopted in 2022, as well as the Action Plans on [Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World](#) and on [Digital Democracy](#), subsequently adopted in 2024.

The report offers many concrete examples of practices countries have adopted to tackle these challenges, including how to engage better with citizens, how to strengthen capacity to address complex policy challenges in open democracies, how to steer the green transition, and how to address gender gaps. It also tackles frontier issues, such as building pathways for effective digital democracy and working to strengthen information integrity in response to the challenges of mis- and disinformation. The report takes stock of work undertaken collectively through the OECD and identifies strategic directions for the future.

This report was approved and declassified by the Public Governance Committee on 9 October 2024 and prepared for publication by the Secretariat. Further information can be found at www.oecd.org/governance/reinforcing-democracy.

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Executive summary

At the OECD Public Governance Committee Ministerial in 2022, ministers committed to bold action to build trust and reinforce democracy. This action has been guided by the five pillars of the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative and their respective action plans: combatting mis- and disinformation; enhancing participation and representation and openness in public life, and its annex on gender equality; stronger open democracies in a globalised world; governing green; and digital democracy.

This Monitoring Report delves into the richness of that action by drawing on OECD survey data, evidence, and policy analysis, as well as submissions by countries and cases collected via an online public call in 2024. It also identifies gaps in action and points to a set of common priorities for the future.

Key findings

Public Governance for Combatting Mis- and Disinformation

Governments increasingly recognise the urgency of strengthening information integrity and have started to act in three main areas: enhancing transparency and accountability, fostering societal resilience to disinformation, and improving governance measures to uphold the integrity of information ecosystems.

Notably, some are moving beyond self-regulatory approaches to improve the transparency of online platforms and their content moderation. Many governments are working to slow the decline in independent and pluralistic media and to build capacity – both amongst the general public and within government – to effectively tackle mis- and disinformation.

Nonetheless, action has been slow given the rapid rise of mis- and disinformation and their damaging effects over the past decade. Governments need to work together and with all of society to deliver comprehensive and constructive solutions. The OECD Council Recommendation on Information Integrity, currently under development, will provide a global standard for action in democratic settings.

Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life

Countries are making progress in implementing participatory processes at all levels of government, developing policy frameworks to ensure civil society engagement and improving access to information. Efforts are also being made to enhance representation in elected bodies and the public service to ensure that these institutions reflect societal demographics.

Nevertheless, there is still no clear understanding, nor clear way forward, in making participation fully compatible with, and fully meaningful in, representative democracy. The institutionalisation of meaningful and transparent participation mechanisms has been slow. There is thus a need to take citizen participation to the next level, institutionalising citizen participation and evaluating what works best for different policy decisions. Strengthening citizens' civic skills and civil servants' capacity to undertake and evaluate participatory processes is crucial. While evaluation of these processes has become more common, further research is needed on their impact. The upcoming OECD Barometer will help measure meaningful citizen participation.

More broadly, OECD data show significant scope remains for further action to protect and promote civic space, strengthen integrity in policymaking and boost the representation of underrepresented groups. While some progress has been made with regard to women and young people, barriers to representation remain for other under-represented groups such as visible minorities, second generation migrants and indigenous people (where applicable).

A special focus on gender equality

Countries are working to remove legal and policy barriers to women's participation in electoral and policymaking mechanisms, while addressing gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment, which prevent women and girls from fully engaging in public life. Countries are also increasingly adopting gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting.

However, such measures alone are not enough. Despite decades of progress, gender gaps in political representation and participation persist across OECD countries. Countries must work together to develop evidence-based policies, using more granular data to identify areas requiring attention. New challenges, such as tech-facilitated gender-based violence, need to be tackled urgently. The biennial OECD Gender Equality Forum provides a platform for addressing gender gaps in the context of the dual transition.

Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World

Governments are strengthening governance capacities to address global challenges through international co-operation, taking better account of transboundary impacts, and developing new reporting mechanisms for global commitments. At the same time, they recognise that intensifying foreign interference is changing the landscape of international relations, with consequences for the democratic model of governance. In response, OECD countries are strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks for lobbying, including political finance from foreign sources; applying pre- and post-public employment restrictions on senior public officials and ensuring protections for media and civil society organisations.

However, the scale of the problem requires greater co-operation amongst democracies to better understand foreign interference and design appropriate policy responses to strengthen democratic resilience. These include countering corruption, controlling lobbying, reinforcing information integrity, better integrating diasporas, further regulating political finance or better screening foreign direct investments, and minimising trade and debt dependence on single foreign actors. Nonetheless, it is important to safeguard legitimate foreign influence efforts to foster transparent international relations.

Governing Green

Countries are using tools such as green budgeting and green public procurement to ensure that government actions align with green objectives. Governments are also monitoring and reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions and environmental footprints. Finally, some are attempting to build public consensus and trust in government's ability to drive the green transition through, for example, public communication, citizen participation and engagement with civil society.

However, much more is needed for governments to accelerate the transition to a green economy. Democratic governments need to garner public understanding and support for policies that may be seen as contentious or inequitable. They can take action to improve governance processes, such as permitting for green infrastructure; making use governance tools such as procurement more strategically; and employing public communication and citizen engagement to build trust and buy-in.

Transforming Public Governance for Digital Democracy

Governments are using digital tools, including civic tech, to enhance both in-person and online participation in policymaking. They are also addressing regulatory gaps in election integrity, political advertising, and online campaign finance. Digital identification systems and open data are being deployed to improve public services.

However, the public sector often lags in adopting the necessary technologies needed to meet the expectations of a digital democracy. The rapid spread of mis- and disinformation demonstrates the urgent need for more decisive government action. Public institutions can improve their ability to harness digital tools, such as AI, to provide better services and enhance their own efficiency.

Moving forward, together

Beyond offering an impressive array of specific country examples, this Monitoring Report underscores the need for continued peer-learning and collaboration internationally. It has focused on action in OECD Member countries. Going forward, peer-to-peer learning under the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative will bring together a wider group of countries, including non-Members, to break new ground for democracy.

1 Public Governance for Combatting Mis- and Disinformation

Governments increasingly recognise the need to strengthen information integrity, particularly in three key areas: enhancing transparency and accountability, fostering resilience to disinformation, and improving governance to protect information ecosystems. Some are moving beyond self-regulation to improve platform transparency and content moderation. Governments are also focusing on supporting independent media and building capacity within society and government to combat mis- and disinformation, including via improving education and media literacy. However, action has been slow relative to the rapid rise of these issues. Governments need to work together and with all of society to find comprehensive and constructive solutions.

1.1. Introduction

A healthy democracy requires populations to have access to reliable information. It is what allows the public to better understand the decisions made by government, and thus allow them to form informed political opinions and hold public figures to account. However, the accelerated spread of seriously harmful false and misleading information in recent years, often through deliberate disinformation campaigns by domestic or foreign actors, poses a fundamental threat to democratic institutions, jeopardising access to reliable information, creating confusion, polarising different groups within society, and undermining the very essence of democracy. This has driven the issue of combatting mis- and disinformation to the top of the government policy agenda in many OECD countries.

In the results from the 2023 Trust Survey (OECD, 2024^[1]), an average of 11% identified mis- and disinformation as one of the main three issues facing their country, and in Czechia, Korea and the Slovak Republic this figure exceeds 20%. Trust in traditional media is also suffering from challenges in the information environment, as on average just 39% of people have high or moderately high trust in news media, a level similar to national government, while 44% report low to no trust in the media. The results also highlight stark differences by age group, as a higher share of people aged 50 and above rely on journalist or organisation reports on stories, whereas for younger people social media has become the primary news source, with 68% obtaining news this way. These recent results highlight the scale of the challenges currently faced by governments in this area and highlight the relevance of the areas for action included in the Action Plan and discussed in the chapter below.

While mis- and disinformation have always existed, technological advancements in communication via digital platforms and search engines have fundamentally altered the way in which information is spread, making it far easier for false information to spread quickly. Furthermore, developments in generative artificial intelligence tools have allowed convincing false information, including photos and videos, to be made quickly and at low cost. Against this backdrop, promoting information integrity and tackling disinformation is central to the OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative.

[The Action Plan on Public Governance for Combatting Mis- and Disinformation](#) (henceforth “the Action Plan”) identified three key areas and the steps needed to tackle them:

- **Key area 1** – Implementing government policies to build more resilient societies against mis and disinformation;
- **Key area 2** – Supporting the design of policy and regulatory measures to increase transparency and data sharing to prevent the spread of mis and dis-information; and
- **Key area 3** – Identifying regulatory and policy responses that reduce economic and structural drivers of mis and disinformation.

Since the welcoming of the Action Plan by Ministers in Luxembourg, the OECD Information Integrity Hub (previously, OECD DIS/MIS Resource Hub) and the OECD Expert Group on Governance Responses to Mis- and Disinformation, have delivered the “Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity” (OECD, 2024^[2]).

As reflected in the report, the OECD has outlined three complementary dimensions of governments' policy responses (OECD, 2024^[2]):

- Implementing policies to enhance the transparency, accountability, and plurality of information sources: This includes promoting policies that support a diverse, plural, and independent media sector, with a needed emphasis on local journalism. It also comprises policies that may be utilised to increase the degree of accountability and transparency of online platforms, so that their market power and commercial interests do not contribute to disproportionately vehicle disinformation.

- **Fostering societal resilience to disinformation:** This involves empowering individuals to develop critical thinking skills, recognise and combat disinformation, as well as mobilising all sectors of society to develop comprehensive and evidence-based policies in support of information integrity.
- **Upgrading governance measures and public institutions to uphold the integrity of the information space:** This involves the development and implementation of, as appropriate, regulatory capacities, co-ordination mechanisms, strategic frameworks, and capacity-building programmes that support a coherent vision and approach to strengthening information integrity within the public administration, while ensuring clear mandates and respect for fundamental freedoms. It also involves promoting peer-learning and international co-operation between democracies facing similar disinformation threats.

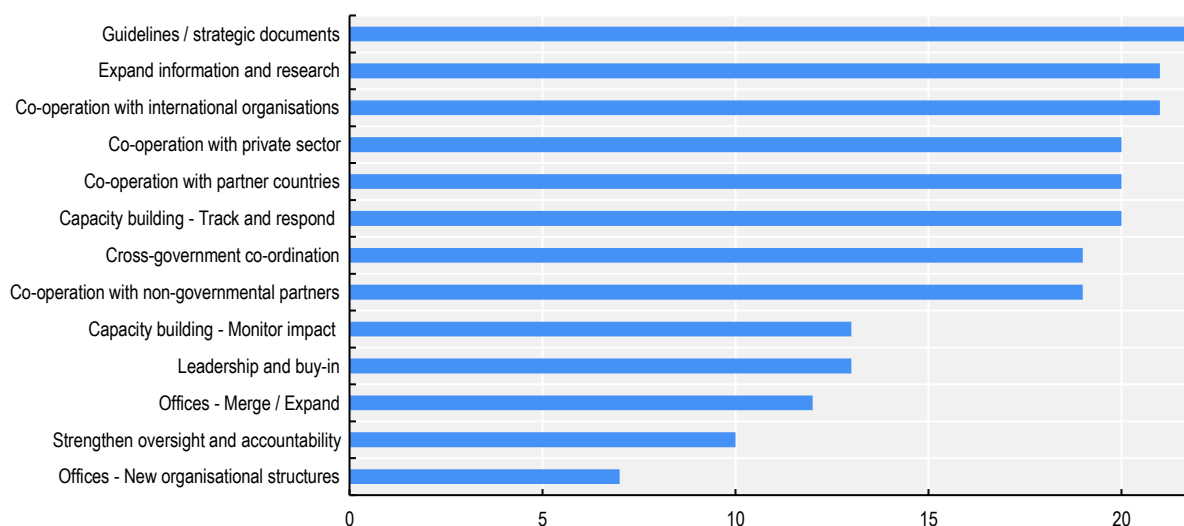
This chapter identifies progress made by OECD countries in their efforts to promote information integrity and combat mis- and disinformation and potential gaps against the Action Plan adopted in Luxembourg, building on the above report and the work of other OECD Committees.

1.2. Key area 1 - Implementing government policies to build more resilient societies against mis- and dis-information

1.2.1. Expand on and create new partnerships with non-governmental and international organisations to build resilience to the spread of false and misleading information

The OECD 2022 RDI report recognised the importance of governments engaging with media and civil society organisations to address the threats posed by mis- and disinformation, highlighting this as an area where numerous actors had already been active, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis (OECD, 2022^[3]). The speed of the proliferation of false and misleading content has made countries aware of the need to develop a comprehensive view on how to improve levels of information integrity (OECD, 2024^[2]). Recent OECD data shows that new partnerships, including co-operation with international organisations, the private sector, partner countries, and non-governmental partners all feature frequently as areas where governments seek to improve over the next few years (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Areas for future improvements to strengthen information integrity



Note: n=22

Source: OECD Survey on Institutional architecture and governance practices to strengthen information integrity, 2023, in OECD (2024^[2]), *Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d909ff7a-en>.

Several countries have already taken measures to further improve collaboration on information integrity. For example, in 2022, Spain created the “Forum against Disinformation Campaigns in the Field of National Security”, a platform designed to foster public and private collaboration on the risks posed by disinformation to national security. Latvia developed the “2023-2027 National Concept on Strategy Communication and Security of Information Space”, which includes actions on partnerships with organised civil society, the private sector, and academia. Collaboration efforts have also increased within government: half of respondent countries (54%) have at least one cross-government mechanism to identify and respond to disinformation.

Collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors can also help ensure that measures to improve information integrity continue to uphold free speech principles. An example of such collaboration was evident in Lithuania, where the Government Chancellery worked with Lithuanian Civil Service Organisation Debunk.eu to collect examples of accounts that had been blocked on Facebook for expressing pro-Ukraine opinions, without violating Meta’s content policies. The Chancellery then brought this information to Meta, providing valuable context on Lithuanian cultural and linguistic traditions to better inform the company’s content moderation policy.

Many countries have recognised the borderless nature of information flows, and thus the need for greater collaboration at the international level. Much of this collaboration has taken place via international organisations. The OECD’s Information Integrity Hub has served as platform for policy analysis and dialogue, as expanded on in the dedicated ‘Working collectively through the OECD’ section. UNESCO has undertaken a comprehensive set of consultations across 134 countries on how to tackle mis- and disinformation, culminating in a set of guidelines for the governance of digital platforms, launched in 2023 (UNESCO, 2023^[4]). While the European Union has provided a platform to collaborate on countering disinformation via its European Digital Media Observatory since 2021, in late 2022 it notably expanded the reach of this Observatory, adding six new hubs, in order to reach 100% of the EU population (European Commission, 2022^[5]).

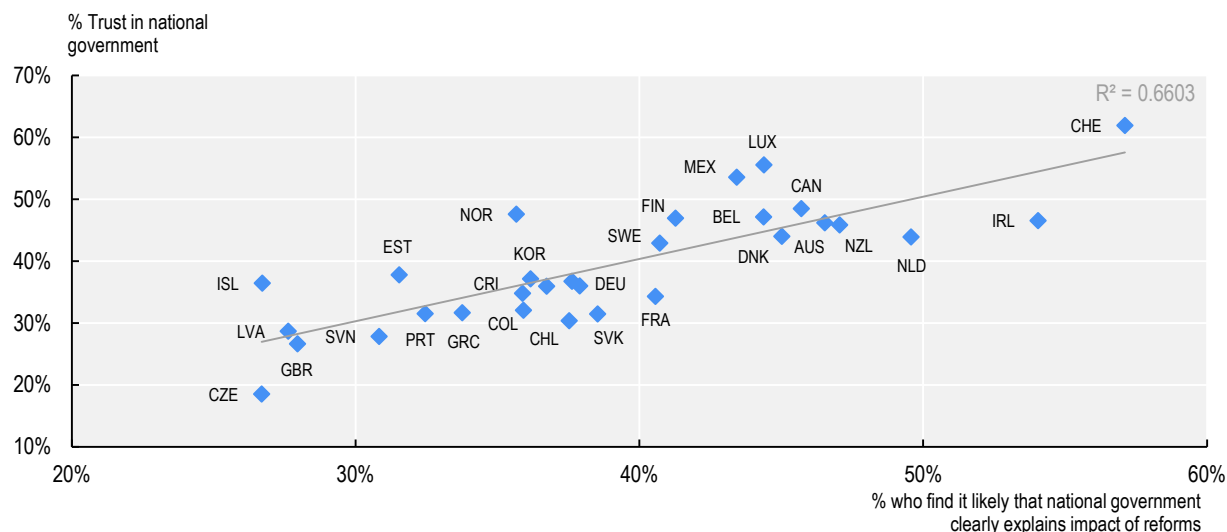
While the value of such collaboration is clear, there is a risk that overly close relations between government and civil society or private sector organisations can lead to these organisations unduly influencing government interests. Some research has found correlation between fact-checkers’ political affiliations and their findings (Louis-Sidois, 2022^[6]). Collaboration with such entities would carry a clear risk. Equally, such relations can lead to government unduly influencing organisations and biasing public discourse. Therefore, safety nets are needed to ensure that such co-operation does not lead to political bias.

1.2.2. Build capacity for more proactive, responsive and effective public communication in counteracting mis- and dis-information by:

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlights the need for strengthening societal resilience against mis- and disinformation by ensuring the public is informed and aware of what information is reliable, and what is false and misleading. Effective public communication of relevant and timely information is crucial to this. Results from the 2024 Trust Survey show that people remain quite divided about the perceived impact of government communication, as 39% say the government would likely explain the impact of reforms, while 40% remain sceptical (OECD, 2024^[1]). In addition, perception of the government’s communication regarding the impact of reforms are closely related to trust in the national government (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Countries in which people think government communicates well about reforms tend to have higher trust in the national government

Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government (y-axis) by share of people that think it is likely government will clearly explain how they will be affected by a reform (x-axis), 2023



Source: OECD (2024^[11]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

The Action Plan identified the need for governments to build capacity for proactive, responsive and effective public communication. This includes the institutionalisation of public communication responses and the use of behavioural insights.

OECD data shows that public communications are a priority for OECD countries: 90% of responding countries indicated the importance of building the capacity of public officials to track and respond to disinformation threats. This is reflected in the training and guidance aimed at such officials on handling disinformation, established by several governments. For example, in January 2022, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations developed “Guidance on dealing with information”, offering advice on responding to disinformation and on communicating with the media on this topic. Similarly, the United Kingdom Government Communication Services released a “Wall of Beliefs” toolkit to assist communicators in understanding the roles of identity, relationships and worldview in belief formation, in order to develop more sophisticated communication strategies to counter false information (Government Communication Service, 2022^[7]). Canada’s School of Public Service offers training programmes to equip officials with the skills to identify and react to disinformation, including how to effectively use communication via social media platforms to debunk and pre-bunk any disinformation identified. It also compiles information on how disinformation spreads and detection methods on a dedicated website (Government of Canada, 2024^[8]). Despite these initiatives, 45% of respondents to the OECD survey reported the absence of regular training programmes for countering disinformation (OECD, 2024^[21]).

In 2023, the OECD released a set of Good Practice Principles for Public Communication Responses to Mis- and Disinformation. These principles suggest that public communication interventions should be transparent, independent from political influence, and coherent across government, and acknowledge the rapid spread of disinformation aiming to pre-empting when possible (OECD, 2023^[9]). There is great scope for countries to better use these principles in the future, in particular reducing the politicisation of public communications.

Moreover, several countries have conducted research on behavioural patterns related to the consumption of disinformation to better understand the factors that lead individuals to engage with and disseminate false information, and thus devising more targeted and effective policy solutions. A Randomised Controlled Trial, conducted by Canada in collaboration with the OECD and the French government, explored ways to reduce the spread of misinformation online (OECD, 2022^[3]). The study tested two policy interventions grounded in behavioural science. The first one involved prompting users to rate the accuracy of a single random headline prior to engaging with Facebook-style headlines online. The second intervention provided a list of media literacy tips. While participants were generally good at accurately identifying true and false headlines, they often shared news headlines they identified as false or questionable. The results show that digital media literacy prompts reduced their willingness to share fake news by 21% compared to the control group, underscoring the efficacy of simple, scalable online interventions in enhancing the quality of information circulating online. Impact Canada continues to assess whether susceptibility to misinformation varies depending on the content and context (Impact Canada, 2022^[10]). In Greece, the National Transparency Authority has also designed a behavioural insights intervention aimed at raising citizens' awareness during natural disasters and encouraging reliance on information from reliable sources, including official channels of competent authorities. This intervention also includes a public communication element, with government providing guidelines for identifying and avoiding unreliable sources of information during such emergencies.

1.2.3. Pursue a whole-of-society approach to strengthening media and information ecosystems:

A whole-of-society approach, calling for the collective engagement of governments, private sector entities, educational institutions, and the civil society, stands as a key priority to enhance the resilience and strength of information ecosystems. While many countries had invested in this area its importance has since been recognised even further, with several countries publishing guides on recognising and tackling mis- and disinformation. For example, in 2022 the Latvian State Chancellery released a “Handbook against disinformation: recognise and oppose”, aimed at both government officials and Latvian residents. The Ministry of Interior in the Netherlands financed the creation of a website teaching people how to identify mis- and disinformation (OECD, 2024^[2]).

The increasing recognition of media literacy's value in combatting mis- and disinformation is reflected in the efforts of civil society organisations, which make a critical contribution in this field. Several OECD countries have identified the need to work alongside such organisations through a whole-of-society approach to develop media literacy activities. However, it is important to recognise the limitations of media literacy, for example in the face of highly convincing deep fakes. The OECD Truth Quest Survey is a tool that helps to measure the ability of people to identify false and misleading information and was applied in 21 countries (OECD, 2024^[11]).

The emphasis on inclusion is evident in the UK's Media Literacy Taskforce Fund, established in 2022 to boost media literacy skills for people particularly vulnerable to false information. The Taskforce collaborates with 17 organisations to offer a variety of programmes, including access to digital media skills for the elderly, literacy training for teachers in disadvantaged schools, and workshops for vulnerable and marginalised women to tackle online abuse (OECD, 2024^[2]). Similarly, the German National Security Strategy, released in June 2023, highlights the importance of dealing with disinformation. It pledges to contribute to this by promoting application-oriented research and development focused on disinformation, including strengthening digital, data and media literacy (German Ministry of Defence, 2023^[12]).

1.3. Key area 2 - Support the design of policy and regulatory measures to increase transparency and data sharing to prevent the spread of mis- and dis-information

Regulatory responses to promote transparency and data sharing have developed rapidly since 2022. In part, this has been due to the recognition of the limitations posed by existing self- and co-regulatory regimes, including the risk that they will not sufficiently mitigate the threats posed by those actors that do the most to undermine information integrity in democracies, as well as by those who merely do not wish to engage. Such risks point to the importance of government involvement in designing, enforcing, and updating regulatory responses (OECD, 2024^[2]). Several laws have recently been implemented or discussed that focus on a wide range of transparency issues. The European Union’s Digital Services Act (DSA) and the UK Online Safety Act, for example, reflect growing demands for greater platform transparency (Lai, Shiffman and Wanless, 2023^[13]).

The rapid growth of generative artificial intelligence (AI) – that is, machine-based systems that infer from the input they receive how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations or decisions (including in the form of images and other media) – has also increasingly been a cause for policymaker concern in relation to the role of platforms. The development of tools such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT, a chatbot which surpassed 100 million users just two months after launching (Hu, 2023^[14]), has highlighted the added risk to the dissemination of mis- and disinformation that the possibility of artificial articles, images and other media poses. In this light, the EU Artificial Intelligence Act adopted in March 2024 requires, inter alia, that AI models comply with a variety of transparency requirements, including publishing detailed summaries of the content used for training, performing model evaluation and reporting any incidents, and clearly labelling any artificial audio or video content as such. The United States has also started to take action in this area, with the 2023 President’s Executive Order on Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence, which seeks in part to protect citizens from AI-enabled fraud by “establishing standards and best practices for detecting AI-generated content and authenticating official content” (U.S. White House, 2023^[15]) (OECD, 2024^[2]).

1.3.1. Promote data transparency of online platforms to build greater understanding of mis- and dis-information narratives and how such content spreads by:

The OECD RDI 2022 report and the action plan underline the importance of promoting data transparency of online platforms, and highlight several approaches to doing so, including promoting partnerships between social media platforms and researchers such that these platforms provide some level of data access to researchers. This focus aligns with the recent trends in this space, particularly in Europe, where the DSA provides significant impetus across OECD European countries to make progress in this area.

However, given commercial interests, the relatively opaque nature of both social media platforms and search engines means that it can often be difficult to understand their algorithms, and in particular how they make use of advertising. Furthermore, many platforms have become increasingly reticent in their sharing of information. TikTok’s strict approach to allowing researchers access to its data (Bloomberg, 2023^[16]) and X’s (formerly Twitter) decision to reduce access to researchers (Calma, 2023^[17]) have legitimised other major platforms to follow suit – including Meta, who decided in March to shut down CrowdTangle, a public insights tools from Facebook used by journalists, researchers and fact checkers to track how information spreads across the platform.

Recognising these issues, the EU 2022 Digital Services Act (DSA) requires Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Search Engines (defined as those with more than 45 million users in the European Union) to ensure public access to their repositories of advertisements, including the content of these advertisements and related data on the advertiser, as well as any detail on how the advertisement was

targeted (EUR-Lex, 2022^[18]). In some cases, country governments have taken matters into their own hands – for example, France’s Ambassador for Digital Affairs has developed an open source tool to track changes to online platforms’ terms of service, as well as a tool to identify suspicious accounts using an algorithm that calculates the probability a given account is a bot (OECD, 2024^[2]). The DSA has also gone some way to addressing the issue of data availability for researchers. In particular, Article 40 states that Very Large Online Platforms or Search Engines must provide data to approved researchers when requested, provided that the research is conducted solely with the intention of identifying “systemic risks in the Union” (EUR-Lex, 2022^[18]).

1.3.2. Improve transparency of the processes and mechanisms used by online platforms to moderate content and shape information flows

The OECD 2022 RDI report noted that, up to that date, the approach to content moderation in the social media sector had been largely self-regulatory, and that content-specific regulations beyond this presented risks to freedom of speech. It suggested requiring online platforms to be more transparent, including clarifying their content moderation policies and the functioning of their algorithms as well as explaining how and why content is removed or de-prioritised, and requiring that online platforms be subject to regular audits.

The limitations of relying solely on self-regulation of social media sites and search engines continue to be recognised. The limitations posed by existing self-regulatory regimes increase the risk that they will not sufficiently mitigate the threats posed by those actors that do the most to undermine information integrity in democracies, as well as by those who merely do not wish to engage (OECD, 2024^[2]). However, there is equally an awareness that excess direct regulation could risk inhibiting freedom of expression. Countries have identified the possibility for co-regulatory approach, where platforms self-govern while allowing government to play an oversight and enforcement role. An example of this is the European Code of Practice, which was updated in 2022 to include issues such as demonetisation of spreaders of disinformation. However, the limitations of even co-regulatory approaches were made clear when X announced in May 2023 that it was withdrawing from its participation in the 2018 European Union Code of Practice on Disinformation, after its first transparency report for the Code fell short of the standards set by other platforms (OECD, 2024^[2]). Similarly, in November 2023, the signatory status of X to the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (voluntary code) was withdrawn after an independent Complaints Sub-Committee found that it failed to provide publicly accessible channels to report misinformation and disinformation during Australia’s Voice to Parliament referendum. This was the only consequence for X and demonstrated a clear gap in digital platform accountability measures. This indicates that even when governments have some oversight capacities, non-binding approaches mean that such platforms are able to ignore regulations as soon as they no longer feel they benefit from them.

As noted, this area has seen active developments since 2022, particularly at European level. The Digital Service Act was enacted in August 2023: it requires for social media platforms and social engines to provide researchers and regulators with greater insight into how their algorithms moderate, prioritise and recommend content. It further requires the publication of transparency reports – a condition similar to that in the European Code of Practice, although making it obligatory.

The UK Online Safety Act was enacted in October 2023, with requirements that algorithms must be designed to help protect individuals online – although unlike the DSA, it does not require the parameters of these algorithms to be disclosed (Hagedorn et al., 2023^[19]). The Australian Government has also taken significant steps in this direction with the release of the exposure draft Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill in June 2023. The Bill would provide the independent regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), with new powers to increase transparency and to hold digital platforms to account in addressing seriously harmful misinformation and disinformation.

1.4. Key area 3 - Identify regulatory and policy responses that reduce economic and structural drivers of mis- and dis-information

Since the adoption of the Action Plan, several regulations have been implemented to address competitive harms and improve the health of markets for actors in the information space. For online platforms, strategies seek to encourage new entrants and innovation and to maintain diverse markets as a means to spur competition between online platforms, potentially encouraging market-based incentives to healthier information spaces, though this outcome is far from certain (OECD, 2024^[2]). The EU Digital Markets Act (DMA) is the most prominent example. Furthermore, the 2024 European Media Freedom Act is a notable example of an effort to strengthen the market for traditional media, reduce the risks posed by media market concentration, and maintain media pluralism.

1.4.1. Promote more responsible behaviour of online platforms

In some sense, digitalisation has reduced barriers to entry for media providers, thus increasing the potential for plurality. However, dependence on social media platforms and search engines for advertising revenue has also increased the risk of media capture – that is, situations in which individuals, groups or organisations exert significant control over media organisations in a way that risks influencing content and coverage (OECD, 2024^[2]). In this light, the OECD 2022 RDI report identified the issue of responsible online behaviour of platforms as relevant, with the action plan inviting countries to take steps to promote a fairer business environment in the digital media sector. The European Union has been a significant player through its 2023 Digital Markets Act, which regulates the market power of digital platforms in a variety of ways (Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. The European Digital Markets Act

The Digital Markets Act (DMA) is designed to regulate so called ‘gatekeeper’ power, with gatekeepers defined as large digital platforms providing core platform services, such as online search engines, app stores, and messenger services. The European Commission initially proposed the Act in December 2020, and it entered into force in November 2022 and became applicable on 1 May 2023. The Act establishes a variety of “do’s” and “don’ts” for the gatekeepers”:

Examples of “do’s” include:

- allowing business users to access the data that they generate while using the gatekeeper’s platform
- providing companies advertising on their platform with the tools and information necessary for advertisers and publishers to carry out their own independent verification of their advertisements
- allowing their business users to promote their offer and conclude contracts with their customers outside the gatekeeper’s platform.

Examples of “don’ts” include:

- treating services and products offered by the gatekeeper itself more favourably in ranking than similar services or products offered by third parties on the gatekeeper’s platform
- preventing users from un-installing any pre-installed software or app
- tracking end users outside of the gatekeepers’ core platform service for the purpose of targeted advertising without consent.

Fines for non-compliance can be up to 10% of the company's total worldwide annual turnover, or up to 20% in the event of repeated infringements. Alternatively, period penalties can be incurred of up to 5% of the average daily turnover.

Source: European Commission (n.d._[20]), "About the Digital Markets Act".

On top of this, in March 2024 the European Parliament passed the European Media Freedom Act, which will, inter alia, requires that Very Large Online Platforms (those with more than 45 million users in the European Union) intending to take down media content would have to inform the media provider before doing so. The use of the "Very Large Online Platforms" definition has also been constructed with competition in mind – platforms that do not fall under this definition will not be required to take on a significant number of the transparency requirements mandated in the European Digital Services Act, so that compliance does not become a barrier to entry (OECD, 2024_[2]).

The European Union has also taken measures to prevent very large platforms abusing their power through its Digital Services Act. In particular, it obligates those falling under the Very Large Online Platform category to conduct analysis on the systemic risks they create, as detailed in Box 1.2.

Box 1.2. The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA): Risk Assessment Requirements for Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines

The Digital Services Act highlights that Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Services (VLOP and VLOS) can be used in a way that can significantly influence online safety as well as the shaping of public opinion and discourse. Given the systemic risks that this can pose, the Act requires VLOP and VLOS to assess risks stemming from the design, functioning and use of their services, and take steps to mitigate any risks identified.

The DSA specifies four types of systemic risk that should be assessed in-depth by these platforms:

- Risks associated with the dissemination of illegal content, including child sexual abuse, illegal hate speech, and the sale of illegal products or services.
- Risks impacting the exercise of fundamental rights as protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including freedom of expression and information, media freedom, the right to private life, and the right to data protection.
- Risks concerning negative effects on democratic processes, civil discourse, electoral processes, and public security.
- Risks related to the design and functioning of such platforms having a negative impact on physical and mental well-being, including from interface design stimulating behavioural addictions and from disinformation campaigns related to public health.

The DSA highlights that when assessing these risks, VLOP and VLOS should also consider content that is not illegal, or does not go against their terms and conditions. It further states that the impact of algorithmic systems, in particular recommender systems and advertising systems, should be considered, and that cases where algorithmic amplification of information contributes to systemic risks should be reflected in the relevant risk assessments. In order to make such assessments possible, platforms are required to preserve all supporting documents related to assessments carried out, including underlying data.

In order to ensure that these risk assessments, and subsequent risk mitigation efforts, are based on the best available information, the DSA states that VLOP and VLOS should involve, where appropriate, other parties in their research, including recipients of the service and independent experts.

Source: EUR-Lex (2022^[18]), Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj>.

Canada has also tried to ensure that news businesses are able to compete with the monopoly-like power of digital platforms with the 2023 Online News Act, which creates a bargaining framework to encourage platforms to reach voluntary agreements regarding compensation with news businesses, with mandatory bargaining and arbitration processes occurring if unsuccessful. While in theory this gives media platforms greater strength in negotiating with digital giants, it risks that the platforms remove access to news sources entirely. Indeed, in 2023 Meta announced that people in Canada would no longer be able to view or share news content on Facebook and Instagram (Meta, 2023^[21]).

With an aim to update media competition laws in light of the sector's digitalisation, France has recently developed an approach to evaluating the legality of mergers in the media sector. While the current system is predominantly based on transactions that exceed a certain revenue threshold, the new system would be based on a variety of factors, including what such a merger would mean for diversity of content, independence of information, as well as quantitative factors such as audience reach. This makes it easier to determine if certain media structures are competitive, even in situations where revenue structures are hidden or unclear (Government of France, 2022^[22]).

1.4.2. Develop and apply lessons, including analysing potential market and financial consequences for business, from regulatory responses and approaches undertaken in other sectors by:

Analysing regulatory models and insights, identifying new ways of working and creating new regulatory bodies and agencies

OECD governments are adapting their institutions and policy frameworks to respond to threats posed by disinformation and to create an enabling environment for accurate, reliable, and plural information to thrive. A number of countries have stepped up their efforts, putting in place national strategic frameworks, administrative co-ordination units, task forces, and capacity building efforts – namely, institutional architecture – as they respond to disinformation and implement measures that enhance information integrity.

In order to ensure a coherent approach to and provide a clear impetus for tackling mis- and disinformation, many countries have developed strategic frameworks identifying the respective roles and requirements of different departments regarding information integrity. The Netherlands, for example, published a government-wide strategy for combatting disinformation in December 2022, highlighting the cases in which the government is responsible for debunking such information, and designating the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations as a primary point of contact (Government of the Netherlands, 2022^[23]). In other countries, strategies for combatting disinformation appear as part of other, wider policies. Estonia, for example, puts forward a set of measures for tackling disinformation campaigns in its National Security Concept, while Australia mentions policies to tackle disinformation in both its Cyber and Critical Tech Engagement Strategy and its Counter Foreign Interference Strategy (OECD, 2024^[2]).

More effective collaboration between different parts of government has also been encouraged via an increase in cross-government co-ordination units. One recent example is Lithuania's National Crisis

Management Centre, whose roles include collecting information and data related to potential threats and co-ordinating any responses to emergencies (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023^[24]).

Several countries have created specific fora in this area. Australia's Digital Platform Regulators Forum allows member regulators to share information about, and collaborate on, activities relating to the regulation of digital platforms, with a focus on considering how competition, consumer protection, privacy, online safety and data intersect in issues that the various regulators consider (Digital Platform Regulators Forum, 2022^[25]). In a similar manner, the United Kingdom's Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum and the Netherlands' Digital Regulation Cooperation Platform were created to formalising co-operation structures between regulators in order to address the regulatory challenges brought about by digitalisation (Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, n.d.^[26]). (Authority for Consumers & Markets, n.d.^[27])

The uniquely multi-faceted challenge that digital platforms present has also required regulators to experiment with innovative approaches. For example, France's Centre of Expertise for Digital Platform Regulation (PEReN) has been enabled, through a regulatory exemption, to test regulatory tools directly on digital platforms. These platforms are legally mandated to co-operate, allowing PEReN to effectively explore future regulation possibilities, including ways to combat child sexual abuse, control for age online, and mitigate the negative impacts of AI. While such an approach can be effective, it is important that the experiment remains limited in its scope and timespan, as it otherwise risks undermining public trust in regulatory processes (Amaral and Hernandez, forthcoming^[28]).

Countries have also developed innovative approaches through regulatory experimentation, with pilot programmes, waivers, hackathons, and exemptions via sandboxes. The latter, while broadly defined, generally refers to situations that allow companies to test new, innovative products while in a controlled regulatory environment. While regulatory sandboxes have become increasingly popular in sectors such as renewable energy and fintech, their use within the digital media sector has been relatively limited. However, this may be set to change, with the European Commission's proposal for an Interoperable Europe Act creating a legal basis for launching sandboxes to test innovative solutions for digital public services in cross-border contexts, allowing European administration to collaborate more effectively both with digital platforms and with each other (OECD, 2024^[29]).

Promoting and maintaining a diverse and independent media sector, and establishing independent mechanisms by which to support not-for-profit foundations, local and public service media

Beyond regulation, a plural and independent media landscape matters. In this light, the Action plan also identifies the need to promote and maintain a diverse and independent media sector, encouraging diversity, editorial independence, and high quality news provision. In many countries, independence of the media was often taken for granted as part of democratic landscape.

However, this is a more contrasted area, which has been under threat for some time – indeed, the World Press Freedom Index reveals that while 49% of OECD countries were ranked as having a good environment in 2015, this fell to 21% in 2023. Globally, the share fell from 21% to 4% in the same time period, emphasising the relative strength of OECD members (RSF, 2023^[30]). While there a variety of factors contributing to this, including threats to the safety of journalists, the digitalisation of access to media, with the difficulties of traditional media to maintain sufficient market share, with subsequent difficulties in generating revenue, plays a key role (OECD, 2024^[21]).

Countries seem to have recently gauged the new importance of this area. In order to help promote media plurality, the 2024 European Media Freedom Act, which was passed by the European Parliament, promotes the stable funding of public service media, and requires member states to assess the impact of media market concentrations on media pluralism and editorial independence (OECD, 2024^[21]). Several countries have already taken such measures – for example, Italy's "Single Fund for Pluralism and Digital

Innovation in the Information and Media Publishing Sector” favours funding media sources that recruit journalists in the fields of digital publishing, communication and cybersecurity, with a focus on disinformation (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2023^[31]). Estonia supports Russian language content creation, designed to provide reliable information to non-Estonian speakers in the country in order to compete with Russian state-funded propaganda (ERR, 2023^[32]).

Many countries also support media in other countries that fulfil certain criteria. In France, for example, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs supports Canal France International, which in turn supports media organisations committed to providing free, democratic and unbiased information in countries receiving development aid often in a francophone context. In a similar manner, Spain’s development agency AECID launched its “*Programa Democracia*” in 2023, (OECD, 2024^[2]), one pillar of which pledges support of journalists, activists and academics who defend a diverse and plural media space within Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Further, Germany’s development agency GIZ is currently supporting a 2022-2025 project aiming to help media outlets in the Western Balkans improve their reporting and revenue-generating capacities, in order to help promote media freedom and pluralism in the region.

1.5. Working collectively through the OECD and priorities going forward

1.5.1. Working collectively through the OECD

- Information Integrity Hub serves as a platform for active engagement to exchange best practices with OECD Expert Group on Governance Responses to Mis- and Disinformation. The Hub Steering Group includes Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Finland, France, Greece, Korea, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States (OECD, 2024^[33]).
- [A conference Tackling disinformation: Strengthening democracy through information integrity](#) was held in November 2023, with over 400 participants, 41 speakers from 23 countries, as well as experts from non members such as Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, and Ukraine.
- Flagship report Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity launched on 4 March 2024: (OECD, 2024^[2]).
- Building on this work, the OECD is currently developing a [draft Recommendation on Information Integrity](#), to be discussed at the Global Forum in 2024.

1.5.2. Conclusions and priorities for the future

Promoting information integrity and tackling mis- and dis-information is a priority for countries around the world. Governments have started to take action by:

- **Fostering societal resilience to mis- and disinformation** through proactive, responsive and effective public communication informed by behavioural insights. Countries are also seeking to equip citizens with the tools to recognise and combat mis- and dis-information by focussing on critical thinking skills, digital skills and media literacy. Governments increasingly recognise that a “whole of society” approach is needed and understand the important role that civil society organisations, journalists, businesses and other stakeholders can play in raising public awareness and promoting information integrity.
- **Enhancing transparency and accountability** by recognising the limitations of self- and co-regulatory regimes and taking steps to introduce regulatory requirements for key players such as social media platforms and search engines. In this context, the emergence and rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has prompted calls for, and in some cases the adoption of, transparency requirements for the datasets used in AI training, evaluations of AI models, and clear labelling of artificial audio or video content.

- **Improving governance measures to uphold the integrity of information ecosystems.** To keep pace with rapidly changing media landscapes, countries are adopting innovative approaches and regulatory experimentation including pilot programmes, waivers, hackathons, and exemptions via regulatory sandboxes. Governments have also strengthened their own capacity to respond effectively by introducing national strategic frameworks, administrative co-ordination units and task forces.

However, action has been slow given the rapid rise of mis- and disinformation and their damaging effects over the past decade. Governments need to work together against a rapidly moving technological frontier, engaging with all of society to deliver comprehensive and constructive solutions. The [new OECD Council Recommendation on Information Integrity](#) should offer opportunities to catalyse countries' efforts in this area through peer learning, sharing of best practices, regular reporting and information dissemination, leveraging the Information Integrity Hub (OECD, 2024^[33]).

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2 Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life

Governments are advancing in implementing participatory processes at all levels to ensure civil society engagement, improving access to information, and enhancing representation in elected bodies and the public service. However, challenges remain in making participation fully compatible with and fully meaningful in representative democracy. The institutionalisation of impactful and transparent participatory mechanisms has been slow. Strengthening citizens' civic skills and civil servants' capacity to implement and evaluate participatory processes is thus essential to get to the next level. Countries are working to remove barriers to women's participation in electoral and policymaking mechanisms, adopting gender mainstreaming and budgeting. While some progress has been made regarding women and young people, gender gaps persist and barriers to representation remain for other under-represented groups. In addition, challenges such as tech-facilitated gender-based violence must be tackled and countries need to work together to develop gender-based policies using more granular data.

2.1. Introduction

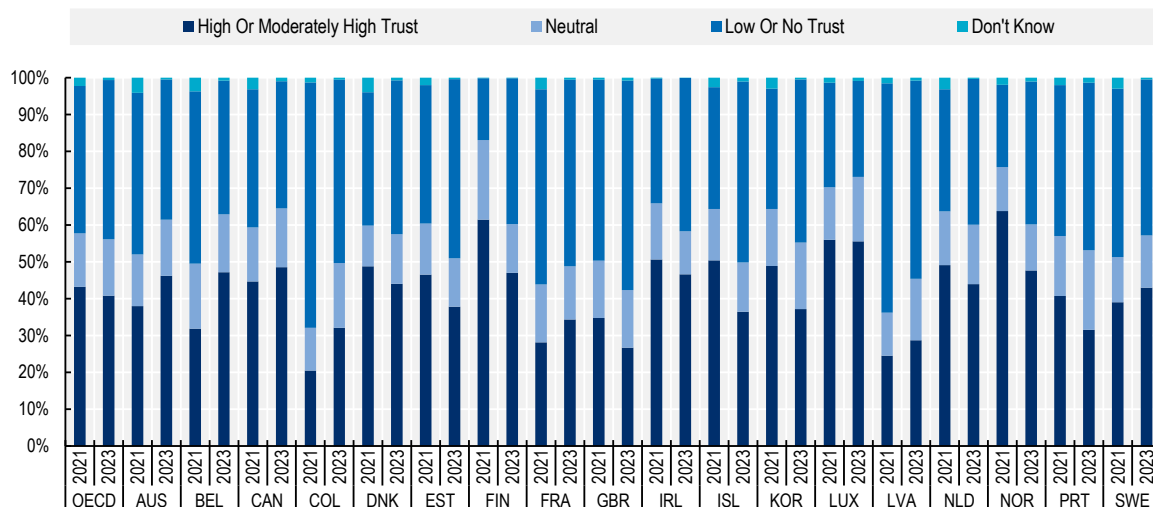
Enhancing representation, participation and openness in public life is at the core of the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative and is key to improving policy effectiveness, equity and trust. Many OECD countries are witnessing trends in low voter turnout, greater political polarisation and larger groups of citizens distancing themselves from traditional democratic processes. To meet citizens' evolving expectations, governments must do better in giving all people a voice, in responding to those voices and following up with concrete and visible actions. Furthermore, global disruptions, such as the Russian aggression against Ukraine, inflation and climate change, have underscored the importance of strengthening the governance of democracies – and citizens' trust in them.

Overall, trust in government has slightly fallen since 2021, by around 2 percentage points, although levels are still higher than after the global financial crisis (Figure 2.1). Whether people have a say in what the government does remains one of the key drivers of trust in government, as trust in public institutions varies more depending on individual' sense of political agency and partisanship than on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Among those who report they have a say in what the government does, 69% report high or moderately high trust in the national government, in contrast to only 22% among those who feel they do not have a say, which is the largest trust gap. The new 2024 trust results also point to the importance as to whether people are confident in one's ability to participate in politics, with a 25-percentage point trust gap between those who are confident in their ability to participate in politics and those who are not (Figure 2.2). This points to the importance of ensuring participation through broader engagement, as well as specifically through elections, as pointed out through the action plan and discussed below.

Finally, while there was only a slight overall decrease of trust in government, this average decrease can largely be attributed to women and people with lower education, whose level of trust in national governments have both decreased by 5-percentage points. Young people also have less trust in government than the average, although while the gender gap has increased since 2021, the age gap has narrowed. On average the gender trust gap has seen a fourfold increase since the 2021 Trust Survey, from 2 percentage points to 8 percentage points and is pretty significant (Figure 2.3), which underscores the importance and relevance of the gender dimension, addressed in this report through the Gender Action Plan.

Figure 2.1. The modest shift in the average with high or moderately high trust across the OECD hides important differences across countries

Share of population who indicate different levels of trust in their national government (on a 0-10 scale), 2021 and 2023

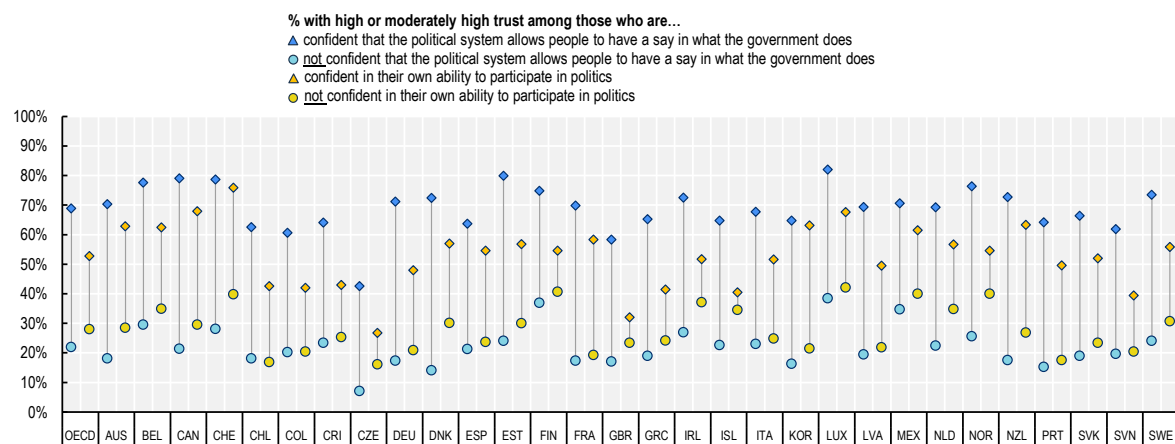


Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions across two survey waves of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?”. A 0-4 response corresponds to ‘low or no trust’, a 5 to ‘neutral’ and a 6-10 to ‘high or moderately high trust’. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023. Mexico and New Zealand participated in 2021, but the survey for this year did not include the question about trust in the national government for these countries

Source: OECD (2024_[1]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

Figure 2.2. People who feel they have a say in what the government does or are confident to participate in politics also express higher trust in the national government

Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government by feeling they have a say in what the government does (blue) and confident to participate in politics (yellow), 2023

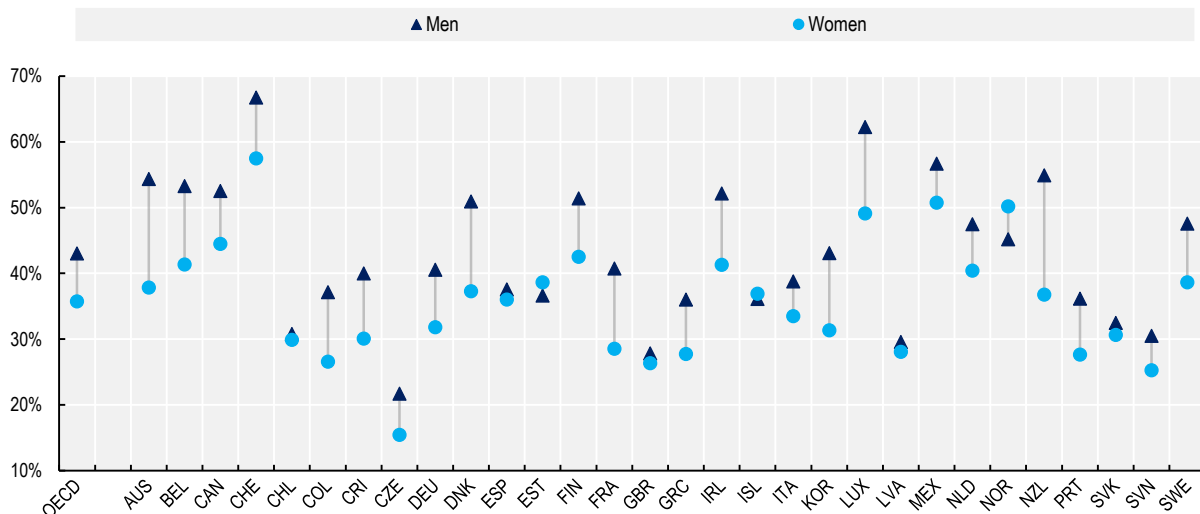


Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?” by respondents’ feeling of having a say (blue) and confidence to participate in politics (yellow). Shown here is the proportion of respondents that have “high or moderately high trust” based on the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the 0-10 response scale, grouped by whether people feel they have a say (blue): “How much would you say the political system in [COUNTRY] allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?” and feel confident to be able to participate in politics (yellow): “How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?”. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries

Source: OECD (2024_[1]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

Figure 2.3. The gender trust gap varies significantly across countries

Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government by gender, 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?” by respondents’ gender. Shown here is the proportion of respondents that have “high or moderately high trust” based on the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the 0-10 response scale, grouped by respondents’ self-identified genders. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries

Source: OECD (2024^[11]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

In light of the very significant trends and gaps highlighted above in terms of trust, this chapter focuses on the key areas included in the [Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life](#) welcomed in the 2022 Luxembourg Public Governance Ministerial meeting, namely in terms of:

- Creating opportunities for inclusive public participation and deliberation
- Strengthening democratic representation
- As well as the follow up to the additional Action Plan on Gender Equality.

Recent examples of country initiatives and progress have been collected through the OECD’s ongoing work on Open Government, on citizen engagement, civic space, and youth lens. The section on strengthening democratic representation draws on recent work on public sector integrity, as well as youth, gender equality, and inclusion. Results of the Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance have also helped to inform the review of progress on the additional Action Plan on Gender Equality.

2.2. Key Area 1 - Creating Opportunities for Inclusive Public Participation and Deliberation

2.2.1. Promote a more structured and institutionalised approach to participation and deliberation

The OECD 2022 RDI report acknowledged both the importance of inclusive and well governed stakeholder participation in rulemaking as well as the need for taking the next step from consultation to engagement, through participatory policymaking. While consultation is usually addressed as part of official procedures for developing government regulations, much of the substance under the bullet of the action plan refers to taking participatory and deliberative processes to the next level. Participation is understood here as a tool that allows citizens and stakeholders to influence the activities and decisions of public authorities at different stages of the policy cycle, and at all levels of government. The analysis is conducted in the

framework of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017) (OECD, 2017^[2]) which frames it under three key aspects: information, consultation and engagement. The recent Monitoring report (OECD, 2023^[3]) prepared to reflect progress in implementing the recommendation also provides a wealth of information that was not available for the OECD 2022 RDI report.

Implement participatory and deliberative processes at all levels of government in policymaking, public decision making, and service design and delivery

Against this backdrop, countries have been actively implementing participatory and deliberative processes at all levels of government in recent years: from more traditional mechanisms such as public meetings, in-person consultations, roundtables and workshops, to more innovative approaches like digital platforms and, more recently, representative deliberative processes. The OECD has actively engaged with countries to collect information. Between September 2021 and September 2023, the OECD collected 160 new cases of representative deliberative processes (such as citizens' assemblies, councils, and juries) where randomly selected citizens are invited by a public authority to learn, deliberate, and come up with informed recommendations to address a concrete public problem. In the past years, the “deliberative wave” has been expanding across the OECD membership and beyond. The OECD Database now includes data from 34 countries. Examples include **Colombia, New Zealand, and in Korea** – where a Children’s Assembly, convening on a yearly basis since 2005, is tasked with identifying issues, contributing to the legislative agenda and writing proposals, some of which have been integrated into laws. The OECD also issued a Call for submissions of Innovative Democratic Processes in early 2024 to complement the data collection with contributions from countries.

National governments have been using methods such as open innovation mechanisms to solve public problems through hackathons or public challenges, with such initiatives progressively diffusing beyond OECD and European countries, such as the *Desafios* platform recently implemented in **Brazil** (OECD, 2022^[4]). They have also used “Trust Dialogues” in Finland and Latvia as illustrated through the recent call on innovative democratic processes (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. Trust Dialogues in Finland and Latvia

The National Dialogues is a new way of carrying out societal dialogue in co-operation between citizens, communities, and authorities. The goal is to provide all people with opportunities to gather together and discuss important issues in a constructive manner. This methodology aims at empowering citizens by offering them low-threshold opportunities to participate in social debate and especially involve those groups whose voice is not normally heard and to develop the ability of different actors in society to handle matters through dialogue. Participation in National Dialogues is open to any interested individual and can be organised by any interested organisation on topics that matter to the community. The Dialogues are summarised in a publicly accessible report to inform policymaking and society on key issues.

In 2020, **Finland** implemented this methodology as a rapid and creative response to the COVID-19 crisis and since then it has developed into a permanent model with Dialogues organised every 6 months.

In August 2023, **Latvia's** State Chancellery in co-operation with non-governmental organisation "Latvian Rural Forum" launched the Trust Dialogues – a series of discussions with citizens on the issue of trust. The discussions focus on social trust (among citizens), trust towards state institutions, municipalities and political officials. The dialogues took place in Autumn 2023 across Latvia. Altogether 26 discussions took place across the country. The main conclusions from discussions with citizens were presented to the decision makers, in particular during a “Conference on Social Trust and Trust in Public Institutions” organised on 27 October 2023 in the Parliament.

Source: OECD (2024) Call for Democratic Innovations.

Deliberative and participatory processes are organised to tackle very diverse public problems from policy challenges such as environment and climate, as presented in Chapters 2 and 3, to examining the impact of digital technologies on society. They also take place at different levels of government. The subnational level of government is at the forefront with a high number of innovative practices. More than 80% of the deliberative cases collected by the OECD have occurred at either the local or the regional level and the most advanced forms of digital participation are implemented by cities such as Barcelona (**Spain**), Reykjavik (**Iceland**), and Amsterdam (**Netherlands**). Nonetheless, citizens' assemblies also take place at the national level, as in **Canada** where more than 120 randomly selected citizens served on one of three national Citizens' Assemblies on Democratic Expression. Such initiatives often aim to involve citizens in addressing the climate crisis, such as in the Klima-Biergerrot (Citizens' Assembly on the Climate) organised in **Luxembourg** in 2022 where 100 citizens were tasked with discussing Luxembourg's current commitments for tackling climate change, and with developing possible additional measures or proposals. Similar initiatives were held in **France**, **Belgium**, **Spain** and the **United Kingdom**. Some deliberative processes have also interacted with multiple levels of government. This was the case for the Citizens' Assembly on Sustainable Consumption, in 2023, in **Denmark**, that gathered citizens across the country to develop recommendations delivered to the regional level, the Capital Region of Denmark, and the Region of Southern Denmark as well as selected municipalities. There are also some recent examples of mobilising some participatory mechanisms in times of crisis, for example in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, or recent conflicts and wars (Box 2.2).

Representative deliberative processes have also been organised by public authorities at the transnational level. The **European Commission** conducted a dozen citizens' panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Among these panels, the most recent were the Citizens' Panel on Food Waste, which took place over 2022 and 2023, and the Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency, concluding in April 2024. In 2021, a first instance of a **Global Citizens' Assembly** was organised by a group of civil society organisations from several regions around the world with the short-term goal of delivering recommendations in view of the COP 26 in Glasgow, and the long-term vision of establishing a permanent Global Citizens' Assembly to be part of the global governance framework.

Box 2.2. Examples Involving citizens in times of crisis

Deliberative processes are often used to tackle long-standing complex policy issues but can also be applied in times of crises and urgent responses, particularly during or in the aftermath of major disasters or catastrophic events.

During the **COVID pandemic**, some regions around the world turned to citizens' councils to manage the health crisis. In **Germany**, one local and three state-level citizens' councils were organised. In South **Korean** cities, online petitions were the main medium to gather citizens' concerns and requests on topics such as the mask mandate, social distancing policies, or even travel routes of individuals who tested positive for COVID-19.

Public authorities have also organised participatory processes as part of a "healing post disaster process", whether due to catastrophic events, war or terrorist attacks. Another recent example is the "**ReStart Ukraine**", a platform of citizens, practitioners and researchers reunited to write a recovery plan for rural and urban communities that have been greatly affected by the ongoing war with Russia.

Sources: (Dienel et al., 2024^[5]; Lee et al., 2022^[6]; OECD, 2023^[7]; Robert Bosch Stiftung, n.d.^[8])

Make efforts to ensure citizens' contributions are transparent, impactful and that participatory processes are evaluated

The quality of a participatory process is of great importance to ensure impact and citizen satisfaction (OECD, 2022^[9]). The results from the 2024 Trust Survey (OECD, 2024^[11]) show that the most impactful variable on trust in the national civil service, is the likelihood that government would adopt the opinions expressed in a public consultation on reforming a policy area. A positive perception of this dimension of openness is associated with a 2.6 percentage point increase in the likelihood of high or moderately high trust in the national civil service. In participatory processes, “closing the feedback loop”¹ is not yet common practice which risks discouraging people from participating another time and potentially diminish the benefits of participation.

A notable exception are representative deliberative processes as public authorities tend to be more responsive and accountable to participants. In most cases, they respond to participants and implement at least half of the input received. Further data demonstrates that when responding to participants, in 54% of cases public authorities favoured a face-to-face setting showing commitment and respect to the engagement of citizens (OECD, 2023^[7]).

While evaluation of participatory processes has become increasingly common, as evidenced in Box 2.3, the question of a deliberative process's impact deserves further research and consideration. Increasingly, experts have pointed to other equally important outcomes of a deliberative process that could be used to measure their impact. For example, the learning aspect of a deliberative process is usually highlighted by both participants and observers as a key outcome. It not only allows for better results, but also informs participants about the policy issue at stake and the role of public authorities in addressing the problem. Other positive spillover effects include reduced mis and disinformation, a potential decrease in polarisation through informed deliberation, and increased empathy among citizens.

Box 2.3. Evaluation of participatory processes in OECD countries: selected examples

- The Permanent Climate Assembly of Brussels (2023) is a deliberative process, which aims to mobilise the experience of Brussels' citizens and enable them to feed into the government policies and strategies developed to achieve the climate objectives set by the Region. In this case, the public authority commissioned an independent evaluation by a qualified third party to assess the process's quality and outcomes.
- The Itinerant Citizens' Assembly of the Bogotá Council (2020 – 2023) is a permanent deliberative and citizen participation space that rotates its members and specific objectives for each iteration. Given this characteristic, organisers chose a process reflection evaluation, in which they delved into the different stages of the process, what were the lessons learned, the results achieved and what could be improved upon.
- The Krakow Transport Panel (2023) is a deliberative process convened to address how to optimise transport in the city and lower transport-related emissions. The evaluation method selected centred on participants, through the application of a participant exit survey and a participants' feedback session, where direct input from the participants is collected to gather their experience and impressions of the process.

Source: OECD (2023^[10]), OECD Deliberative Democracy Database.

Move from ad-hoc processes to institutionalised and permanent participatory and deliberative mechanisms

Embedding a deliberative process within institutional frameworks refers to establishing a form of recurrence to go beyond one-off processes and embed such mechanisms into existing decision-making structures such as local councils or bringing the results to bear in Parliaments. There are different ways to embed representative deliberation into public decision making, as shown by the OECD's eight ways to institutionalise deliberative democracy (OECD, 2021^[11]).

Embedding deliberative processes into existing representative institutions (such as Parliaments or Local Councils) can help reduce friction between representative and deliberative democracy and support a move towards a systemic or continuous approach to democratic decision making that combines different forms of participation to complement electoral processes (OECD, 2021^[11]). Indeed, this is a trend which is gathering momentum, as evidenced in the doubling in the number of cases collected by the OECD (2023^[10]) between 2020 and 2023, which went from 22 to 41 cases - the majority of which have been implemented at the local or regional levels. Other approaches involve giving people the right to demand a deliberative process, as is the case in Austria. France has been home to a variety of embedded deliberative processes dating back several years, as outlined in Box 2.4. Most recently, France's President Emmanuel Macron announced in September 2023 a 'Citizen's Convention on the end of life'² managed by the Social Economic and Environmental Council. This involved 150 randomly selected citizens convening between December 2022 and April 2023, leading to the French government presenting a draft law on assisted dying in April 2024. In Italy, such deliberative processes are evident within the Open Government Forum, which brings together open government stakeholders from 15 public institutions (both at central and regional level) and 29 civil society organisations. Its mission is to foster peer-to-peer discussion and co-creation processes between organised civil society and institutional actors (Department of Public Service, 2024^[12]).

Box 2.4. History of deliberative processes within existing institutions: France

- The National Public Debate Commission has served as an independent commission, organising nation-wide public consultations and promoting citizen participation, since 1995.
- Between 2019 and 2020, 150 French citizens were selected at random to take part in the Citizens Convention for Climate, which discussed ways to reduce France's carbon emission by 40% from its 1990 levels.
- In January 2021, The Social Economic and Environmental Council (CESE) received a legal mandate to include citizen participation and deliberation in its decision making (methods that are not integrated into its foundational texts). This can include online consultations, and the integration of citizens into the Council's work.
- In October 2021, the Council of Paris created the Paris Citizen's Assembly, which can submit requests and proposals for deliberation to the Council. It is currently deliberating on how to support individuals experiencing homelessness.

Source: (Ville de Paris, 2023^[13]; CESE, 2023^[14]; Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, 2019^[15]).

Participatory mechanisms embedding public deliberation in Parliament have also been experimented in Ireland, Belgium and some of its regional governments, as well as in Germany (see Box 2.5).

Box 2.5. Embedding public deliberation in Parliament

The Irish Citizen Assembly

In 2016, Ireland established a permanent citizens' assembly of 100 members, following a parliamentary resolution. Since then, the Assembly has met on a yearly basis, with the task of providing recommendations to the Irish Parliament on topics including climate change, gender equality, drug regulation, and constitutional amendments. The recommendations are systematically reviewed by a committee representative of the two Irish Houses (the Assembly of Ireland and the Irish legislature) and in some cases the recommendations have been submitted to the electorate through a referendum. This model has proven to be an effective tool to find consensus on contentious issues such as abortion and same sex marriage but has recently found certain challenges that can be of inspiration for other OECD countries. In March 2024, Irish voters rejected a referendum for constitutional changes relating to family roles and the duties of women, with 67% voting against the family referendum, which proposed widening the definition of a family, and 74% against the care referendum, which proposed replacing a legal reference to “mother’s duties in the home” with a clause recognising care provided by other family members. Even if time will be needed to fully analyse this outcome, one immediate lesson can be drawn. The two questions ultimately put to referendum did not mirror the recommendations that had been produced by the Citizens’ Assembly. This in turn created confusion among voters and failed to rally supporters (Sortition Foundation, 2024^[16]). Commitment to the results of the Assembly is important to build trust not only on the process, but in the democratic system itself.

Belgium’s mixed deliberative committees

In February 2024, the Belgian Senate adopted legislation to enable the participation of citizens through random selection in the legislative work. In particular, the legislation enacted the possibility to create “mixed deliberative committees” where 15 parliamentarians and 45 randomly selected citizens jointly deliberate and suggest recommendations for the House’s Plenary. Similar deliberative processes have been tested in the parliament of the region of Brussels and the French-speaking parliament in Brussels (officially called the French-speaking Community Commission – Cocof), the body responsible for regulating the French-speaking Community in the Brussels-Capital Region.

German Parliament’s Citizen Assembly on Nutrition

In May 2023, the German Parliament established a Citizens’ Assembly for the first time. In the course of eight sessions, 160 members worked to develop recommendations on the topic of nutrition. In January 2024, nine recommendations were presented in a final meeting with the members, the Scientific Advisory Board and the Parliament President. The recommendations were summarised into a Citizens’ Report, which was presented in Parliament to representatives of all parliamentary groups in February 2024. They included: free lunches for children in kindergarten, mandatory redistribution of leftover edible foods by food retailers and making the animal welfare conditions transparent. The recommendations are now being discussed in plenary sessions to be integrated in legislation.

Source: OECD (2020^[17]), *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en>; Sortition Foundation (2024^[16]), “Ireland referendum embarrassment for politicians shows what happens if you don’t listen to citizens”, <https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/embarrassment-for-irish-politicians>; German Bundestag (2024^[18]), “Final Recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly on Nutrition”, <https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/recommendations-nutrition-995916>.

Design citizen participation and deliberation processes in a way that lowers barriers to participation and encourages people to take part

As suggested by the [OECD Good Practice Principles for innovative citizen participation](#), participation and deliberation can make decision making more inclusive by opening the door to more representative groups of people. Through participatory processes, public authorities can include the voice of the "silent majority" and strengthen the representation of minorities and often excluded groups like informal workers, migrants, women, indigenous populations (where applicable) and LGBTI communities³ (OECD, 2022^[9]). However, for participatory practices to foster inclusion, public authorities have to take the necessary actions to reach out and involve those traditionally marginalised groups⁴ as well as take into consideration any special needs and verify that individuals with disabilities are able to exercise their right to participate in comfort (OECD, 2022^[9]).

Data collected by the OECD (2023^[3]) suggest that countries are gradually increasing their efforts to increase inclusion but there is room for further actions in particular to support the representation of minorities and usually excluded voices. For example, 67.6% of surveyed countries have a strategy. For example, only two OECD OGP countries are involving the LGBTI community⁵ in their multi-stakeholder forum (OECD, 2023^[3]).

Representative deliberative processes can solve the inclusion problems usually faced by other forms of participation such as open consultations. For example, in deliberative processes participation is often encouraged and supported through remuneration, coverage of expenses, and by providing or paying for childcare. In 74% of the cases collected, participants received a form of compensation to support their participation, but OECD countries do not usually provide any specific support for people to attend in-person meetings.

Breaking down barriers to participation also requires a specific focus on engaging with young people, as highlighted in the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People, and children. In fact, countries are increasing their efforts to promote inclusion in participation opportunities: for instance, 67.6% of respondents to the OECD Open Government Survey have a strategy or policy to specifically foster the inclusion of young people in participatory processes (OECD, 2023^[3]). Some administrations, such as Ireland and the European Union, have made efforts to strengthen children and young people's participation in a coherent way, such as by developing targeted whole-of-government frameworks and by creating new platforms for participatory opportunities (Box 2.6).

Box 2.6. Providing frameworks and platforms for child and youth participation

Ireland: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making

In 2023, Ireland's Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and Ireland's national centre of excellence on child and youth participation, Hub Na nÓg, published the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making. The Framework supports government departments and agencies to enhance child and youth participation in decision making by providing accessible training and guidance. The Framework provides guidance for the development of advisory groups, refers to existing sources to involve seldom-heard children in decision making, and discusses the importance of closing the loop and setting realistic expectations on impact. The Framework further outlines principles to guide child and youth consultation processes, provides practical advice to capture their views without undue adult influence, outlines levels of participation, and includes checklists to guide decision makers in planning, conducting and evaluating child and youth participation processes. Finally, the Framework includes a feedback form for children and young people to evaluate the engagement process to which they took part.

European Union: EU Children’s Participation Platform

In 2022, the European Union launched the EU Children’s Participation Platform as a hub of child participation mechanisms with the aim of promoting a more systematic, safe, meaningful and inclusive approach to enable children to participate in decision making in line with the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The Platform includes 58 organisations from 22 EU member states and its work and activities are co-created by children, notably through the Children’s Panel and children’s representatives in the Advisory Board steering the work of the Platform. The first consultation conducted by the Platform focused on what children need to feel safe, involving 1 095 children from 21 countries through an online survey, interviews and focus group discussions. The results contributed to the European Commission’s policy work on integrated child protection systems. The 2023-2024 Work Plan envisages activities to gather the perspectives of child stakeholders on democracy, voting and fake news, among others.

Source: (Government of Ireland, 2023^[19]; European Union, 2022^[20]); OECD Call for Innovative Democratic Practices.

Public institutions can also partner with civil society organisations, notably youth-led ones, to promote opportunities for inclusive youth participation. These organisations can help inform the design of participation opportunities based on the needs and interests of young people, and promote awareness and interest among them, helping to bridge access barriers that notably young people from marginalised background are facing. They can also help implement the initiatives. For instance, with the support of the European Parliament, the civil society organisations Make.org and JEF Europe ran a large-scale youth consultation in 2023 (Box 2.7).

Box 2.7. Partnering with civil society organisations to create opportunities for youth participation

The EurHope initiative was launched in 2023 with the support of the European Parliament and in collaboration with 50 organisations, including civil society organisations, cities, regions and transnational institutions. The initiative established a multi-lingual voting support tool through which young people could submit, vote for and comment proposals in different languages. In five months, the initiative gathered the voices of 1.5 million young people in the 27 EU countries as well as 5 000 proposals in response to the question “What are your ideas for building together a Europe that can respond to future challenges?”. The votes and proposals were analysed by a team of sociologists, consolidating inputs into 15 consensual ideas across 7 dimensions under the “Agenda of Hope.” The campaign was accompanied by online communication campaigns, reaching almost 4 million young people. Additional events and actions are planned to disseminate and discuss the consultation outcomes ahead of the 2024 elections of the European Parliament in order to inform the general public and gather reactions from European political parties.

Source: (Make.org, n.d.^[21]); OECD OPSI Call for Innovative Democratic Practices.

Foster a culture of, and building capacities for, participation and deliberation in the civil service and in society at large

To increase the quality of participation, countries should invest in boosting internal capacities and skills to ensure civil servants are trained to involve citizens and stakeholders. Almost 80% of surveyed countries⁶ already have toolkits and guidelines for civil servants regarding citizen and stakeholder participation, and

almost 64% of them also offer trainings on the subject (OECD, 2023^[3]). To support this, the OECD recently published the OECD Guidelines on Citizen Participation Processes (OECD, 2022^[9]).

Building skills and capacity is particularly important to support youth participatory initiatives and move towards more structured and institutionalised approaches to young people's participation. Countries such as New Zealand, Germany and Finland have been taking important steps recently to develop and apply practical guidelines and providing online training courses for policymakers at national and subnational level (Box 2.8). Similarly, Italy's Opengov initiative includes the implementation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), with 12 editions of 4 MOOCs organised between June 2022 and July 2023, providing the 5 376 participants with theoretical and practical tools on digital participation practices, open data, accountability and quality in digital services (Department of Public Service, 2023^[22]).

Box 2.8. Supporting the capacities of public servants to engage young people

New Zealand: Best practice guidelines for engagement with children and young people

In 2022, the Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group (CWPRG) under the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) developed and published a series of practical guidance resources to support policymakers to consult and engage with children and young people across government bodies. These guidelines were developed in consultation with other departments, children and young people and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. They place specific emphasis on participation of Māori and seldom heard population groups. They include detailed guidance for different steps of participation processes as well as links to resources for policymakers.

Germany: Updated quality standards for child and youth participation

In 2023, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in Germany published an update of its "Quality standards for child and youth participation" from 2015. The update was prepared jointly with the German National Youth Councils, experts and practitioners, and encourages organisations and political decision makers to enable child and youth participation in all relevant areas.

It sets out general quality standards as well as more specific guidelines in the field of family education, counselling, and work; child day care; (full-time) school; children and youth work; open child and youth work; children's and youth organisations; children and youth work in sport; cultural education for children and young people; extracurricular political youth education; international youth work; youth social work and in facilities and services for educational support. Another important development is the provision of participation guidelines at the state, federal and European level, and a new chapter on quality standards in the context of digital participation formats.

Finland: Online training courses

In 2023, Finland's Ministry of Justice developed a ten-modules online training course open to any policymakers wishing to enhance their skills to enable the participation and consultation of children and young people in their work. It was accompanied by a training package on children's rights for policymakers as part of Finland's National Child Strategy, which includes a module on children's right to participate and be involved in policymaking and decisions that impact their lives. The training package is available to all government bodies in Finland at national and subnational level and has received strong uptake among municipalities.

Source: (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.^[23]; Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2023^[24]; Finland Ministry of Justice, 2023^[25]).

In addition, countries are starting to close the gap between citizen participation and the broader open government or democracy agendas. An analysis of commitments included in OECD countries that are part of the OGP reveals that the number of commitments on citizen and stakeholder participation has progressively increased. For instance, France's 2023 Action Plan includes a pillar on deliberation and citizen empowerment. Some OECD countries have recently mandated the same public institutions with both the participation and democracy agendas to increase co-ordination and synergies and treat them as the same agenda. This is the case, for example, in the Netherlands and France.

The challenge for countries is to help nurture a participatory and democratic culture beyond the administration. A citizenry that is democratically fit has the mandate, but also the skills and competences needed to play an active part in a democratic system (OECD, 2022^[9]). This is an area in which a whole of government approach is needed to align the efforts of ministries and agencies responsible for education, youth and lifelong learning to help citizens of all ages build and exercise skills for democracy.

Communicating with and listening to citizens through online and offline channels, while using the same channels to foster dialogue

OECD countries are making use of digital tools to communicate about their open government agenda. For example, social media is the most used channel to communicate among OECD countries that are part of the OGP. Governments are also increasingly developing dedicated mobile applications to establish direct communication channels with the public. In 2023, France launched AGORA - a mobile application developed and deployed by the government meant to encourage regular and direct dialogue with the public institutions through online public consultations or citizens' requests. While it is too early to provide an assessment of the real results, over 10 000 questions were asked and answers have been provided by the Members of the Government. Beyond OECD countries, the Egyptian app Hewar supports government decision by running public opinion polls and enabling a direct communication channel.

Countries are also increasingly creating digital spaces for citizen and stakeholder participation. All OECD countries are using digital portals to participatory processes, a good practice highlighted by the OECD as centralised participation platforms have the advantage of providing a "one-stop shop" portal for citizens and stakeholders to learn about past, current and future opportunities for participation (OECD, 2022^[9]). For example, in Bogotá, Colombia, a chatbot is used to encourage citizen participation (see Box 2.9).

Box 2.9. Digital and online participation in Colombia

The City of Bogotá has designed *Chatico*, a conversational chatbot that informs citizens in a clear, simple, and user-friendly way to encourage active citizen participation in local governance issues, in particular the design of Bogotá's development plan for the next four years. The chatbot is anchored in Colombia's most used instant messaging application (WhatsApp) to promote broader usage, and gives citizens three ways to engage: 1) "short route", which offers the option to participate by selecting one of the five priority objectives; 2) "intermediate route", where citizens can choose both an objective and a solution; and 3) "long route", which allows citizens to leave specific comments addressed to the mayor. In average, it takes citizens 5 minutes to participate, and so far, *Chatico* has attracted more than 10 000 interactions and gathered 22 000 proposals.

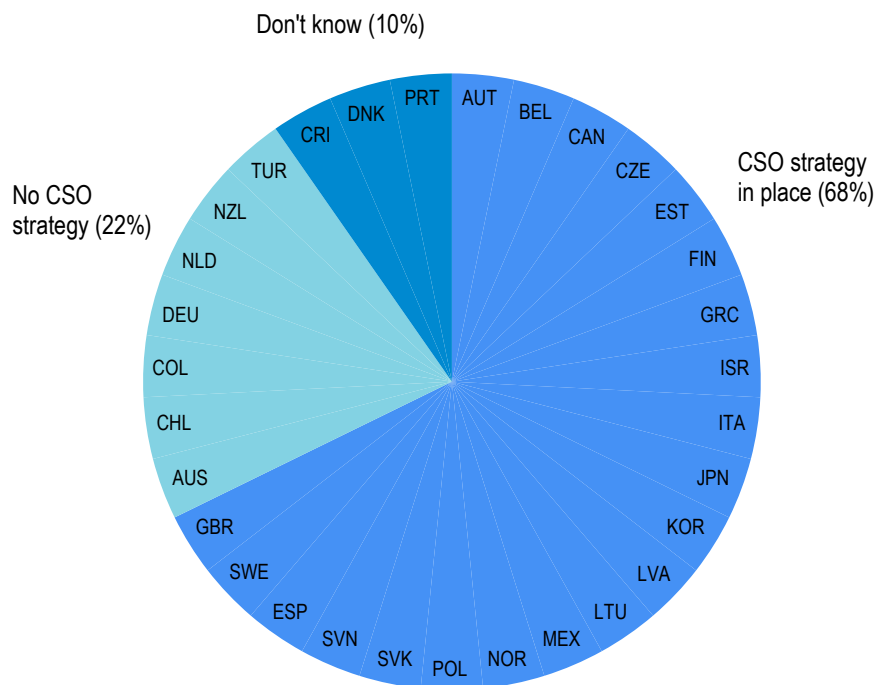
Protect and promote civic space as a precondition for public participation and deliberation

The OECD 2022 RDI report identified a healthy civic space as precondition for effective and inclusive public participation in policymaking, including deliberation. It is about creating the necessary environment within which people can exercise their democratic rights. There are several elements of healthy civic space in OECD countries, such as constitutions guaranteeing human rights, independent oversight mechanisms over government decisions, autonomous and independent news organisations, protection programmes for human rights defenders, portals responding to freedom of information requests, strategies supporting civil society organisations, and online fora to provide feedback on public services. In recent years, progress has been achieved in five areas:

Clear policy frameworks enabling civil society engagement in policymaking

According to the OECD Open Government Survey results (OECD, 2022^[26]), as of 2020 the majority of OECD countries (68% of the 32 OECD respondents) had developed overarching policy frameworks to improve or promote the enabling environment for civil society (Figure 2.4). Through these strategies, governments are striving to develop robust and independent civil society organisations (CSO), build strong CSO-state relationships, and enhance inclusion and social cohesion, among other objectives. These strategies typically include a definition of civil society, an assessment of the current state of play for the CSO sector and a high-level vision for state engagement with CSOs. Other crucial components for well-rounded CSO strategies are the setting of coherent, feasible and ambitious objectives to support the sector, including concrete steps on their implementation, and the establishment of oversight, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms.

Figure 2.4. CSO Strategies in OECD Countries



Note: n=31. This figure indicates responses to the question “Does the government have a policy or strategy to improve or promote the enabling environment for CSOs?”. Data on Türkiye are based on OECD desk research and were shared with them for validation.

Source: OECD (2022^[26]), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

Countries have been active in these areas in recent years. France launched a new civil society and citizen engagement strategy in 2023 and Finland adopted a resolution in 2024, outlining the development of civic space in the Government Programme period 2023–2027. Romania launched a process to develop an open government strategy with a dedicated component on engaging civil society in public decision making in 2024. Other countries provided support to the CSO sector by introducing simplified reporting or accounting requirements for small associations. Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg are in the process of, or have already, introduced simplified procedures for small associations. Ireland has recognised the advancement of human rights as being a recognised “charitable purpose” in a new Charities Bill and Luxembourg introduced a funding stream for CSOs working to protect human rights and environmental defenders.

Implementation of civic freedoms and rights and independent oversight to counter and reduce violations of civic space rights

Freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly and the right to privacy are fundamental civic freedoms that enable effective civic participation. These basic rights are an essential precondition for the good governance and development of any democratic society. They are also necessary to ensure the empowerment and well-being of non-governmental actors. Freedom of expression for CSOs, journalists and activists is increasingly endangered by Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs) that aim to silence people who publicly criticise or investigate powerful individuals, companies or interest groups. The OECD 2022 report on civic space identified an opportunity for all countries to assess whether there are frequent cases of SLAPPs in their jurisdictions and to introduce legislation to counter them (OECD, 2022^[26]).

Since 2022, there is a growing recognition of the negative impact of SLAPPs and Belgium, Croatia, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia are all in the process of, or have already, introduced related draft laws, focal points, and working groups. At the European level, there is also growing awareness of the threat. In 2022 the European Union Commission introduced a Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders from SLAPPs, urging Member States to establish national focal points. In addition, in 2023, the Commission proposed a legally binding Directive to provide procedural safeguards against cross-border SLAPPs in civil cases, which was adopted by the European Council in 2024.

Redress mechanisms to ensure protection of civic freedoms

Civic freedoms are protected by accessible redress mechanisms such as national human rights institutions (NHRI), ombudsman offices and national courts. As of 2020, the majority of OECD Members (84%) had publicly funded independent public institutions that address human rights complaints, such as an NHRI, including ombudsperson offices (OECD, 2022^[26]). This is an area for further progress and consolidation across a number of OECD countries.

There are ongoing judicial reforms at national level to strengthen judicial independence and to facilitate access to justice in Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, Poland, Romania and Spain. Some OECD Members such as Czechia and Croatia are strengthening the enabling environment for their NHRIs. Various national courts have also delivered judgements underscoring a commitment to safeguarding freedom of peaceful assembly – for example, in Finland a judgment condemned the disproportionate use of pepper spray by police officers against protesters (yle, 2023^[27]).

Promote healthy online and offline information ecosystems by safeguarding and promoting the right to access data and information, supporting media and protecting journalists

In recent years, this area has seen significant progress. A number of OECD Members introduced measures to foster resourced and vibrant information ecosystems, focusing on access to information and protection for at-risk groups. Canada introduced guidelines to support public officials to proactively share information,

in a new Directive on Proactive Publication under the Access to Information Act. Czechia amended its media law in 2023, with the aim of promoting diversity within the Czech Television Council and Radio Council. Members can now be elected from both chambers of parliament and be nominated by a broader range of entities. Sweden introduced a legal provision to protect journalists and their families, whereby offences committed against them due to their work carry increased penalties. Denmark adopted a national action plan agreed between government, the media industry, and other stakeholders to improve journalists' safety. Austria and France introduced measures to protect journalists during peaceful assemblies. In Austria police deploy media contact officers during demonstrations to assist those who feel threatened, attacked or who want to report a suspicious incident. Bulgaria introduced a law to protect whistleblowers, creating internal and external reporting mechanisms for breaches of relevant Bulgarian or EU laws. Peru adopted a decree aimed at the prevention, protection, and recognition of women human rights defenders, following the establishment of an intersectoral mechanism in 2021 to protect human rights defenders more broadly.

Discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation that disproportionately affect certain groups

Discrimination can affect citizens' trust, in addition to their ability and willingness to engage with state institutions if they feel undervalued, excluded, unprotected or threatened. As such, all forms of discrimination can affect individuals' ability or willingness to freely express themselves or to assemble and influence public decision making. As of 2020, strong legal frameworks were found in 91% of respondent OECD Members (OECD, 2022^[26]). Such framework help to counter discrimination and to enable effective and equal participation and they can be supported by affirmative action to support disadvantaged groups.

Countries are making progress in this area. Overall, there is a trend towards making anti-discrimination legislation more comprehensive and in recognising different groups that are affected. In recent years, many EU member states have rendered their laws more comprehensive, in the field of ethnic or racial discrimination. Finland introduced a law on legal recognition of gender with self-identification as the sole requirement for it to be recognised. Luxembourg increased funding for NGOs working on integration and discrimination.

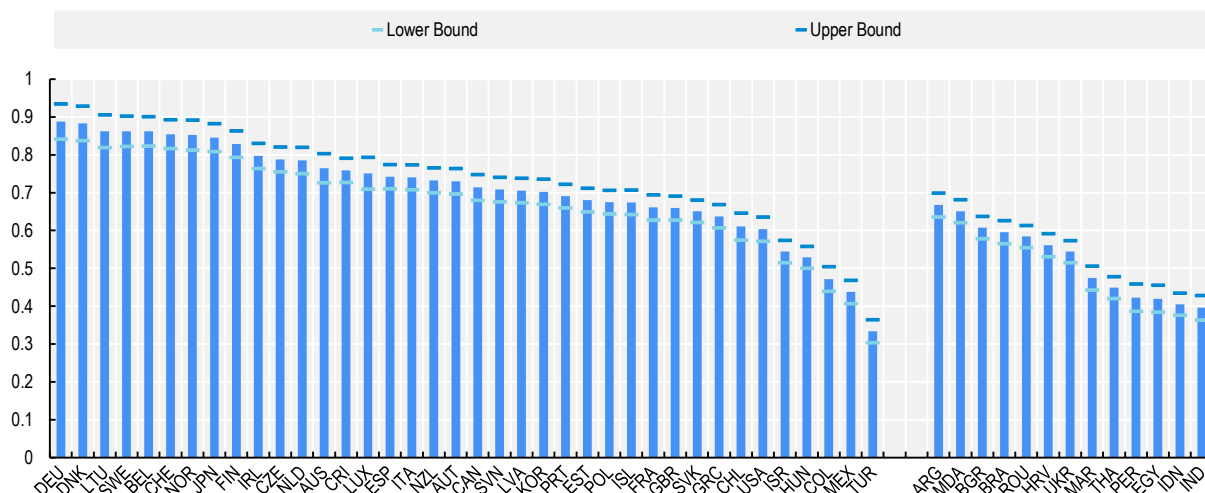
In keeping with an overwhelming trend in OECD Members to prohibit hate speech (97% of respondent OECD Members) as a widely recognised form of discrimination, Slovenia established a Strategic Council on the Prevention of Hate Speech, including representatives of relevant ministries, civil society and legal experts, and is mandated to monitor hate speech domestically and at EU level and to propose preventive actions. Germany extended protection to migrant victims of gender-based violence, following a decision not to renew reservations to articles 44 (on jurisdiction) and 59 (on residence status) of the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

2.3. Key Area 2 - Strengthening Democratic Representation

2.3.1. Making elected bodies and executives more representative of the population

The OECD 2022 RDI report fully acknowledged the need for strengthening democratic representation, as many countries face significant challenges in this area. Certain demographics and societal groups, including women, young people, minorities, individuals with lower educational attainment, and those with lower incomes, remain notably underrepresented in elected bodies and executives (OECD, 2022^[28]). Data from International IDEA on social equality, which measures aspects such as how civil liberties and political power vary across social groups, shows that while OECD countries generally do demonstrate high levels of equality, many are not as strong as they could be (Figure 2.5). Other gender equality data, including the power distribution by gender in civil society organisations as well as political representation and years of schooling, paints a similar picture (Figure 2.6).

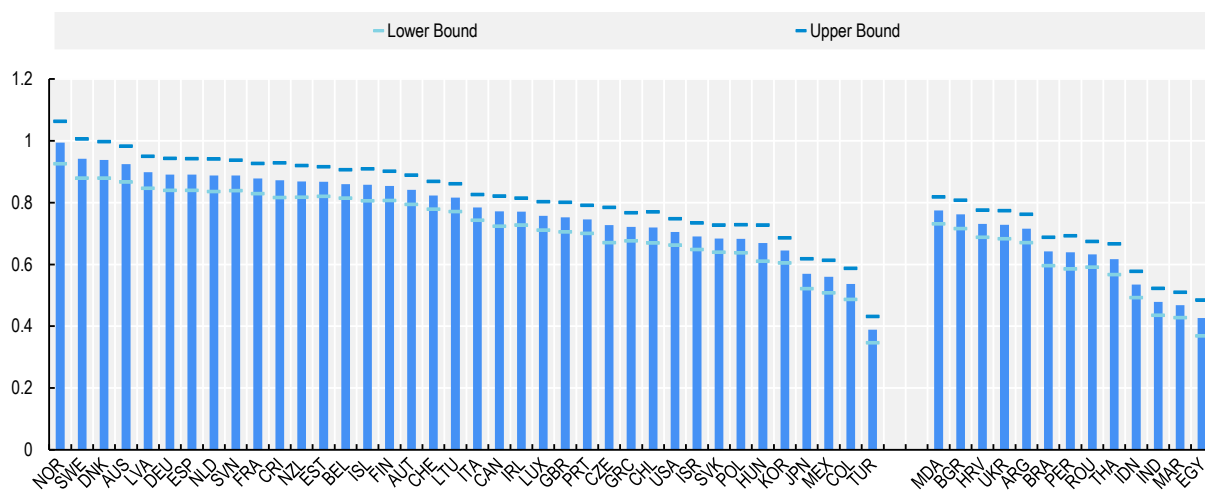
Figure 2.5. Social Group Equality Indicator, OECD Member and Partner Countries, 2023



Note: Five V-Dem expert-coded indicators that reflect social equality are used to measure social group equality with regard to civil liberties and political power distribution. These are supplemented by indicators of equality treatment and political equality from BTI and Freedom House. Upper and lower bounds are for the 68% confidence interval. See Annex A for full set of indicators.

Source: International IDEA (2023^[29]), “Global State of Democracy Indices”, <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsd-indices/>.

Figure 2.6. Gender Equality Indicator, OECD Member and Partner Countries, 2023



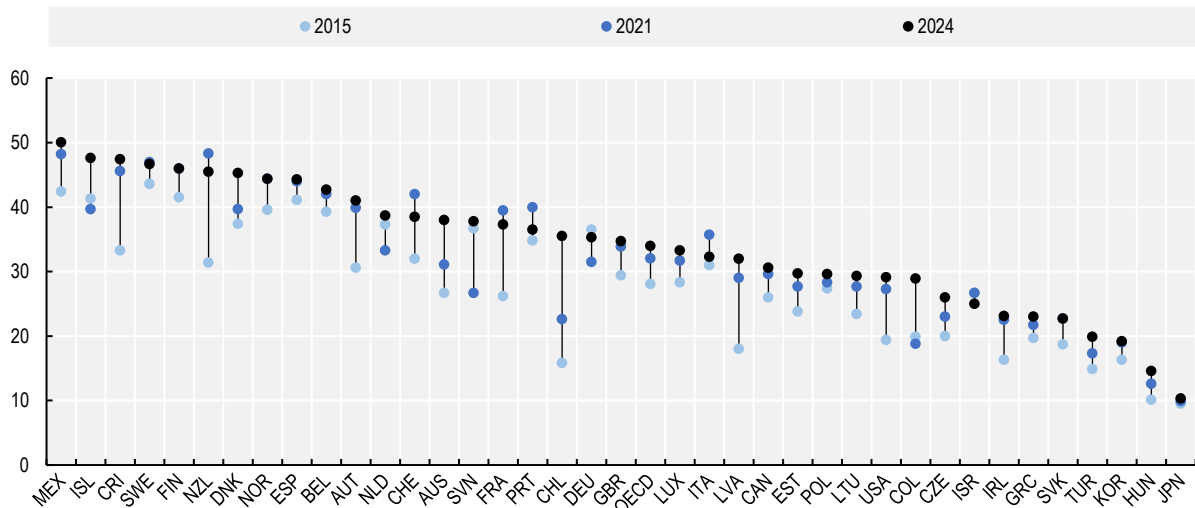
Note: The gender equality subcomponent is measured through two expert-coded indicators from V-Dem, on power distribution by gender and female participation in civil society organisations, and two observational indicators, on the ratio of female to male mean years of schooling (IHME), and the proportion of lower chamber legislators who are female (V-Dem), the gender disaggregated labour force participation rate (women-men, ILO), the share of managerial positions held by women (ILO), and gender disaggregated control of financial accounts (women-men, World Bank). To this was added an index of exclusion by gender (V-Dem), and in-house coded measures of women’s empowerment (Global Gender Gap Report), and women’s political and economic rights (both from CIRIGHTS). Upper and lower bounds are for the 68% confidence interval. See Annex A for full set of indicators.

Source: International IDEA (2023^[29]), “Global State of Democracy Indices”, <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsd-indices/>.

Addressing the gender dimension of elected representation

Since 2021, which serves as the most recent reference point for the 2022 RDI report, there has been a slight increase in women’s representation in parliaments across OECD countries, albeit with some variations. On average, the representation of women in the lower or single house of parliament in OECD countries has risen from 28.1% in 2015 to 32.0% in 2021, and further to 34.0% in 2024 (Figure 2.7). However, the level of women’s representation in parliament varies significantly among countries, ranging from over 45% in Denmark, Costa Rica, Finland, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, and Sweden, to less than 15% in Hungary and Japan (IPU Parline, 2024^[30]). Furthermore, in some countries such as Italy, New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland the proportion of women in parliament has decreased slightly between 2021 and 2024 – indicating the need for continued monitoring and concerted efforts. Additionally, evidence suggests that women in politics still represent a rather homogeneous group, with individuals from under-represented communities – such as young women, LGBTI women, or women with disabilities – remaining less visible and encountering greater barriers to accessing leadership roles (Council of Europe, 2021^[31]). For example, in the United Kingdom, a report prepared by the Women and Equalities Committee in 2022 highlighted that only 5.7% of all 650 MPs in the House of Commons are women from minority ethnic backgrounds (UK Parliament, 2022^[32]).

Figure 2.7. Gender equality in Parliament, 2015, 2021 and 2024

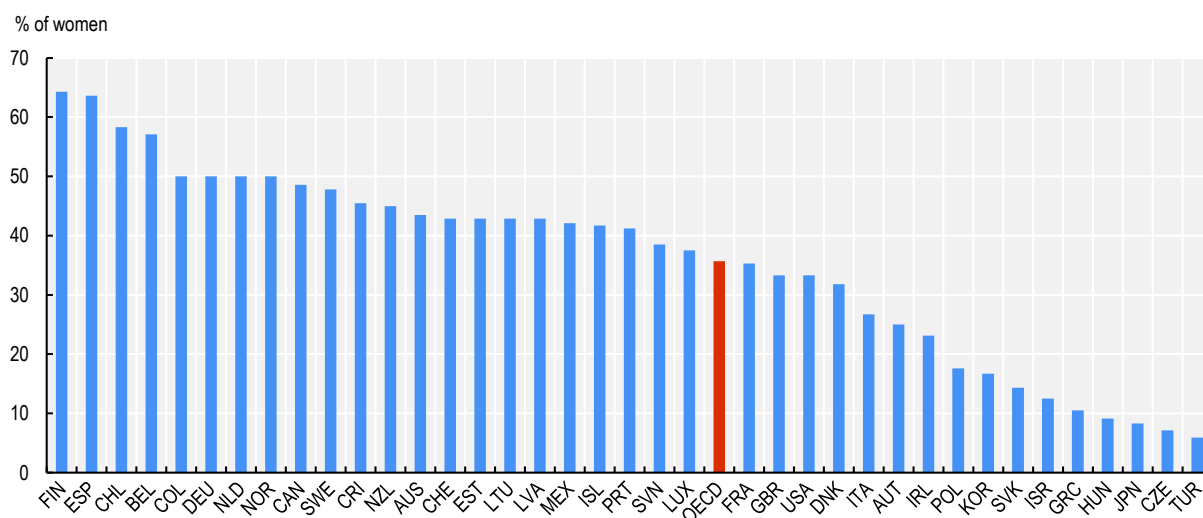


Source: (OECD, 2017^[33]; OECD, 2021^[34]; IPU Parline, 2024^[30]).

Looking beyond elected bodies, less progress has been made in terms of the number of women in ministerial positions. While some OECD countries have achieved gender-balanced cabinets, women continue to be underrepresented in government on average. As of 2023, women’s average representation in cabinet ministerial positions stands at 35.7% across OECD countries (OECD, 2023^[35]). However, the share of women in cabinet positions also varies significantly among countries (Figure 2.8). In 2023, 8 out of 38 OECD countries – Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain – had 50% or more women in ministerial cabinet positions. On the other hand, four OECD countries – Czechia, Hungary, Japan, and Türkiye – had shares below 10% (UN Women, 2023^[36]). Meanwhile, the distribution of women cabinet ministers within national governments globally highlights a trend where they primarily occupy roles related to social and cultural policy (OECD, 2023^[35]). The ministerial portfolios most commonly held by women include women and gender equality, family and children’s affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs (where applicable) (OECD, n.d.^[37]). Conversely, very few women hold ministerial portfolios in areas such

as transport, energy, defence, trade, and agriculture (OECD, n.d.^[37]). In particular, the presence of women leaders in environment and energy sectors remains low (OECD, 2023^[38]). Moreover, the European Investment Bank's 2022-2023 climate survey highlights a gender gap in opinions on whether increased political involvement of women leaders would enhance efforts against climate change: 45% of men in the European Union believed it would make a difference compared to 60% of women (Lesi, 2023^[39]). This underscores the importance of not only attaining gender-balanced representation in terms of numbers but also diversifying ministerial portfolios for both women and men to achieve gender equality in cabinets.

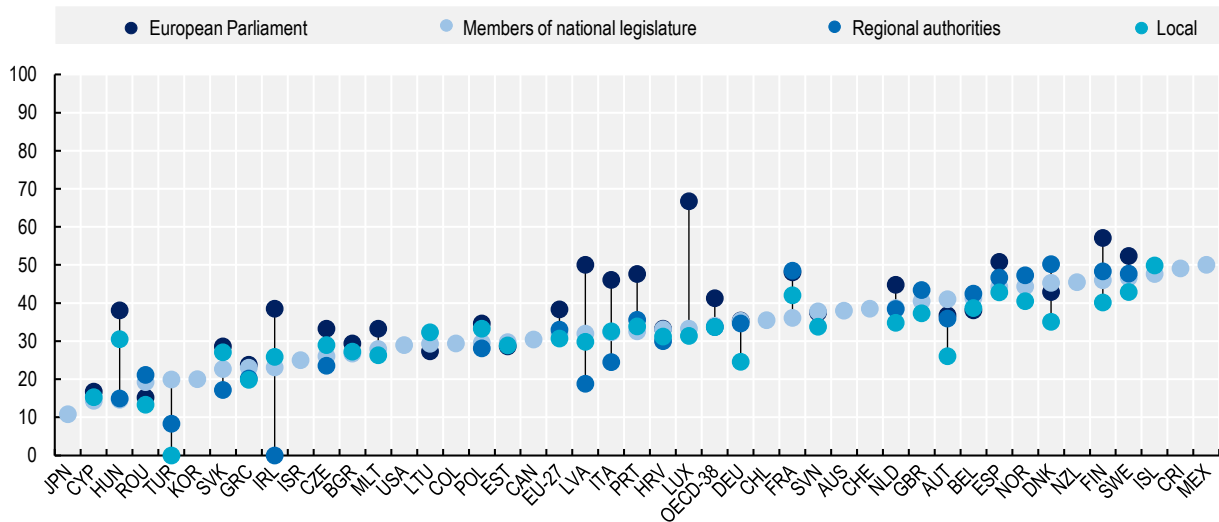
Figure 2.8. Gender equality in cabinet ministerial positions, 2023



Source: OECD (2023^[35]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

Women also remain underrepresented in decision-making positions at sub-national levels of government (Figure 2.9). Recent estimates suggest that women make up less than approximately 15% of mayors and only about 34% of elected local deliberative bodies globally (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2023^[40]). In the European Union, the share of women in local/municipal and regional assemblies is just over one-third of members (European Commission, 2023^[41]).

Figure 2.9. Gender equality across levels of government, 2024



Note: EU-27 and OECD-38 averages are unweighted. Data on members of national legislatures from September 2024. Data on the European Parliament cover the president and members of the European Parliament comprised of representatives elected by the EU Member States. This is a supranational legislative parliament, exercising powers similar to those of the national legislatures. Data on regional assemblies cover the representative assemblies of regions (i.e. regional authorities). The term region refers to regional authorities that are endowed with self-government acting as the territorial authorities between the central government and local authorities. Data on local councils cover the representative assemblies of municipalities, cities or towns. Data for the European Parliament is from Q1 and Q2 of 2024. Local and regional estimates are for 2024.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parline “Historical Data”, EIGE Indicator G1b “The proportion of women in the European Parliament” Indicator G3a “The proportion of women in local assemblies in the Member States [starting from 2011]”, and Indicator G2 “The proportion of women in the regional assemblies of the Member States, where appropriate”.

These modest but positive results reflect the progress across OECD countries in adopting measures to enhance gender equality in political leadership. These include, for example, legislated or voluntary gender quotas for parliaments, political parties, and executives. However, the effectiveness of quotas is not a given and their impact on women’s representation in public life depends upon several factors like their level, the effectiveness of incentives to comply, and the strength of penalties for non-compliance (OECD, 2019^[42]). The characteristics of the electoral system can also have a role in shaping democratic representation and inclusivity. Indeed, evidence suggests that proportional representation systems tend to result in higher numbers of women being elected (Electoral Reform Society, 2023^[43]; OECD, 2023^[44]). In December 2023, Spain approved the Organic Law on Equal Representation and Balanced Presence of Women and Men. Regarding the political sphere, the new law aims to ensure effective representation of women by mandating the “zipper system” in electoral legislation (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2023^[45]). This requires candidates of both sexes listed in an alternating order for various elections (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2023^[45]). Additionally, the law applies the principle of balanced representation to the State’s highest executive body, the Council of Ministers, stipulating that no gender should have less than 40% representation (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2023^[45]). To enhance women’s representation at the local level, Costa Rica’s Supreme Electoral Tribunal announced in February 2023 that the 2024 municipal elections would apply gender parity in single-nomination positions, namely the mayors (Molina, 2023^[46]).

Beyond quotas, additional mechanisms can be envisaged to foster broader gender equality. OECD countries report implementing measures such as voluntary targets, mentorship and networking programmes, and initiatives to create female-friendly parliamentary workplaces (OECD, 2023^[35]). For example, in November 2022, the Riksdag Board, which leads the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) Administration, established a working group on gender equality. The working group subsequently proposed

an action programme for gender equality for the electoral period 2022-2026, which aims to achieve gender balance in parliament and various roles. It integrates gender equality into all activities, fosters an internal culture of respect, and facilitates work-life balance. Both men and women are involved in the Riksdag's gender equality efforts, ensuring equal participation and resources allocation (Swedish Parliament, 2022^[47]).

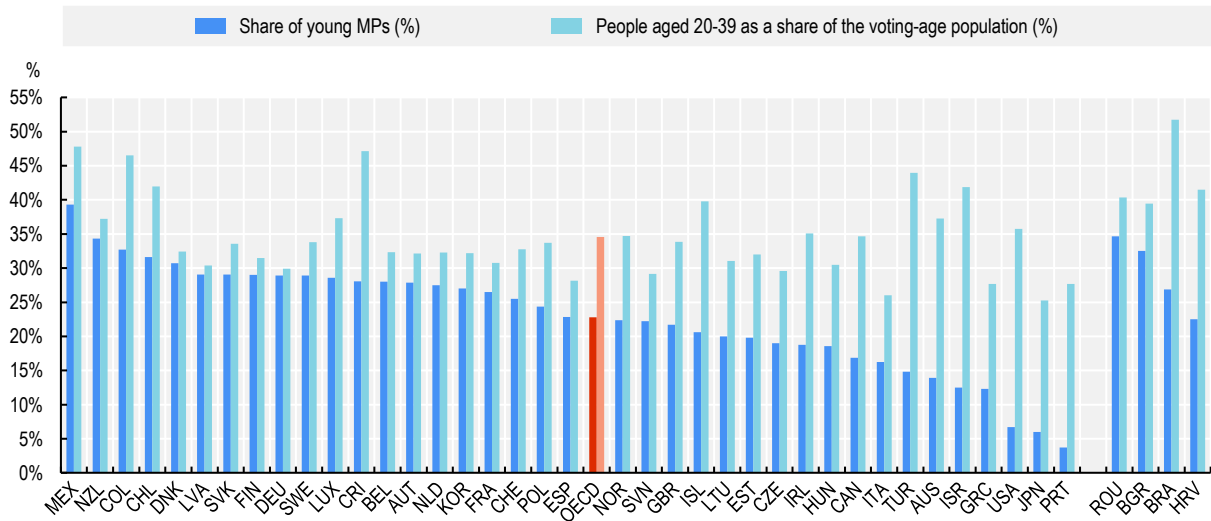
Overall, data shows that women's representation in elected bodies and executives continues to increase on average across OECD countries, albeit slowly. Globally, the current pace suggests that gender parity in national legislative bodies may not be achieved until 2063, with gender equality in the highest positions taking another 130 years (UN Women, 2023^[36]). To make further progress, governments need to keep implementing a comprehensive policy including both mandatory and voluntary measures. These can include incentives and sanctions; gender audits of parliamentary practices and procedures; impact assessments of the electoral law and other relevant laws; addressing violence, both online and offline; tackling unconscious bias and gender stereotypes on women's leadership; raising awareness; and fostering leadership skills. Particular attention should be paid to understanding the specific barriers that women from diverse backgrounds may face.

Considering a youth lens and age-related perspective in democratic representation

Addressing the current challenges of democratic representation and reinforcing democracy also requires consideration of a youth and age-related perspective. According to the recent OECD 2024 Trust survey, young people tend to trust the national government less compared to older generations (43% of people aged 50 and over report having high or moderately high trust against 36% for people aged 18-29, even though this age-related trust gap has decreased since the 2021 Trust survey. Despite showing a strong motivation for addressing global challenges, young people tend to join political parties and vote in elections less than older peers. On average young people tend to vote less in national (68%) and local (41%) election, even though younger people are more prone to taking part in a demonstration and posting or forwarding content on social media (OECD, 2024^[11]).

Young people also remain underrepresented in elected and executive bodies. In 2022, even though 20–39-year-olds represented a third of the voting age population on average across OECD countries (34%), less than a quarter (23%) of members of parliament (MPs) on average were under 40, indicating a representation gap of 11 percentage points (Figure 2.10). The largest representation gaps are seen in Israel, Türkiye and the United States (all -29 p.p.), while the smallest ones are seen in Germany and Latvia (-1 p.p.), Denmark and Finland (-2 p.p.), suggesting that demographics are not destiny but that policies, institutions and practices matter (OECD, 2023^[35]). Representation gaps also remain high in countries' executive branches. In 2022, across OECD countries, only 56 out of 756 of cabinet members were under 40 (7%) and only 16 were aged 35 or under (2%) (Figure 2.11).

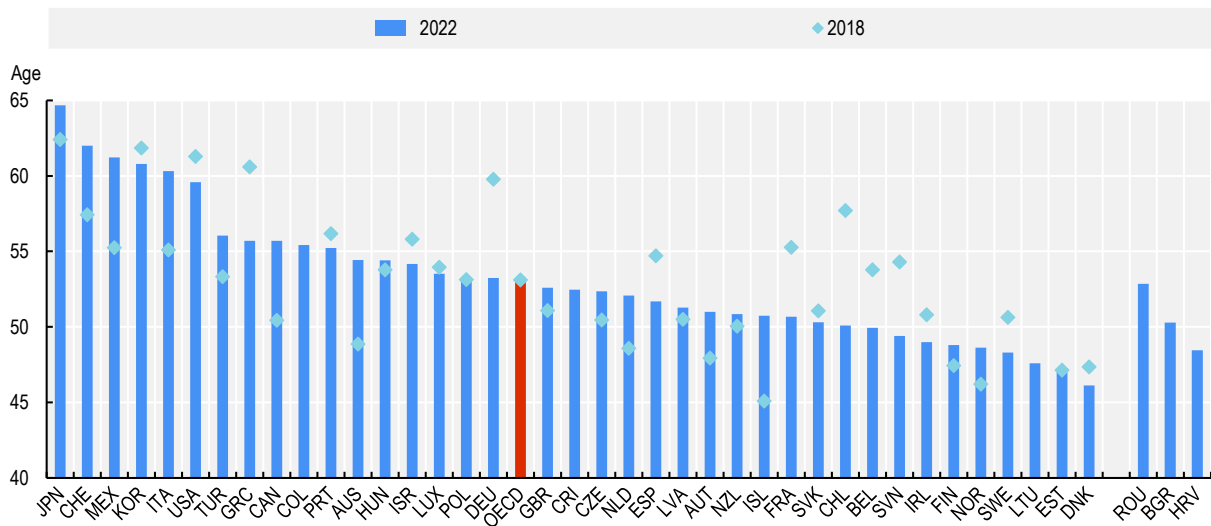
Figure 2.10. Share of members of parliament aged 40 and under, and people aged 20-39 as a share of voting-age population, 2022



Note: OECD calculations based on OECD Demography and Population database (2021); and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parline database on national parliaments (2022).

Source: OECD (2023^[35]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

Figure 2.11. Average age of cabinet members by country, 2018 and 2022



Note: OECD calculations based on publicly available data on official government websites as of 20 December 2022.

Source: OECD (2023^[35]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

Several OECD countries are taking action in this area such as Sweden, Switzerland, for example through taking steps to strengthen civic and citizenship literacy among young people as well as promote reliable and non-partisan information tailored to young people (Box 2.10).

Box 2.10. Strengthening young peoples' civic and citizenship literacy

Sweden: Skolval, mock elections at school

In Sweden, the Skolval initiative includes the organisation of mock elections as part of school curriculums to help young people familiarise with the electoral system, raise awareness on policy issues and ultimately raise awareness of, and engagement in, democratic processes. In 2022, Dalarna University, Stockholm University and Mid Sweden University undertook an evaluation of the initiative, demonstrating that approximately 70% of participating students gained a better understanding of democratic processes and politics (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, 2023^[48]). The initiative was first developed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society in 2002. It is implemented in junior high schools and upper secondary schools, with a focus on schools providing special education to students with disabilities, and schools in socio-economically marginalised regions. Through this initiative, students under the minimum voting age engage in a simulated voting process. Before the elections, politicians from different parties are invited to share their ideas and policy proposals in schools, helping young people in making an informed decision. The initiative also includes other activities, such as political newsrooms, conducting polls and drafting articles.

Switzerland: Easyvote

The Swiss Federation of Youth Parliaments has developed the web platform and app “Easyvote” (Easyvote, n.d.^[49]). Easyvote aims to make information on politics and democratic processes accessible to young people by presenting political content in a clear and neutral format. The platform uses user-friendly interfaces and multimedia to capture the attention of young people. The algorithms of the app “Votenow” allow young users to find the candidates who best match their opinions based on a series of questions. Easyvote also provides content to promote civic and citizenship literacy, for instance on the separation of powers, federalism, climate change, Switzerland's state structure and international politics. The initiative originated to address research findings documenting that overload of information and complexity of electoral documents pose significant barriers to young people's participation in elections (Easyvote, n.d.^[50]). A survey conducted by the University of Bern and the Swiss Research Institute gfs.bern demonstrates that 94% of the respondents consider Easyvote to be a comprehensible source of information on politics (Easyvote, n.d.^[49]).

Voter registration rules and minimum age requirements to vote and to run as a candidate can also present specific barriers for young people. For instance, the discrepancy between the minimum age to vote and the minimum age to run as candidate can raise confusion among young people and fuel stereotypes against young people in public and political life who are considered “too young” and “lacking experience” to access positions of political influence. Since 2022, some OECD countries, such as Belgium, Germany or Lithuania, have reviewed their minimum age policies to remove access barriers to young people's participation in elected bodies (Box 2.11).

Initiatives have also emerged to channel young people's perspectives in the work of national parliaments, for instance through dedicated caucuses and committees. In Australia, the Parliamentary Friends of Young People group was established in 2022 as a non-partisan forum for members of both chambers to meet and interact with young people and youth organisations to discuss policy issues impacting their lives.

Box 2.11. Reviewing minimum age requirements to vote and run as a candidate

Minimum age to vote in elections

Belgium lowered the minimum age to vote in elections for the European Parliament to 16 in 2022. While initially voters aged 16 and 17 could vote only after submitting a request to their municipality of residence, this additional step was dropped in 2023 after a ruling of the Belgian Constitutional Court considering it unconstitutional. In Germany, a law adopted in early 2023 also lowered the voting age from 18 to 16 for the elections of the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2023^[51]).

Minimum age to run as candidate

In 2022, Lithuania lowered the minimum age to run as parliamentary candidate from 25 to 21 years; however, still exceeding the voting age of 18. In 2023, Mexico unanimously passed a law aligning the minimum candidacy age with the minimum voting age, reducing it from 21 to 18 (IPU, 2023^[52]).

While some degree of progress has been made with regard to women and young people, barriers to representation remain to be tackled for other under-represented groups such as visible minorities, second generation migrants and indigenous people (where applicable). Given the diversity of these groups and the paucity of available comparative data, this report does not include any analysis of the issue, while recognising that it remains a policy challenge for many countries.

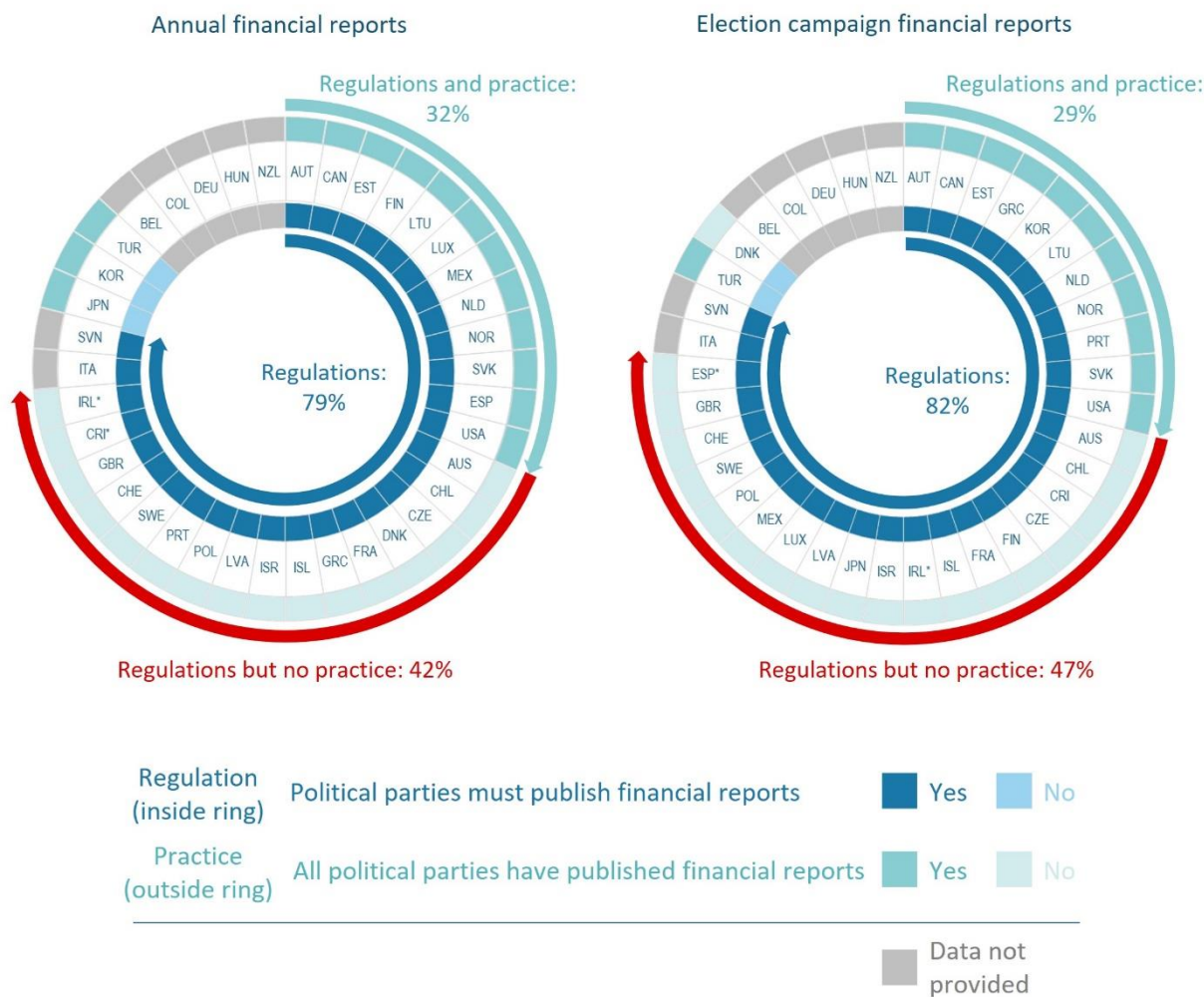
2.3.2. Promote integrity in democratic institutions and elected officials

The OECD 2022 RDI report clearly identified the need to ensure the integrity of democratic institutions and elected officials. While many OECD countries were taking steps to improve integrity in these areas, data collected for the 2022 report showed that there was scope for countries to improve further. Furthermore, challenges to the integrity of democratic institutions and elected officials have developed with globalisation which, despite bringing benefits to people and societies across the world, has also introduced more threats to the establishment of a fair and competitive global market and the propagation of strong, healthy democratic governments (OECD, 2024^[53]). This presents liberal democracies with new, dangerous and complex challenges, which will be also discussed to address progress as part of the last Action Plan on “Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World”.

Strengthen government integrity systems, including in electoral processes by increasing transparency of the financing of political parties and election campaigns

Sound regulations and implementation in practice ensure effective transparency and integrity in the financing of political parties and election campaigns. Evidence from the OECD Public Integrity Indicators (Figure 2.12) shows that the majority of OECD countries (31) have a regulatory framework in place that requires parties/and or candidates to report on their finances (funding and expenses) during electoral campaigns. However, in just 12 countries have all political parties submitted accounts related to elections within the timelines defined by national legislation for the past two election cycles. Additionally, in only 15 OECD countries have all political parties submitted annual accounts within the timelines defined by national legislation for the past five years. Moreover, while 30 OECD countries require political parties to make their financial reports public, including all contributions exceeding a fixed ceiling, only 25 countries have published the financial reports from all political parties, and only 22 countries have published all financial reports on one single online platform in a user-friendly format. Taken together, failure to uphold transparency requirements undermines scrutiny and the ability of responsible authorities to assess compliance and react where necessary.

Figure 2.12. Selected data from the 2023 OECD Public Integrity Indicators



Note: Countries marked with an asterisk (*) do not have centralised data on practice. For annual financial reports, regulations refer to the criterion “Political parties must make financial reports public, including all contributions exceeding a fixed ceiling” and practice refers to the criterion “All political parties have submitted annual accounts within the timelines defined by national legislation for the past five years”. For election campaign financial reports, regulation refers to the criterion “Parties and/or candidates must report their finances (funding and expenses) during electoral campaigns” and practice refers to the criterion “All political parties have submitted accounts related to elections within the timelines defined by national legislation for the past two election cycles.”

How to read: 79% of OECD countries have regulations requiring political parties to publish annual financial reports, 32% of OECD countries have both regulations requiring political parties to publish annual financial reports and all political parties published annual financial reports within the timelines defined by national legislation for the past five years, 42% of OECD countries have regulations requiring political parties to publish annual financial reports but not all political parties published their annual financial reports within the timelines defined by national legislation in the past five years.

Source: OECD (2024^[53]), *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/968587cd-en>.

Moreover, recent years have seen more OECD countries establish an independent body with a mandate to oversee the financing of political parties. However, only 60% of OECD countries have such a body. An independent body can improve co-ordination, information sharing, and responsiveness, and can ensure greater independence from the individuals and institutions it is responsible for regulating (OECD, 2016^[54]; IDEA, 2014^[55]).

Cultivating a culture of political integrity, in particular by setting clear standards, oversight and accountability mechanisms for elected and appointed officials

Corruption remains a significant concern for citizens across OECD countries as it remains in the top ten most significant issues perceived by citizens among the three most important ones facing their country (OECD, 2024^[1]). Across the OECD, the political environment is becoming increasingly more complex, with heightened polarisation, reduced trust in public institutions and the rapid and global spread of information manipulation and interference from foreign interests (see also Chapter 1 on Mis and Disinformation). This challenging context has increased public scrutiny on elected and appointed officials, putting their reputations at increasing risk of misperceptions or misrepresentations.

Political integrity is one of the cornerstones of representative democracy. Political integrity is based on the expectation that elected and appointed officials will pursue policies designed to improve the economic and social well-being of individuals, and not pursue policies that prioritise their private interests, or the commercial or political demands of special interest groups who attempt to influence them. As the complexity of representation increases in the face of numerous challenges, including undue foreign influence, political integrity standards serve as an internal moral compass for elected officials, orienting them to act with integrity even when no one is watching.

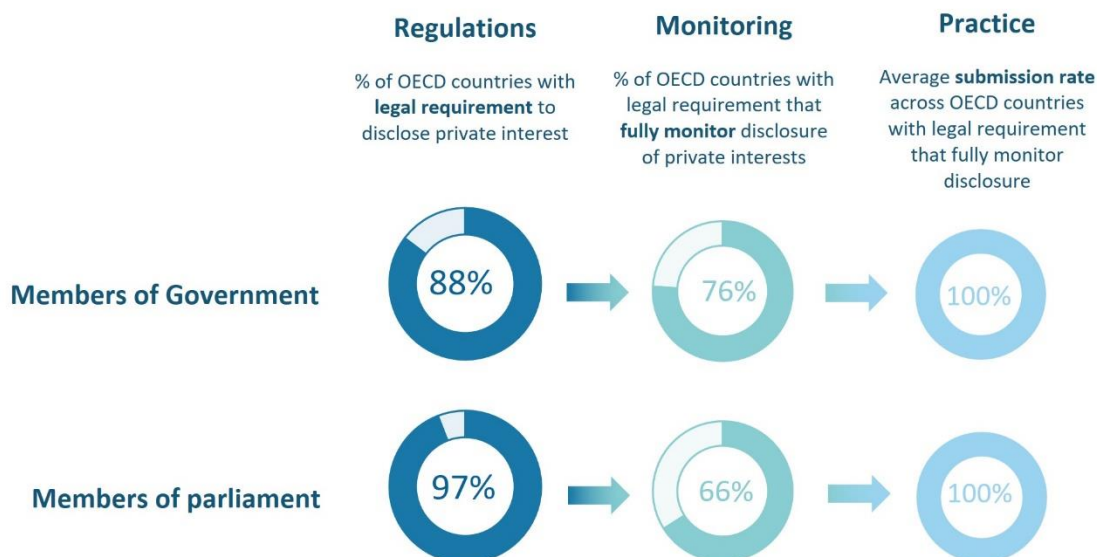
Cultivating a culture of political integrity requires a strong institutional framework that covers all aspects of the political process. This includes the selection of candidates within political parties, the conduct and financing of elections, as well as the policymaking process, which are discussed below.

Setting clear standards of integrity for elected and appointed officials

Standards for integrity, that provide clear and common definitions and set high expectations of conduct have been in place for some time (OECD, 2017^[56]). Such standards consist of both legislative elements and soft law elements, like codes of conduct, and cover areas concerning conflict of interest, engaging with lobbyists and other influence actors, and the revolving door.

Many OECD countries have strong regulatory frameworks in place addressing conflicts of interest. However, while the standards exist on paper, implementation remains a challenge, evidenced by the fact that a significant number of countries do not fully monitor whether these requirements are upheld in practice (see Figure 2.13). For example, among the 29 OECD countries that require members of government to provide interest declarations, full statistics to monitor compliance with disclosure regulations are available in only 22 countries. Members of parliament are legally required to disclose their private interests in 32 OECD countries, but only 21 countries collect sufficient data to assess whether all declarations were fully disclosed.

Figure 2.13. Interest declarations across public functions: Regulations, monitoring and practice



Note: Data does not include data from Belgium, Colombia, Germany, and Hungary, that are categorised as “Not validated by country”. Data for regulations is based on criteria values for “Any member of government / member of parliament must submit an interest declaration, as a minimum upon entry and any renewal or change in public office”. Data for monitoring and practice are based on statistics collected to calculate the criteria values for “The submission rate of interest declarations from: members of the Government is 100% for the past six years / members of parliament is at least 90% for the past six years.”

How to read: Members of government (Ministers) are legally required to disclose private interests in 88% OECD countries. Among these 88% of countries, the disclosure of private interests is fully monitored in 76% of countries. Among these 76% of countries, the average submission rate of interest disclosures by members of government is 100%.

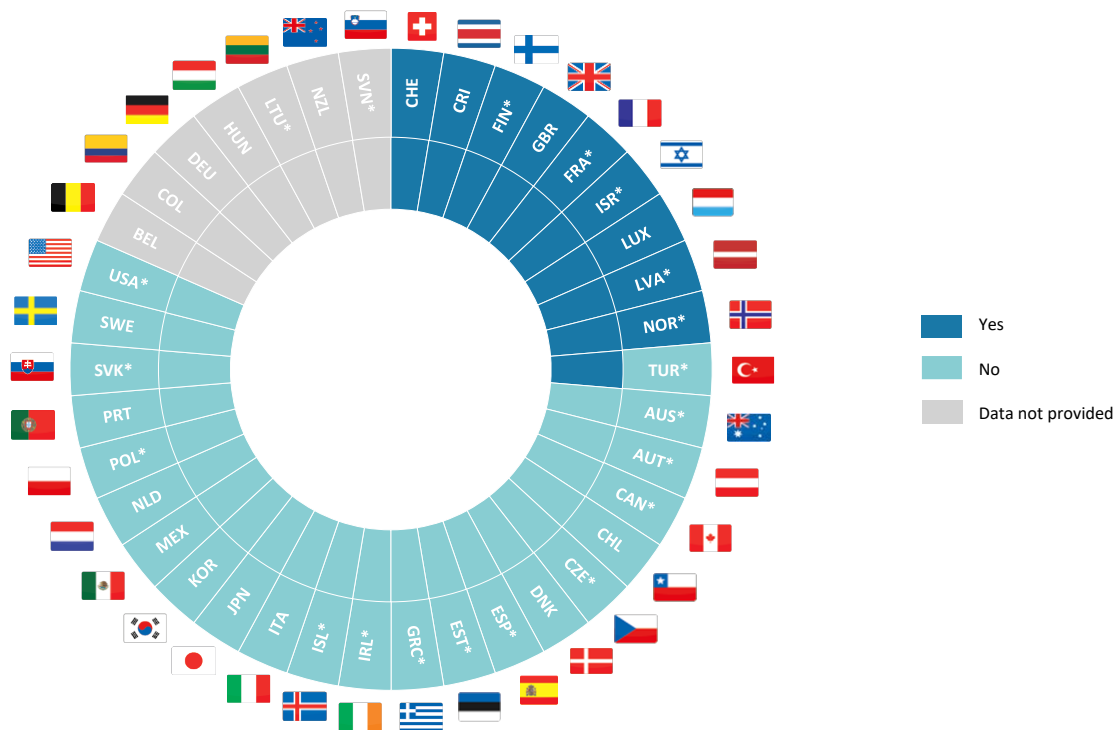
Source: Adapted from OECD (2024^[53]), *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/968587cd-en>.

More concerningly, the resolution of conflicts-of-interest remain *ad hoc*. In instances when responsible authorities with a mandate to oversee implementation of conflict-of-interest policies have detected a conflict, only seven OECD countries can demonstrate that those authorities have issued recommendations for resolution within 12 months for all cases of conflict-of-interest detected for the past three years. For the remaining countries, either the responsible authorities have not issued recommendations for resolution, suggesting conflicts may be going unresolved, or they do not have data to show that resolutions are being reached, meaning countries are unable to check whether conflicts are being resolved and the corruption risk they create is being mitigated. This raises questions regarding the effectiveness of the exercised oversight, but also the overall implementation of conflict-of-interest regulations in practice.

Another potential conflict-of-interest area that requires stronger standards concerns the movement in and out of the public sector. While such movement allows governments to benefit from a greater transfer of skills and knowledge (OECD, 2014^[57]; OECD, 2021^[58]), if left unchecked, the “revolving door” phenomenon can lead to conflicts-of-interest among public office holders, undue influence over public policymaking, and unfair commercial advantages (OECD, 2014^[57]; OECD, 2021^[58]; OECD, 2017^[59]; Brezis and Cariolle, 2014^[60]; Lee and You, 2023^[61]; Strickland, 2023^[62]). This is particularly the case when public office holders move into sectors they were formerly responsible for, or lobbyists take up positions in organisations they previously lobbied. While these risks have typically been domestic in nature, the risk of public office holders using their networks and knowledge for the benefit of foreign interests is an emerging challenge (Charon and Jeangène Vilmer, 2021^[63]).

Yet across the OECD, standards on post-public employment for elected and appointed officials are lacking. Only 20 OECD countries have introduced mandatory cooling-off periods for public office holders, but only two have cooling off periods for both public officials and lobbyists (see Figure 2.14).

Figure 2.14. Nearly half of countries do not have cooling-off periods for public officials



Note: The inner circle is based on whether post-employment integrity for ministers is tracked. The outer circle is based on whether post-employment integrity for top-officials is tracked. Countries marked with an asterisk (*) have mandatory cooling-off periods for public officials. Source: OECD (2024^[64]), OECD Public Integrity Indicators Database, <https://data-explorer.oecd.org/>.

Most OECD countries, including many with mandatory cooling-off periods, are not tracking the post-employment activities of public office holders in practice. Only nine OECD countries collect data on the frequency within the past five years with which ministers took up positions in a private sector organisation that operates in their former area of responsibility. This data does not necessarily need to be made public, but the lack of data makes it difficult for governments to assess whether their rules on revolving door are being observed, and therefore whether they are mitigating the risks of movement in and out of public office.

Cultivating a culture of integrity through oversight and accountability mechanisms

Effective oversight in integrity systems strengthens accountability within government, and enables public institutions to learn and improve, and ultimately better serve the public interest. For oversight to be effective, countries need to have clear institutional arrangements in place that can provide the appropriate scrutiny, while also respecting the separation of powers between the executive, judiciary and legislative branches. Several OECD countries have had such mechanisms independent accountability mechanisms for the legislature, such as Canada, or have recently introduced them, such as most recently the Netherlands (Box 2.12). These independent mechanisms are based on:

- a clearly defined appointment process for members, as well as clarity on terms of independence

- sufficient human, material and financial resources to perform their duties
- clearly defined scope and mandate, providing guidance on how to comply with requirements, handling and adjudicating complaints, conducting investigations and publishing decisions
- clearly defined roles for issuing sanctions, either by the oversight body itself or by a relevant authority. Sanctions should be applied consistently should be effective, timely and proportionate.

Box 2.12. Accountability systems for elected and appointed officials: The Netherlands

The Regulations on the Monitoring and Enforcement of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Representatives (2021) provide for the establishment of an Integrity Investigation Board responsible for receiving and investigating complaints regarding violations of the Code of Conduct by MPs. If after an investigation the Board establishes a violation of the Code of Conduct, the corresponding report is sent to the Presidium (executive committee of the House of Representatives) and to the MP under investigation. In these cases, the Board can also make a recommendation for a sanction in the report. The Presidium is obliged to make the report public no later than four weeks after receiving it, so that the complainant can see the report at that time. However, the Board can determine that parts of the report remain confidential in connection with serious reasons, and those cannot be published by the Presidium. The Presidium should also send a letter to the House of Representatives, simultaneously with the publication of the report, with a proposal to impose the recommended sanctions.

Source: Tweede Kamer (n.d.^[65]), “Rules of Integrity”, <https://www.houseofrepresentatives.nl/members-parliament/rules-integrity>.

2.3.3. Address undue influence on government policy

The OECD 2022 RDI report clearly addressed the need to avert undue influence in public decision-making processes, promoting transparency and integrity in lobbying. More specifically, the Action Plan included commitments to:

- Ensure transparency on who is influencing government policies through lobbying and all other forms of influence, including through digital means.
- Strengthen integrity standards for public officials tailored to the risks of undue influence.
- Engage with the private sector and civil society to promote their adherence to transparency and integrity standards in their relationship with government.

While lobbying and influence activities are a legitimate act of political participation, whereby different interest groups can provide governments with insights and data, if the proper safeguards are not put in place, it can also create unfair advantages for certain groups that lead to asymmetric or undue influence over policymaking. Lobbying and influence are also becoming more complex, with the rise of social media and a greater range of actors seeking to influence public policymaking.

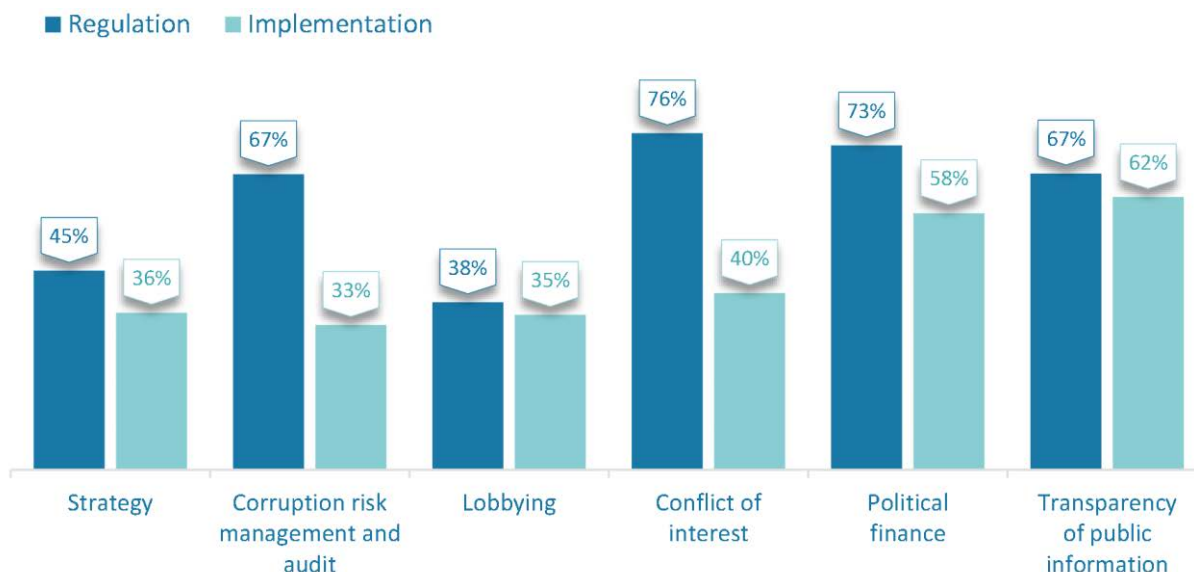
This area clearly appears as a matter of concern in the results from the 2024 OECD Trust survey, as most people feel that decision making favours private sector interests over the public interests. 43% of respondents say it is likely that the national government would accept the demand of a corporation promoting a policy beneficial to their industry but harmful to the society as a whole, and only three in ten respondents believe that the government would refuse a corporation’s demands (OECD, 2024^[1]). Moreover, nearly one in two citizens doubt that a high -level political official would refuse to grant a political favour in return for a well-paid private sector job.

Despite this background, OECD countries have adopted a range of tools to improve the transparency of lobbying and influence activities. These tools included public online registries where lobbyists and/or public officials disclose information on their interactions, government transparency measures where public office holders disclose information on their meetings with lobbyists, or ex post disclosures of how decisions were made. While since 2022, there has been ample scope for countries to take action in this area, progress has been relatively limited.

Ensuring transparency on who is influencing government policies through lobbying and all other forms of influence, including through digital means

Public Integrity Indicators from 2023 shows that lobbying and influence is a policy area with comparatively few regulatory safeguards in OECD countries (Figure 2.15). Countries' safeguards to protect against undue influence in lobbying are much weaker than in areas such as political finance, conflict of interest, and access to information, in which countries scored substantially higher. The data shows a divide between OECD member countries with strong lobbying frameworks and OECD member countries with no lobbying safeguards at all. Top performers when it comes to promoting transparency and integrity in lobbying include Austria, Canada, Chile, France, Ireland, Slovenia, and the United States.

Figure 2.15. OECD average score in the Public Integrity Indicators by thematic area



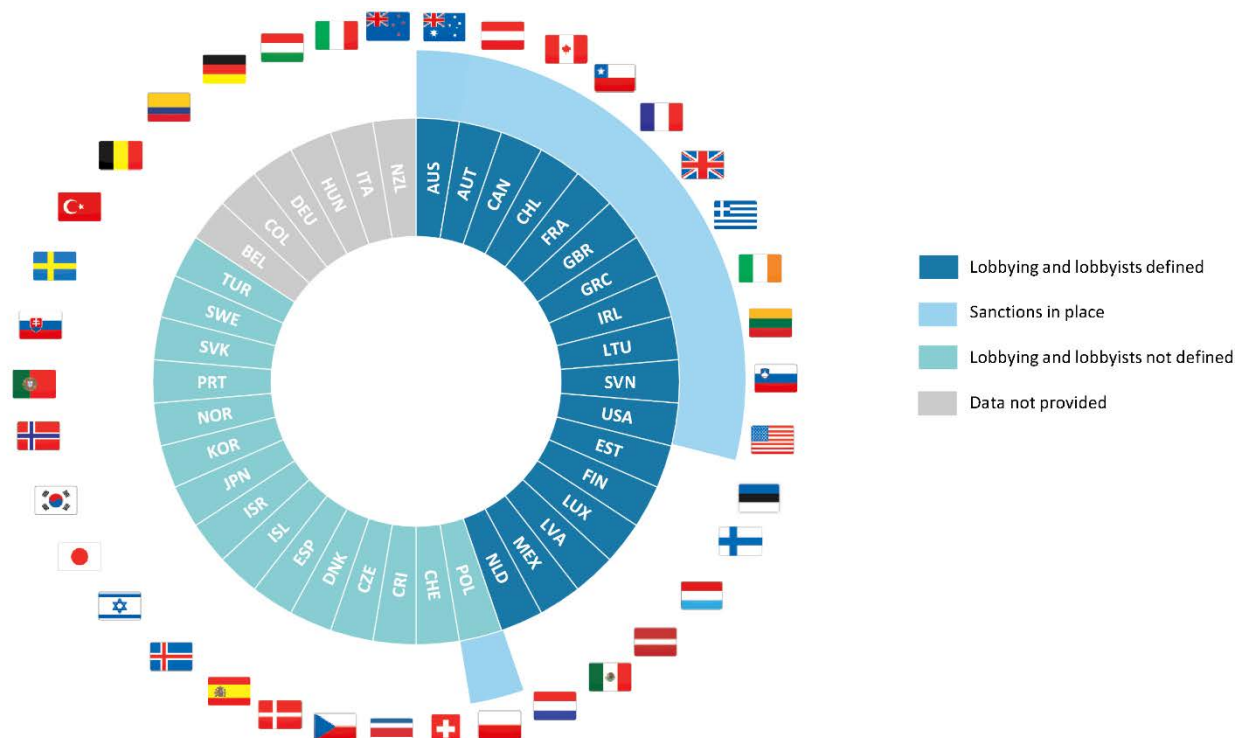
How to read: the values are calculated by analysing whether countries fulfil a standard set of criteria. The score for lobbying regulations is based on [four](#) criteria and the score for lobbying in practice is based on [nine](#) criteria. As measured against OECD standards on lobbying, OECD countries fulfil on average 38% of criteria for regulations and 35% for implementation.

Data not provided: BEL, COL, DEU, HUN, NZL.

Source: OECD (2024^[53]), *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/968587cd-en>.

The goal when regulating lobbying may not necessarily be to reduce lobbying, but rather to promote integrity and transparency in the influence of the policymaking process. Regulation establishes clear rules of the game and provides clarity on who is lobbying, how they are lobbying, and what they are lobbying for or against. A core element of any lobbying regulation therefore are clear definitions on what lobbying is, and who lobbyists are. Overall, 17 countries have established legal definitions of both lobbying and lobbyists (Figure 2.16).

Figure 2.16. Legal framework for lobbying by country



Note: Data based on criterion “Lobbying activities are defined in the regulatory framework, including which actors are considered as lobbyists”. Data not provided: BEL, COL, DEU, HUN, ITA, NZL.

Source: OECD (2024^[53]), *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/968587cd-en>.

Beyond the legal framework, there are many steps that countries can take to increase the transparency of lobbying activities, with a usual first step of making publicly available information on lobbying, for example through lobbying registers, footprints of the public decision-making process footprint, or open agendas. While transparency alone is not the solution to increase integrity in lobbying (Bitonti and Mariotti, 2023^[66]) it is a useful starting point because it invites scrutiny over the actions of lobbyists and public officials (OECD, 2021^[58]).

An overview of the different transparency measures that were available in 2020 across the OECD shows piecemeal practices. Currently, 17 OECD member countries have established publicly available lobbying registers, although not all provide a clear picture of the actors influencing policymaking (OECD, 2021^[58]). Out of the 17 countries with publicly available lobbying registers, only 13 include information about a lobbyist’s domain of intervention and type of lobbying activities in their registers. Only 8 countries include more detailed information on piece of legislation targeted and only four include information on the budget and expenses for lobbying. With such limited information available, lobbying registers in many countries are therefore unlikely to shed light how special interests are influencing policy. Some countries have recently either introduced a new lobbying regulation or strengthened their current system to improve transparency and enable better public scrutiny. For example, the Lobbying Register of Finland came into force on 1 January 2024 (Finnish Transparency Register (lobbyist register), 2024^[67]). Germany recently introduced reforms to its lobbying register to extend its scope and require greater transparency (Box 2.13).

Box 2.13. Recent reforms to the German Lobby Register Act

On 1 January 2022, Germany's first lobbying register at the federal level entered into force. Building on this, the German Bundestag agreed on a reform of the Lobbying Register Act in 2023, which entered into force on 1 March 2024. The amendments aim at increasing transparency in interest representation and citizen's trust in the integrity of democratic processes and institutions. The various amendments to the Lobby Register Act, while not a complete list, can be divided into four key areas:

- **Extension of the scope of the register:** Registration is now mandatory for contacts up to the level of department heads in the federal ministries since draft legislation of the Federal Government is generally prepared at the department level. Obligations to register in the lobby register will apply to 30 (instead of 50) lobbying contacts in the last three months. Initiators of interest representations are now obligated to register themselves if compensation is received for the assignment.
- **Improvement of structural transparency:** All persons and organisations included in the register are obligated, without exception, to disclose their financial expenditure related to interest representation activities. This includes details on grants and subsidies from the public sector and donations and other lifetime benefits from third parties. Regarding the revolving door, individuals listed must provide details of their current or previous affiliations with the German Bundestag or government offices as well as employment relationships in the federal administration. In the case of natural persons, it is now mandatory to provide the company name, if available, to ensure transparency regarding any potential economic motivations. Gifts with sponsoring benefits are now incorporated and the aggregate sum of donations received must be reported in EUR 10 000 increments. The naming of individual donors is only required if the donations of a donor exceed the total annual value of EUR 10 000 and at the same time 10% of the total donation amount.
- **Ensuring transparency of content:** The key innovation of the reform is the inclusion of specific details regarding interest representation activities within the register. This involves specifying all current, planned or intended targeted regulatory projects and a required publication of fundamental opinions and expert reports related. The disclosed information will remain visible for eight years.
- **Clarifications and simplifications** to further increase information value and control of the register entries. These include, for example, a strengthened legal position of the register-keeping body and simplified updating obligations and general register entry management.

Source: German Bundestag (2023^[68]), "Lobby Register", <https://www.lobbyregister.bundestag.de/startseite?lang=de>

Other transparency tools included publishing the agendas of ministers online. These "open agendas" can also give the public a better sense of which interest groups may be meeting with ministers, although they are most effective when they can be cross-referenced against a lobbying register (OECD, 2021^[58]). While 10 countries publish ministers' agendas either on a centralised portal or on the websites of the respective ministries, only four countries combine these open agendas with a publicly available lobbying register. Lastly, in addition to lobbying registers and open agendas, other countries provide transparency on lobbying by mandating *ex post* disclosures of how decisions were made. The information disclosed can be a table or a document listing the identity of lobbyists met, public officials involved, the object and outcome of their meetings, as well as an assessment of how the input received was factored into the final decision (OECD, 2021^[58]). Germany has recently put in place such requirements: an amendment to the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries introduced in 2023 established a mandatory legislative footprint. From 1 June 2024, all draft legislation of the Federal Government must state "the extent to which

interest representatives and commissioned third parties have made a significant contribution to the content of the draft legislation". Making information public is only one side of the coin and more transparency is needed around the forms of lobbying and influence. Trends over the past decades have shown that lobbying and influence are increasingly targeted towards the upstream generation of ideas and evidence and undertaken by a greater range of actors, sometimes indirectly or by proxies, including NGOs, foundations, think tanks and research centres. While these groups can contribute expert opinions, evidence and data, and public mobilisation to the policymaking process, there is a risk of undue influence, and more transparency is needed around these forms of lobbying, especially as they are often excluded from the definition of "lobbyist" or are exempt from disclosure requirements (OECD, 2021^[58]).

Using media, journalism or other public platforms is also an emergent way of shaping perceptions of the public and ultimately of influencing the policymaking process. Just as with funding research, think tanks and other organisations, the so-called "journno-lobbying" is often referred to as an indirect lobbying strategy used to influence story telling of a given policy issue. More transparency is needed on the use of social media in lobbying; the Canadian Register of Lobbyists and the EU Transparency Register are the only frameworks requiring lobbyists to declare awareness-raising, grassroots and social media campaigns as lobbying tools (OECD, 2021^[58]).

In addition, more transparency around the interests of advisory groups providing advice to government is also required. Such groups are composed of academic and scientific experts, public and private sector members and/or representatives from civil society. While these groups help to strengthen evidence-informed decision making, the legitimacy of their advice is at risk when transparency and conflict-of-interest safeguards are not in place for their senior members (OECD, 2021^[58]). OECD countries can mitigate these risks by implementing transparency and integrity frameworks for advisory groups, which include standards on integrity and conflict of interest, and provide for public disclosure on the funding and functioning of the groups, and disclosure of their members, including their private interests and past professional affiliations. Such provisions exist for well-developed advisory groups in some countries but are far from being the norm.

Finally, further tools are needed to determine the beneficial owners of companies influencing the policymaking process. The term "beneficial owner" refers to the natural person(s) who ultimately owns or controls a customer and/or the natural person on whose behalf a transaction is being conducted. It also includes those persons who exercise ultimate control over a legal person or arrangement. Even where a fair level of transparency exists as to who is influencing the policymaking process, the name of a legal entity may not reveal who is the beneficial owner, or who is ultimately benefiting from the lobbying activity. Transparency and scrutiny would necessitate that adequate, accurate, and up-to-date information on beneficial ownership can be obtained or accessed rapidly and efficiently by competent authorities, through either a register of beneficial ownership or an alternative mechanism.

While some countries have recently taken steps toward the creation of such a register, such as Canada, who in November 2023 passed legislation to this effect, the decision of the European Court of Justice in November 2022 that the publication of beneficial ownership information violates the right to privacy has had negative implications for the capacity to ensure transparency around beneficial ownership.

Strengthening integrity standards for public officials and lobbying and influence actors tailored to the risks of undue influence

Integrity standards have existed across OECD countries for some time, to regulate the way that public officials can engage with lobbyist (OECD, 2010^[69]). While the great majority of public officials follow the spirit of these principles, few countries have specific integrity standards for public officials on lobbying and influence activities. Integrity standards and ethical obligations on lobbying and influence activities may be included in a specific lobbying law or lobbying code of conduct, or included in the general standards for public officials, such as laws or codes of conduct for public officials. As of 2020, few OECD countries,

roughly a quarter, had developed such specific standards (OECD, 2021^[58]). Further guidance is needed. Such guidance can include elements such as:

- the duty to treat lobbying and influence actors equally by granting them fair and equitable access
- the obligation to refuse meetings with unregistered lobbying and influence actors
- the obligation to report violations to competent authorities
- the duty to register their meetings with lobbying and influence actors (through a lobbying registry or open agendas)
- guidance on how to assess the reliability of information provided by lobbying and influence actors.

Public officials across the OECD also require additional guidance to assess the reliability of information (OECD, 2021^[58]). In their interactions with public officials, lobbying and influence actors share their expertise, legitimate needs and evidence about policy problems and how to address them. This provides public officials valuable information on which to base their decisions. At times, they may abuse this legitimate process to provide unreliable or inaccurate information. For example, lobbying and influence actors may highlight selective findings of scientific studies, dismissing any doubts or criticisms in these studies. They may also support and promote studies that challenge scientific arguments unfavourable to their interests or highlight the results of studies financed by their own centres and institutes and other organisations, such as think tanks. Few governments, however, provide concrete standards for public officials in assessing evidence provided by third parties. This is clearly an area where greater capacity for evidence-informed policymaking, through training and coaching, could also support public officials in asking the right questions and having a critical view on the quality of evidence.

Lobbying and influence actors also require clear standards and guidelines that clarify the expected rules and behaviour for engaging with public officials. This ensures integrity in the policymaking process. Canada recently updated its Code of Conduct for lobbyists, following three rounds of consultations with relevant stakeholders. The Code includes easy-to-understand rules that work to enhance transparent and ethical lobbying (Box 2.14).

Box 2.14. Canada's 2023 Code of Conduct for Lobbyists

The Code is a non-statutory tool that complements the Lobbying Act's registration requirements and serves to reinforce transparent and ethical lobbying. It applies only to an individual who must be identified as a lobbyist in the Registry of Lobbyists.

It includes a list of four key expectations to guide lobbyists in complying with the rules in this Code:

- Transparency
- Respect for government institutions
- Integrity, honesty and professionalism

Lobbyists must also follow the specific rules related to:

- Disclosures
- Trustworthiness
- Gifts and hospitality
- Sense of obligation

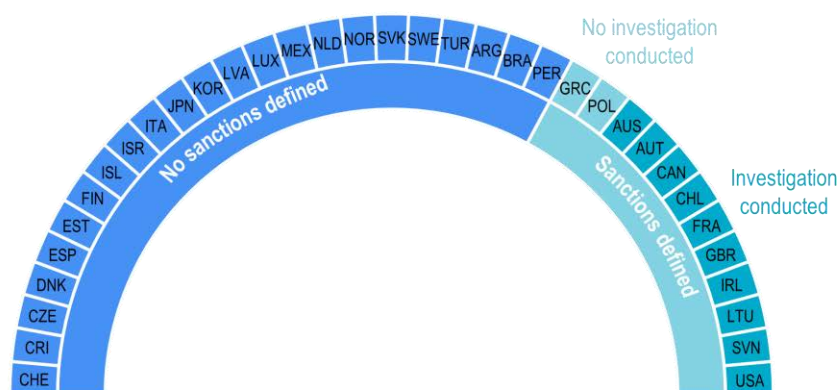
Source: (Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, 2023^[70]; Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, 2022^[71]).

Effective oversight and enforcement of lobbying standards are essential for mitigating risks of undue and asymmetric influence

While action plans for effective oversight and enforcement exist in most cases, countries are not ensuring the standards set out in their regulatory frameworks are maintained in practice through effective enforcement and oversight. While such enforcement matters for compliance (OECD, 2021^[58]), many countries, had not defined sanctions regimes within their lobbying rules as of 2020 when the last comparative data were available. Existing sanctions regimes may not be effective. Only just over a third of OECD countries have defined proportionate sanctions for breaches of standards for transparency and integrity in lobbying. Even among the 17 countries with a legal definition of lobbying, six have not prescribed sanctions. In countries where sanctions regimes do exist, their deterrent effect may be undermined because those subject to them are unaware of them (OECD, 2021^[58]). A 2020 OECD survey of parliamentarians and lobbyists found that only 10% of parliamentarians and 11% of lobbyists knew of sanctions that had been applied in the previous 12 months, and that 42% of lobbyists were not even aware that sanctions existed (OECD, 2021^[58]).

Effective oversight is also an area for potential improvement. However, according to the latest data from 2020, only 14 OECD countries had established a supervisory authority to oversee transparency and integrity in lobbying. Of the 12 countries with sanctions in place, ten had conducted an investigation for non-compliance with lobbying regulations within the past year. These results also highlight a strong contrast between a core group of OECD countries that has taken many steps to promote integrity and transparency in lobbying and the rest of the countries, where this is an area where further progress is needed.

Figure 2.17. Lobbying compliance measures by country



Note: Data based on criterion “sanctions for breaches of standards for transparency and integrity in lobbying are defined and proportional to the severity of the offence” and “at least one investigation was carried out for non-compliance with the regulation of lobbying activities or incomplete or erroneous disclosure of information during the latest full calendar year”. Data not provided: BEL, COL, DEU, HUN, NZL.
Source: OECD (2024^[64]), OECD Public Integrity Indicators Database.

Engaging with the private sector to promote their adherence to transparency and integrity standards in their engagement with government

To ensure transparency and integrity in lobbying and influence, governments need to engage proactively with the private sector and set clear standards on responsible corporate engagement. Getting corporate influence right – ensuring that business can engage with pressing policy challenges in a responsible, trustworthy, and problem-solving manner – is essential. Growing expectations on companies to engage more also come with growing expectations on how they engage. This comes with proportionate

responsibilities attuned to global challenges to exercise political engagement transparently and constructively, so that companies can contribute to economic, environmental and social progress with a view to achieving sustainable development.

This is an area of significant progress. The relevance of corporate political engagement to both society and business success increasingly motivates a broader range of corporate stakeholders, including shareholders, investors, customers and employees, to pay more attention to the corporate political footprint of the firms that they own, transact with or work for – and how their engagement footprint aligns with their positioning on societal issues. For example, over the last two decades, shareholders have formally engaged with close to half of all S&P500 companies to improve their transparency and accountability on corporate political engagement (Center for Political Accountability, 2023^[72]), and shareholder resolutions on these issues continue to feature among the top topics raised by investors (CERES, 2022^[73]; Morningstar, 2023^[74]; VBDO, 2023^[75]).

A growing number of principles and reporting frameworks are also surfacing in the corporate stakeholder ecosystem that, while not always specifically targeted, provide key insights on what constitutes responsible corporate engagement. These include: (i) existing government regulations, guidelines and codes of conduct that frame interactions between government and businesses in democratic systems (lobbying regulations, lobbying codes of conduct, political finance rules); (ii) mandatory sustainability reporting standards, such as the European Commission’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) (also featured in the chapter on governing green) (European Commission, 2023^[41]); and (iii) international initiatives and frameworks on responsible lobbying and corporate political engagement, including the latest Global Standard on Responsible Climate Lobbying (AP7, BNPP AM, Church of England Pensions Board, 2022^[76]).

Based on these initiatives and good practices in companies, the OECD has convened a community of government, business and civil society representatives to identify core principles of responsible lobbying and corporate political engagement with government. Current draft OECD Principles reflect evolving expectations and evidence for what constitutes responsible corporate political engagement, understood as the upholding of the highest standards of integrity, transparency, openness, and equity by businesses as they contribute to economic, environmental and social progress, and how to realise it effectively from setting business strategy all the way to everyday business operations. As such, the draft Principles seek to provide guidance for companies and corporate stakeholders to design and execute corporate political engagement that contributes responsibly to economic, environmental and social progress.

2.3.4. Foster a diverse, representative and responsive civil service

The OECD 2022 RDI report underlined the importance of fostering a diverse, representative, and responsive civil service as a way of improving decision making and building trust in government. The subsequent action plan calls on governments to strengthen diversity in the public sector workforce, as well as inter-generational learning between older and younger employees; providing training and skills, as well as developing concrete and applicable goals for an open and participatory civil service that would enable it to be more responsive; taking stock of barriers in the pipeline for senior management positions and horizontal segregation to enable balanced representation of diverse societal groups across all decision-making levels; and monitoring progress through concrete targets measured through more data collection and use.

Senior managers of the HR function in OECD countries are taking seriously the issues of ‘creating a representative and diverse public service, particularly at senior leadership positions, and guaranteeing equitable opportunities for underrepresented employee groups. OECD indicators of diversity in the public sector helps monitor progress towards this aim. Traditionally, available data shows that Westminster countries tend to invest more in diversity initiatives, with the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada in top positions, alongside Israel. In continental Europe, France and the Netherlands are among the

countries that invest in such initiatives the most (OECD, 2021^[34]). Another key indicator focuses on gender balance at the top levels of the public service hierarchy. While many OECD countries have gender balance in the public service as a whole, very few achieve it at senior levels. OECD data on workforce composition shows just five countries had 50% or more women in senior management positions in central governments in recent years (OECD, 2021^[34]).

Another area where representation can be ensured is through recruitment, which can be mobilised to support gender balance. For example, countries are linking specific occupations to gender by implementing targets or quotas for gender equality in public service recruitment. Of the OECD countries, 14 have set gender targets for the entire public service, while 7 specifically target senior-level public servants (OECD, 2023^[38]).

Systems of learning and development matter to ensure a diverse representative and responsive civil service, particularly at senior level, as it matters to develop the pipeline of future leaders (OECD, 2023^[77]). Some leading governments collect and analyse robust data to evaluate the effectiveness of training systems in reaching all staff and cultivating the necessary skill sets for responsive governance. For example, several countries collect data on participation on training programmes by gender and age (e.g., Belgium, Estonia, France, Luxembourg, and Latvia), which can be useful in uncovering unseen barriers to learning or reskilling uptake faced by women or older employees. However, more data could be collected by OECD countries on further diverse groups, as very few countries collect data on participation in training by people with disabilities, and none collect it on participation by employees of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Some best-practice governments, for example Canada, collect their data on learning and development at a central level as well as in more detail at ministry level, allowing for comparisons across departments and ministries in government, to ensure that success and best practices are shared and to inform decisions about using mobility as a tool for development.

The OECD 2023 report on Public Employment and Management (OECD, 2023^[77]) has identified a critical gap in assessing participation and outcomes for training across diverse groups of employees. Notably, just over 30% of OECD countries track participation in training and development initiatives by gender, for central government public servants. This number drops for other groups that are important for creating a representative public service, standing at slightly more than 20% for participation across age groups, below 10% for people with disabilities, and 0% for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. This leaves questions about whether all employees are reached by training initiatives and being given equal opportunities for growth and development. Ensuring that all employees have equal opportunity to learn, grow and reach their potential can be a significant factor in creating a broadly skilled workforce that also represents the population it serves, particularly at leadership levels.

Ireland is a leading example of work being done within a public service to increase the degree to which it represents the diverse population of the country. Ireland has taken significant strides in recent years in advancing diversity, equality, and inclusion (DE&I) through a dedicated strategy in its public service, spanning 2021-2023. This strategy is itself imbedded in the administration's Corporate Statement of Strategy ("Nua 23"). Both Nua 23 and the ED&I Strategy 2021-2023 firmly position diversity and inclusion as central tenets guiding the organisation's purpose, mission, and strategic priorities – making Ireland now among the leading OECD countries in diversity and inclusion work for its public service. Moreover, the strategy's emphasis on data-driven decision-making underscores a commitment to transparency and accountability, laying the groundwork for evidence-based initiatives to drive diversity and inclusion forward.

2.3.5. Deliver on the promise of more inclusive policies

The OECD Action Plan on Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness in Public Life calls OECD members to fulfil their commitment to fostering more inclusive public policies (OECD, 2022^[78]). This entails the development of explicit provisions to support the integration of the needs of underrepresented groups into policymaking through strengthened mainstreaming processes. Additionally, the Plan emphasises the importance of improving both the availability and use of diversity-related data and evidence, as well as documenting the policy impacts of and lessons learned from their use.

Ensuring the inclusivity of public policies transcends mere considerations of the identity and background of those in positions of authority, whether they are elected or part of the civil service, which have been addressed in the previous sections. Rather, promoting inclusive policies requires proactively identifying and addressing both overt and implicit systemic barriers and biases that may perpetuate inequalities. In fact, policy instruments are not always neutral in their application and impact, and potential bias can hide in government decision making, with the risk of exacerbating inequality and discrimination, as highlighted in the gender area (OECD, 2023^[38]) (see section focusing on gender equality).

Moreover, there is a growing recognition by policymakers in OECD countries that inequalities are the result of the interaction of various identity-based discriminations and that approaching them by considering only one identity factor (e.g., gender) may result in an incomplete picture of the advantages and disadvantages faced by different groups in society. Intersectional analysis takes these interactions into account, producing a more holistic picture of the various discriminations that can affect individuals (OECD, 2023^[38]). The improved understanding of needs brought about through intersectional analysis can help support targeted policy action that is more effective at closing gender gaps.

Adopting a youth lens to support inclusion

Young people have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis and inter-generational challenges such as climate change, population ageing, and others are impacting and will continue to affect their and future generations' wellbeing (OECD, 2022^[28]). Delivering more inclusive policies can sustain well-being, people's satisfaction with public institutions and ultimately strengthen their association with democracy. OECD data shows that respondents aged 18-29 are more likely to report financial insecurities (OECD, 2023^[79]). Results from the 2023 OECD trust survey also show that in all countries, feelings of economic insecurity are associated with lower trust in the government. (OECD, 2024^[1]). Younger respondents to the 2022 Risks That Matter Survey are also considerably more likely to be concerned about accessing adequate housing on average, with a 22-percentage point difference between people aged 18-29 and those aged 50-64 (OECD, 2023^[79]). These challenges call countries to systematically consider, integrate and address young people's needs and perspectives across all relevant policy and service areas.

Youth mainstreaming can be introduced across core functions of government including through (i) the systematic collection and use of age-disaggregated evidence; (ii) the elaboration and implementation of national and sub-national integrated youth strategies; (iii) the use of public management tools (e.g. regulatory impact assessments, budgeting); and (iv) the systematic and meaningful participation of young people in policymaking.

National youth strategies can promote an integrated approach to youth policymaking and service delivery by identifying strategic objectives, assigning clear responsibility for implementation across governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and by establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress. As of April 2020, 76% of OECD countries had an operational national or federal multi-year youth strategy in place (OECD, 2020^[80]). OECD countries have continued designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and updating national youth strategies (Box 2.15).

Box 2.15. Implementing and reviewing national youth strategies

Mexico: National Youth Programme (Projuventud)

Mexico is finalising the implementation of its National Youth Programme 2019-2024 (Projuventud). The Programme aims to establish operational guidelines to shape youth policy, foster inter-institutional co-operation (notably across levels of government) and integrate young people's needs and interests across policy and service areas (Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, 2022^[81]). The strategy's design was informed by surveys, polls, and debates to gather young people's perspectives, with targeted efforts to include under-represented groups in the process, such as girls, indigenous young people and LGBTQ+ young people. As part of the Programme, Mexico established a System for Monitoring and Evaluation of Youth Policy aimed at monitoring and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of government actions and programmes for young people (Government of Mexico, n.d.^[82]).

New Zealand: Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action

In 2023, New Zealand reviewed and updated its Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action (Youth Plan). The review was informed by engagements with over 1 400 young people through in-person and digital means. The participatory process paid specific attention to under-represented groups, including Rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, rainbow young people, disabled young people, young women and young people from minority ethnic communities. The updated Youth Plan provides government agencies and youth stakeholders with a common vision, framework, tools and resources to promote change as part of the broader Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS) (The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet New Zealand, 2023^[83]). The Youth Plan was first launched in 2020 with the aim of increasing opportunities for young people to lead their own lives, have their identities seen, valued, and respected, and have increasing influence in their communities and across government policy.

Policymakers can also leverage tools, such as ex-ante regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), to anticipate potential impacts on young people of new laws, policies and regulations. Using such tools also encourages the collection of age-disaggregated data and evidence and it can foster inter-ministerial co-ordination as well as transparency and accountability. For example, "youth checks" are increasingly being applied as tools to promote youth mainstreaming at different levels, in line with practices in Austria, France or Germany (since 2022, a "youth check" also exists at the state level in Thüringen) and the Flanders region in Belgium, as well as in other jurisdictions (3.20).

Box 2.16. Mainstreaming young people's interests across policy areas

Parma, Italy: Generational impact evaluation

In January 2024, the city of Parma (Italy) adopted a generational impact evaluation (youth check) aimed at systematically analysing and evaluating the impact of the municipality's policies, programmes and projects aimed, either directly or indirectly, at young people (City of Parma, 2024^[84]). The introduction of the generational impact evaluation has been accompanied by the adoption of guidelines for its implementation, including areas of impact, outputs and outcomes indicators, steps to ensure a youth participatory approach and the overall process flow. The youth check is first applied to assess the potential impacts of the annual programme of the municipality, which is the municipality's main strategic and operational document.

European Union: Youth mainstreaming

The European Union has been giving new impetus to promote youth mainstreaming as an approach to policymaking, starting from the work undertaken during the 2022 European Year of Youth. In 2023, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions to promote youth mainstreaming in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in all areas affecting young people's lives (European Council, 2023^[85]). Building on these conclusions, in 2024, the European Commission committed to applying a youth check when designing EU policies (notably by leveraging the existing Better Regulation tools, including consultations and impact assessments) and outlined key actions to strengthen youth mainstreaming at European and national level going forward, including through co-operation with the OECD on strengthening the evidence base and lessons learnt (European Commission, 2024^[86]).

Addressing data gaps for gender-sensitive and inclusive policymaking

High-quality, reliable, and easily accessible data serves as the cornerstone for evidence-informed policymaking as it facilitates the identification of the most effective and efficient ways to tackle social and economic challenges, including gender inequalities. However, the rigour of gender and intersectional analysis is still limited by the availability of adequate data, especially in areas traditionally considered as “gender neutral” (e.g., defence, trade, environment), which calls for strategies to expand the evidence base in view of strengthening inclusive policymaking. Against this backdrop, **OECD countries are taking steps to improve the supply of gender-sensitive and intersectional data and evidence to foster inclusive policies**. For instance, Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), the country's central gender equality institution, announced new research in 2023-24 to further understand and advance gender equality in Canada and expand on the availability of intersectional data. This will include research on identifying barriers for women and gender diverse individuals in politics, including the harassment of elected officials, as well as research on the pathways for women, youth, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals in and out of homelessness (Government of Canada, 2023^[87]). Ireland is also in the process of developing a National Equality Data Strategy to improve the collection of all equality data and the ability of public bodies to monitor the impact of policies and initiatives (Government of Ireland, 2022^[88]). Looking at the whole OECD area, at least 19 OECD countries state having legal or binding requirements for the collection and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data (OECD, 2023^[38]). In addition, in at least 7 OECD countries the strategic framework for data and statistics at the central/federal level explicitly includes commitments or actions on gender and/or intersectional data (OECD, 2023^[38]).

Furthermore, emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly showing their potential to enhance inclusive and gender-sensitive policymaking, by facilitating the processing of large datasets, and using predictive modelling techniques to forecast the potential impact of policies on different societal groups. However, it is essential to ensure that AI systems are developed and deployed ethically and responsibly to mitigate the risk of reinforcing biases or perpetuating discrimination. For example, Canada adopted in 2019 a Directive on Automated Decision-Making as a framework to help institutions better understand and reduce the risks associated with the use of AI in supporting administrative decisions (Government of Canada, 2023^[89]). The Directive's safeguards against discriminatory outcomes for historically marginalised individuals or groups have been strengthened in April 2023 with a new requirement mandating the completion of a Gender Based Analysis Plus during the development of modification of an automated system (Government of Canada, 2023^[89]). This intends to foster an intersectional approach to the design of automation projects, allowing departments to consider multiple identity factors such as sex, gender, geography, and language when assessing the potential impacts of a system on individuals.

These recent developments underscore the proactive measures OECD countries are undertaking to deliver on the promise of representation through more inclusive public policies. Capitalising on these advancements, there exist opportunities to further strengthen these processes in the future. OECD countries should enhance the use of tools and policy instruments to support inclusive policymaking and gender equality. For example, quality gender impact assessments (GIAs) should be conducted throughout the policymaking process, including policy evaluation, to understand gender-specific impacts. As a key prerequisite for GIAs and inclusive and gender-sensitive policymaking, OECD countries should continue improving the collection, accessibility and use of gender and intersectional data, taking into account the informational needs of policymakers at various stages of the policy process and expanding the types of data sources and methods to analyse them. These efforts would necessitate investments in staff capacity building, such as fostering co-ordination among government units and agencies to ensure data quality, interoperability, and privacy protection, thereby establishing a robust data governance ecosystem. Finally, while harnessing the potential of emerging technologies to foster inclusive policymaking, it would be important to ensure algorithms and other tools are free from bias and do not reinforce gender stereotypes, with the risk of inadvertently exacerbating inequalities and discrimination.

2.4. Working collectively through the OECD and priorities going forward

2.4.1. Working collectively through the OECD

Over the past two years, the OECD has been very active in supporting countries, facilitating peer learning and engaging with countries in all areas of the action plan:

- Promoting inclusive public participation and deliberation. The OECD has monitored and evaluated participatory processes, in light of country progress in implementing the [Open Government Recommendation](#) (OECD, 2023^[3]). The work has benefitted from the [OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People](#) and the [OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life](#). The OECD has also actively been supporting countries to assess, monitor, and protect and promote civic space following the 2022 global report (OECD, 2022^[26]).
- Strengthening Democratic Representation. The OECD has actively engaged with countries to update the 2010 [Recommendation on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying](#). It has also collected data also reflected in the 2024 Anticorruption and Integrity Outlook (OECD, 2024^[53]). The OECD has also actively worked towards more inclusive policies for young people through the horizontal project “A Better Future for Young People in Ageing Societies” (2023-24)”, supporting the implementation of the [OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People](#). The OECD has also developed an [OECD Youth Policy Toolkit](#).
- The (2023) report “Public Employment and Management: Towards a More Flexible Public Service” (OECD, 2023^[77]) and the 2024 PEM composition survey and diversity inclusion indicators support a diverse, representative and responsive civil service. The OECD has engaged to close data gaps focusing on intersectional and inclusive policy analysis.

2.4.2. Conclusions and priorities for the future

Countries are making progress in implementing participatory processes at all levels of government, including developing policy frameworks to ensure civil society engagement and improve access to information, and making efforts to enhance representation in elected bodies and the civil service. These processes complement well-established forms of participation characteristic of representative democracies, such as the ballot box. In particular, many countries have taken action by:

- **Making public participation and deliberation more inclusive**, using a wide range of mechanisms (public meetings, online and in-person consultations, roundtables, and representative deliberative processes), and lowering barriers for people whose voices are often overlooked, including children, young people, migrants, women, first nations, LGBTI communities⁷ and those with special needs. Many countries are also fostering a culture of dialogue, enabling greater engagement with government among citizens and civil servants alike while protecting and promoting vibrant civic spaces.
- **Strengthening democratic representation**, particularly with regards to age and gender, as well as promoting integrity in democratic institutions. A number of countries are now taking steps to ensure greater transparency for political party and election campaign financing.

However, there is still a lack of clear understanding over how to make such participation fully compatible with, and fully meaningful in representative democracy. The institutionalisation of meaningful and transparent participation mechanisms remains slow. There is therefore a need to take citizen participation to the next level.

The new **OECD citizen participation barometer** will provide a concise, data-driven and internationally comparable overview of how governments provide information, protect civic space and promote citizen participation. Furthermore, the OECD aims to develop an **OECD Observatory on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy** to provide comparative analysis and expert support to countries undertaking participatory and deliberative processes, while also providing a strategic framework and guidance for countries.

In terms of investing in young people, the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative aims to provide new comparative analysis and practices to promote active citizenship among young people, strengthening engagement with the Youth Organisations' Sounding Board for Governance (YOUNG).

2.5. Additional focus on Gender Equality

The "[Additional Focused Action Plan on Gender Equality](#)" calls for building adequate capacities within the public sector for countries to meet their gender equality objectives, eliminating all barriers hindering the women and girls' participation in public life, as well as collectively addressing the challenges through related OECD initiatives (e.g., through cross-Committee projects to enhance government capacities in utilising gender and intersectional data, the OECD Forum on Gender Equality as part of the OECD's Gender Strategy, and other collaborative efforts).

In fact, recent empirical evidence shows that, although progress has been made in reducing some longstanding gender inequalities in OECD countries, gender gaps persist across various facets of life (OECD, 2022^[90]; OECD, 2023^[38]), stressing the need for continued and intensified efforts from a holistic and whole-of-government perspective.

2.5.1. Establish adequate capabilities, expertise and capacities within public institutions to close persistent gender gaps that hamper women from diverse backgrounds from fully participating in public life

Gender mainstreaming, as a strategy for integrating a gender equality perspective into decision making, can help governments make more inclusive policy decisions (OECD, 2023^[38]) and enhance the fairness and responsiveness of public policy, which in turns contributes to increasing public trust (OECD, 2017^[91]) and reinforcing democracy. Closing gender gaps can also bring dividends for society at large, with positive effects on economic growth, productivity, and fiscal sustainability (Nicol, 2022^[92]).

Gender mainstreaming is increasingly taking ground in OECD countries, starting with strengthening the legal bases for its implementation. At least 9 OECD countries have introduced new legislation, regulations, or directives to promote gender mainstreaming since 2017 (OECD, 2023^[38]). In total, 29 OECD countries report having some form of legal basis or binding decision underpinning gender mainstreaming (OECD, 2023^[38]). However, the implementation of legal requirements for gender mainstreaming has been somewhat uneven, with lack of clear allocation of responsibilities, resources, and accountability mechanisms (OECD, 2023^[38]). Therefore, while there is no one-size-fits-all solution, a robust institutional framework, strategic planning, and effective co-ordination mechanisms are deemed crucial for advancing governments' gender equality agendas.

OECD countries have experimented with diverse government structures with entities tasked to strategically co-ordinate and implement gender equality at the central level (OECD, 2023^[38]). Most recently, Colombia underwent reforms, including the commitment to strengthening the Presidential Council for Women's Equality (CPEM) and the establishment of the Ministry of Equality and Equity in 2023, which is expected to further reinforce the country's institutional framework for gender equality (OECD, 2023^[93]). Nonetheless, OECD countries acknowledge substantial challenges, including insufficient resources, mandate, and capacities to effectively deliver their mandates (OECD, 2023^[38]).

Some countries have put in place capacity-building initiatives targeting civil servants. For example, with a goal to enhance civil servants' understanding of gender equality for more informed policy decisions, Chile's National Civil Service Directorate organised a 6-month training in 2023 covering topics such as public policies with a gender perspective, violence prevention and reporting, inclusive diversity management, and gender-inclusive leadership for female directors (Director Nacional del Servicio Civil, 2024^[94]).

OECD countries are progressively developing gender mainstreaming tools. A key instrument of gender-sensitive policymaking is gender impact assessment (GIA), which allows to identify and assess potential or actual gender-specific impacts of policy or budget decisions. A growing number of OECD countries (at least 26) currently have a formal requirement for GIAs in place, making it one of the most widely used tools for gender mainstreaming across the OECD area (OECD, 2023^[38]). Australia, for example, in line with its renewed commitment to placing gender equality at the heart of policy and decision making, has recently taken steps to strengthen the implementation of GIA processes with a view to monitoring progress, assessing outcomes, and supporting better-targeted policy and spending decisions (OECD, 2023^[95]). After a first GIA pilot undertaken on select cabinet submissions and new policy proposals for the October 2022-23 Budget in the areas of jobs, housing, and the care economy, it was announced as part of the May 2023-24 Budget that, going forward, all new policy proposals would be required to be accompanied by gender analysis (OECD, 2023^[95]). In addition, the Council of Europe has developed guidelines for incorporating a gender perspective into legal initiative assessments.

OECD countries are also increasingly adopting gender budgeting, acknowledging its potential to promote more inclusive policies that generate social and economic gains. By ensuring greater consideration of how government budgets impact gender equality objectives, gender budgeting has become a key tool used to help close gender gaps in 61% (23 out of 38) of OECD countries. A further four countries are actively considering or have concrete plans to implement it (OECD, 2023^[96]). Nevertheless, while some countries have a comprehensive and impactful practice, others – particularly more recent adopters – still have progress to make before their gender budgeting initiatives have the foundations needed to deliver impact (OECD, 2023^[96]). Finland has taken steps to empower the authority for gender budgeting, building on administrative practices (i.e., Budget Circular) to implementing Ordinances/Regulations to strengthen their approach (OECD, 2023^[96]). Similarly, gender-related considerations are increasingly included in public procurement and infrastructure decisions, although further efforts are needed to promote coherence among policies in these areas (OECD, 2023^[38]).

One of the challenges to the implementation of gender equality policies lies in collecting sound and granular data. OECD countries are making efforts to enhance the availability of gender and intersectional data in support of more evidence-based and inclusive policies. For instance, Switzerland implemented a new provision in 2024, mandating public entities to consider gender implications in their studies and statistics (Confédération suisse, 2023^[97]). Accordingly, the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality will provide a specialised tool for gender assessments. Besides, Finland, Slovenia, and Spain have also showed engagement in collecting gender-disaggregated data to enhance their environmental policymaking processes (OECD, 2023^[38]).

To uphold the principles of equality enshrined in existing laws, policies and commitments, countries have continued their efforts to enhance accountability, monitoring and oversight. Within Parliaments, gender equality committees exercise their accountability and oversight function by providing a dedicated space for the discussion of those matters. Based on the most recent available evidence, 87% of OECD countries have parliamentary committees dealing with gender equality either as their exclusive portfolio or, more commonly, combined with other related matters such as family, human rights, welfare, and youth policies (IPU Parline, 2024^[98]). Supreme audit institutions (SAIs) are taking on a more prominent role in overseeing the achievement of gender equality goals. Between 2017 and 2022, institutions in at least 10 OECD countries have undertaken audits of gender-related initiatives, a substantial increase from the mere three audits conducted in 2017 (OECD, 2022^[90]). For instance, Canada conducted audits in 2022, with the latest audit revealing gaps in the Gender Results Framework (GRF). This led to seven recommendations, including improved gender-disaggregated data reporting. In response, Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) developed a 2023 workplan, successfully meeting interim targets in the fiscal year (Government of Canada, 2023^[99]). To promote accountability on the use of public resources for gender-related objectives, Colombia's government has been mandated to submit a yearly report on expenditures targeted towards women's equity to the Congress (OECD, 2023^[93]).

2.5.2. Eliminate all barriers to women and girls' full, equal and meaningful representation, leadership and participation in public life and potential bias and discrimination

In order to eliminate the obstacles hindering women and girls' representation, leadership and participation in public life, the Action Plan on Gender Equality calls for fair pay and transparency, measures to tackle all forms of violence and harassment, and concrete steps to remove structural barriers and systemic disadvantage faced by women and girls.

Data shows that the public sector still experiences a gender pay gap, albeit to a lesser extent than the private sector, prompting countries to implement corrective measures such as pay reporting rules. A recent 2023 Eurostat report revealed an average gender pay gap of 9.1% in the public sector in 2021, contrasting with a higher figure of 15.1% in the private sector (Eurostat, 2023^[100]). While there are cases where reporting requirements only apply to the private sector, at least 15 OECD countries also mandate reporting in the public sector (OECD, 2023^[101]). For example, New Zealand's Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission supports pay gap reporting, offering guidance on implementing pay equity aligned with the Equal Pay Act (OECD, 2023^[101]). In Australia, new regulations publicly name non-compliant employers annually, acting as a deterrent. Starting in 2024, legislation requires the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to publish employer gender pay gaps (OECD, 2023^[101]). However, addressing root causes perpetuating this gap, such as differences in occupational choices, career patterns, and take-up of family-related leaves and flexible work arrangements, requires more comprehensive policies (OECD, 2023^[44]).

OECD countries are committing to addressing various forms of violence and harassment at the national level, encompassing emerging threats such as technology-facilitated violence. A 2023 OECD report shows that almost two thirds of OECD countries had recognised violence against women as a top priority to advance gender equality as of 2021 (OECD, 2023^[102]). In 2024, the European Union (EU) approved the

Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Notably, this significant milestone includes provisions to criminalise cyber violence and promote digital literacy to enhance protection and prevention (European Commission, 2024_[103]). The upcoming implementation of the directive will enable further progress in this area across EU countries. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF-GBV) is progressively accounted for as a threat to women's participation and well-being, with steps towards more extensive legal coverage and robust data collection. Italy reports a promising example, as it has recently started recording administrative data on non-consensual image-sharing and stalking, as well as a forthcoming population-based survey, which collects Big Data on TF-GBV. Importantly, OECD countries are increasingly recognising that regulating and engaging with online platforms is essential in forming joined up responses to TF-GBV. The Digital Services Act (DSA) introduced by the European Union in 2022 is a key initiative in standardising approaches to keeping online spaces safer, including on swifter actions on removing content containing TF-GBV (European Commission, 2022_[104]).

With regard to sexual harassment, a number of OECD countries have put in place various measures in the public sector, although there is room for further improvement (OECD, 2023_[38]). The most common approaches include standardised, confidential complaint procedures (54%), internal training on sexual harassment (46%), workplace initiatives (38%), and adopting anti-sexual harassment policies (38%) (OECD, 2023_[38]). Meanwhile, few public services collect data on workplace sexual harassment complaints (OECD, 2023_[38]). Moreover, reports from OECD members highlight the necessity for legislation encompassing emerging forms of sexual harassment, including those occurring on online spaces, which constitute an increasing method for perpetration (Pew Research Center, 2021_[105]). However, in at least 14 OECD countries, existing sexual harassment laws do not explicitly address cyber harassment or cyberstalking (OECD, 2023_[102]).

While OECD countries are acting against gender biases and negative social norms, sustained and increased efforts are necessary. Gender norms internalised through the encouragement or lack thereof from adults for entering certain career fields continue to influence students' career choices. For example, it partially explains the lack of women in certain fields of studies that lead to the highest-paid professions, such as in ICT, as well as STEM fields, where they are underrepresented including in leadership positions (OECD, 2024_[106]; OECD, 2019_[107]; OECD, 2015_[108]). Gender norms that disproportionately assign domestic and child-rearing responsibilities to women remain as a barrier to their active participation in public life. However, progress in this area is difficult. The 8 March 2024 referendum in Ireland rejected an initiative to remove an article from its Constitution that references women's roles in the home, which has been criticised for sustaining gender stereotypes (Hunt, 2023_[109]). Furthermore, recent evidence suggests a concerning trend across G7 countries where younger generations exhibit more prejudice compared to their parents' generation, and both men and women demonstrate levels of bias against women in leadership positions (Verian, 2024_[110]).

To address cultural bias, in light of the major green and digital transitions, countries have taken steps to increase the number of girls choosing to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields where women often remain underrepresented, including in the public sphere (OECD, n.d._[37]). For example, the European Union has prioritised fostering curiosity and creating a supportive environment for young girls in STEM through initiatives such as the Girls Go Circular programme. Launched in 2020, it has benefitted over 32 000 girls in 23 countries, equipping them with relevant skills (European Commission, 2024_[111]). Moreover, the Spanish Agency for the Supervision of Artificial Intelligence, established in 2023, aims to address gender-bias within meeting its broader objectives of minimising the risks associated with AI use and promoting the responsible development of AI systems (OECD, 2024_[112]).

2.5.3. Remove all barriers, both overt and implicit, from legal or policy frameworks to close gender gaps and compounding inequalities as well as address all stereotypes, gender-based violence and sexual harassment, which hamper women’s and girls’ representation and participation in public life

Despite proactive measures taken by OECD countries in recent years, barriers in legal frameworks continue to hamper women’s representation in public life. Indeed, while a positive correlation has been demonstrated between legal equality and women’s political representation, women and girls continue to face legal restrictions in many different aspects of their lives, including in OECD countries (OECD, n.d.^[37]; Hyland, Djankov and Goldberg, 2021^[113]). For example, in 8 OECD countries, the law establishes restrictions that prevent women from joining certain sectors or professions.

Gender-based violence (GBV), in all its forms, remains one of the most fundamental and pervasive threats to women’s inclusion and active participation in public life (Women Political Leaders, 2022^[114]; National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2023^[40]). Recent OECD work shows that only 11 OECD countries have a dedicated law comprehensively addressing GBV in all its forms (OECD, n.d.^[37]). Women in politics who are marginalised across other identifiers, such as sexual orientation⁸ and race or ethnicity, are made even more vulnerable to violence (Women Political Leaders, 2022^[114]). 85% of women parliamentarians in 45 European countries experienced psychological violence during their term and 58% became targets of online sexist attacks on social networks, prompting many to consider withdrawing from politics (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2023^[40]). Online harassment, abuse, and threats of violence also explain the poorer retention rate of female MPs compared to their male counterparts in the United Kingdom (UK Parliament, 2022^[32]). Online violence and gender-based disinformation campaigns pose a major threat to healthy democracies, since they have been found to be correlated with efforts to weaken democratic institutions and human rights (ShePersisted, 2023^[115]). Evidence is also available from Sweden assessing the extent and consequences of harassment, threats, and violence experienced by elected representatives, including women (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2023^[116]).

Against this backdrop, several OECD countries are actively committed to addressing GBV in the political sphere. For example, Colombia approved a law in 2023 to prevent political violence against women. The bill introduces measures to prevent, address, condemn, and penalise violence against women in politics, aiming to ensure and safeguard their right to participate at all levels (Efemenista, 2023^[117]). Likewise, in Costa Rica, law 10235/2022 aims to prevent, address, punish, and eradicate violence against women in politics. In 2023, the country announced the development of a national strategy addressing hate speech and discrimination, the first of its kind in Latin America (United Nations, 2023^[118]). Additionally, as illustrated in the previous section, OECD countries are increasingly recognising the need to tackle the rising of TF-GBV and ensuring that technological progress neither perpetuates nor exacerbates gender disparities, including in public life.

2.5.4. Working collectively through the OECD

- The OECD launched the 2023 Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality (OECD, 2023^[44]), building upon the 2018 edition. The OECD also engaged on a bilateral basis with several countries, including Australia, Colombia, and Czechia. Efforts have been done to deepen and mainstream gender equality across all pillars of the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative.
- The OECD is also promoting gender equality from a holistic perspective, with its 2023 Gender Strategy *The OECD’s Contribution to Promoting Gender Equality* (OECD, 2023^[119]).
- The inaugural [OECD Forum on Gender Equality](#) was organised in June 2024 to showcase these efforts, discussing gender mainstreaming in green, energy, and digital transitions.

2.5.5. Conclusions and priorities for the future

Countries have worked to remove legal and policy barriers to women's participation in electoral and policymaking, and are actively working to address gender stereotypes, gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Only continued investment in these areas can enable women and girls to fully engage in public life. Despite these efforts, many gender gaps remain, with large variations across OECD countries. As such, more needs to be done to continue addressing persistent gender gaps in political representation and participation. There is a need to invest in working together to develop evidence-based policies, using more granular data and addressing tech-facilitated gender-based violence.

Future editions of the biennial OECD Forum on Gender Equality will offer opportunities for continuing the dialogue and promoting efforts in this area, such as addressing technology-facilitated forms of gender-based violence, and further exploring gender trust gaps to strengthen democratic governance.

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Notes

¹ i.e. efforts taken by the conveners of a participatory process to get back to participants about the status of their inputs and the ultimate outcome of their participation (OECD, 2022^[9]).

² Convention citoyenne sur la fin de vie.

³ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the term "gender", throughout the document, as identical with "sex" pursuant to the binary concept of biological female and male sex. The term "gender equality" shall be interpreted as "equality between women and men".

⁴ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the marginalised groups in line with its own national legislation.

⁵ See note 3 above.

⁶ Adherents to the OECD Recommendation on Open Government.

⁷ See note 3 above.

⁸ See note 3 above.

3

Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World

Governments are enhancing their capacity to tackle global challenges through international co-operation, taking better account of transboundary impacts, and developing new reporting mechanisms for global commitments. They recognise that intensifying foreign interference is altering the landscape of international relations and impacting the democratic governance model. Countries are therefore fortifying institutional frameworks for lobbying and political finance, applying pre- and post- employment restrictions on public officials, and protecting media and civil society organisations. Greater international co-operation amongst democracies is needed to better understand foreign interference and craft appropriate policy responses. This includes countering corruption, further regulating political finance, and minimising trade and debt dependency on single foreign actors. However, it is important to safeguard legitimate foreign influence efforts to foster transparent international relations.

In a global context marked by increased fragmentation open democracies face significant challenges. While the levers of government are largely domestic, many of the challenges they currently face, including the digital and green transitions, are global in nature, and thus require international co-operation to be effectively handled. These challenges are apparent in the results of the 2023 OECD Trust Survey which show that while a majority of people see public institutions as reliable in delivering domestic public services, they are seen as less reliable in addressing complex policy challenges involving many unknown unknowns or trade-offs. For example, just over one third think it is likely that government can regulate new technologies appropriately and help businesses and citizens use them responsibly.

At the same time, the open nature of democracies means that they are potentially more exposed to undue influence from foreign actors. Foreign actors can take advantage of the open and inclusive context under which democracies operate to advance adverse interests and seek to exert undue influence in policymaking at the domestic level. While many of these challenges relate to the threats posed by mis- and disinformation, many others have repercussions far beyond information, media and public opinion, and can exert pressures deep into the institutional and regulatory frameworks of open democracies.

The [Action Plan on Stronger Open Democracies in a Globalised World](#) (henceforth “the Action Plan”) addresses these two key areas and the steps needed to tackle them:

- **Key area 1** – Reinforcing public governance capacities to address global challenges; and
- **Key area 2** – Building resilience to foreign undue influence in policymaking and democratic processes.

This chapter identifies the progress made by OECD countries in terms of capacities to tackle global challenges, including progress in reinforcing human resource capacity, strengthening the readiness of public institutions, mobilising governance tools, and countering foreign influence in terms of regulation and oversight, as framed in the terms of the Action Plan approved by PGC in 2024, building on the work of the OECD public governance policy communities.

3.1. Key Area 1: Reinforcing Public Governance Capacities to Address Global Challenges

3.1.1. Strengthen national institutions to make them fit for a globalised world

The OECD 2022 RDI report identified the need to focus on building the global capacities of governments to address challenges such as climate change, the digital transition, terrorism and pandemic mitigation. It identified the challenges involved in building trust, the need for demonstrating progress on global action, and the need for countries to put in place specific mechanisms to ensure policy coherence and co-ordination for global affairs, as well as the need to strengthen skills to think in global terms.

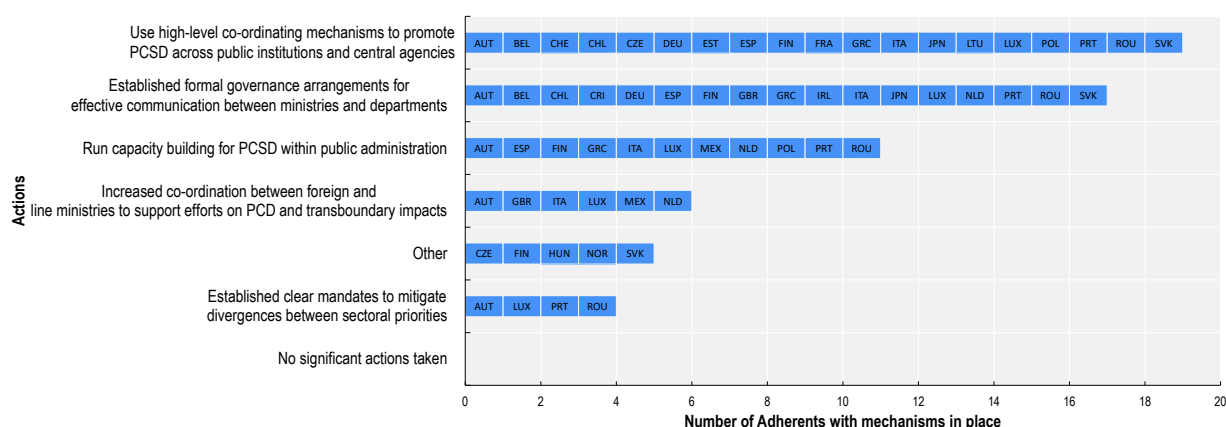
The rise in interconnected economic, environmental, social and geopolitical crises have had serious implications on countries’ prospects to develop sustainably and in line with international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Effectively tackling such increasingly interconnected challenges requires governance mechanisms to adjust policy in light of potential negative transboundary impacts, to maximise benefits while addressing trade-offs, and to effectively work across sectors in a whole-of-government approach. Recent progress in this area can be seen in the monitoring report on the implementation of the OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2024^[1]). The OECD’s report on the implementation of this recommendation shows that countries use high-level co-ordinating mechanisms, located within the Centre of Government or a lead line ministry, to promote the integration of global priorities such as sustainable development across public institutions and central agencies. Many countries have also established formal governance arrangements that support effective communication between ministries (Figure 3.1). While in many cases countries have had such

mechanisms for some time, further progress is being observed. For example, In Portugal, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 5/2023, of 23 January 2024, establishes a new inter-institutional co-ordination mechanism that positions monitoring of the 2030 Agenda within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Government of Portugal, 2023_[2]).

Dedicated cross-government strategies can be another important lever to strengthen the transboundary perspective in the policy work of line ministries, as well as regulatory impact assessments and sustainability reporting. Some initiatives even involve engaging with Parliament – for example, in 2023, the Dutch government adopted its third action plan defining policy areas, objectives and actions and providing a basis for accountability to parliament (Government of the Netherlands, 2022_[3]). The Netherlands’ first priority is reducing its global trade, production and consumption footprint.

Figure 3.1. Ensuring whole-of-government co-ordination to promote mutually supporting actions

Implementation by Respondents



Note: 26 Respondents (The 25 original Respondents plus the United Kingdom).

Source: 2023 Questionnaire to Adherents for assessing the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.

Beyond these institutional mechanisms, engaging with citizens to strengthen the democratic mandate for governments to act on global challenges is crucial. Engaging and partnering with citizens and stakeholders is particularly important in addressing the climate crisis. OECD countries have been actively implementing participatory and deliberative processes at all levels of government in recent years to involve citizens and stakeholders in climate related decisions (see Chapter 4). Countries and organisations are also experimenting with such participatory approaches at the transnational level. At the global level, the results of the global citizens’ assembly organised ahead of the UN COP26 in Glasgow became available in 2023 and show that as well as influencing global climate negotiations, this pilot provided a “blueprint for a new piece of global governance infrastructure” that could be used to place citizen engagement at the heart of the multilateral system (Curato et al., 2023_[4]).

Justice systems also have a key role in ensuring accountability for action on global commitments. The comprehensive amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, adopted on 13 June 2023, recognise the right to a healthy environment, placing a legal obligation on the Government of Canada to develop an implementation framework within two years¹. In the United States, the “Executive Order 14096: Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All”, signed in April 2023, underlines the need to continue advancing environmental justice, with an emphasis on citizens’ rights to be protected from harmful pollution and exposure and the priority of building a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable economy (Government of the United States, 2023_[5]).

Furthermore, governments across OECD countries are developing new accountability mechanisms to ensure stronger enforcement of global commitments. For instance, in April 2023, the Government of the United States published the first-ever Environmental Justice Scorecard, assessing government-wide efforts to advance environmental justice (Council on Environmental Quality, 2023^[6]). The Scorecard will be updated on an annual basis, with the objective of “creating a durable, robust, and comprehensive tool” to hold the federal government accountable for its global commitments to address climate injustice (Council on Environmental Quality, 2023^[6]). In addition, the new adoption of the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems (OECD, 2023^[7]), by 38 OECD countries and the European Commission in 2023 will further support to facilitate effective enforcement of rights, and by extension ensure that governments are accountable to their international obligations.

3.1.2. Leverage governance tools and innovation to enhance capacity for global action

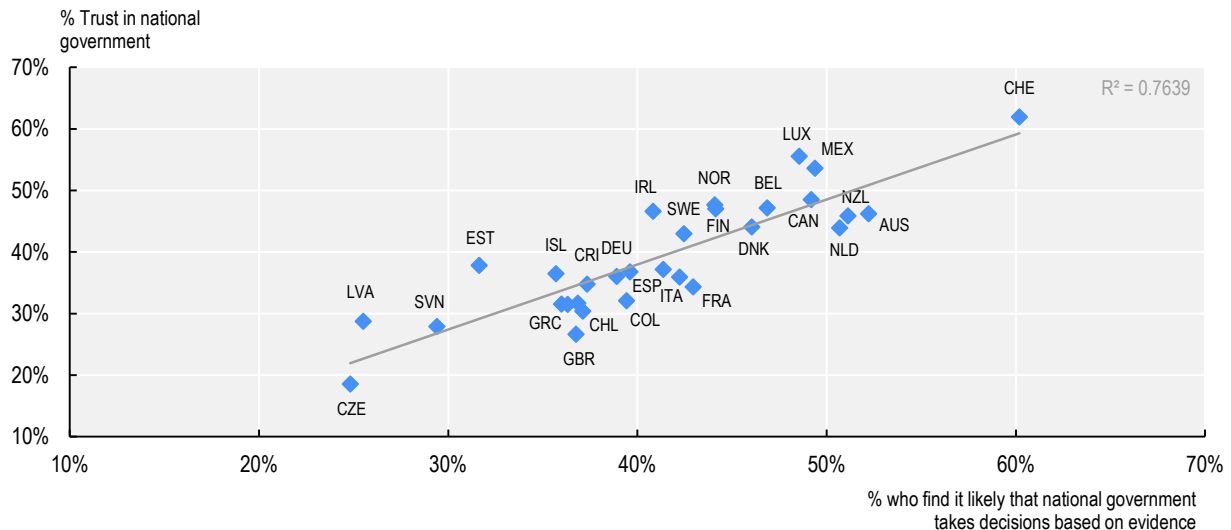
Promoting a foundational culture of evidence-based and science-based policymaking for action on global challenges

The OECD RDI 2022 report highlights the importance of developing skills related to evidence-informed policymaking to tackle global challenges. It further highlights the importance of leveraging innovative approaches to increase the effectiveness of public expenditure in relation to global challenges, such as climate change, gender equality, health and sustainable development goals.

This area has emerged as a priority in the 2023 OECD Trust Survey (OECD, 2024^[8]). Only 4 in ten believe that it is likely that governments make decisions based on the best available evidence, and more than a third of people do not believe that government-provided statistics allow them to assess whether government keeps its promises. Overall, there is a high correlation between the confidence in the ability of government to make policies based on the best available evidence and trust in National Government. What is more the results show that the fact that government decisions are based on evidence appears as the second most powerful driver of trust in national government, just behind whether government balances intergenerational interests (Figure 1.12 in (OECD, 2024^[8])), way above many other public governance levers, pointing to the relevance and priority of government efforts in this area.

Figure 3.2. Confidence in the ability of government to make policies based on the best available evidence is closely related to trust in the national government

Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government (y-axis) by share of people that think it is likely government takes decisions based on best available evidence (x-axis), 2023



Note: The scatterplot presents the share of “high to moderately high trust” responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?” on the y-axis. The y-axis presents the share of “likely” responses to the question “If the national government takes a decision, how likely do you think it is that it will draw on the best available evidence, research, and statistical data?”. Both high or moderately high trust and ‘likely’ correspond to the 6-10 responses on the 0-10 scale

Source: OECD (2024^[8]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

A number of OECD countries are taking significant steps to strengthen their capacity for evidence informed policymaking, to better mobilise evidence and increase government capacity to benefit from science. This was in fact done for multiple reasons, some linked to the aftermath of COVID and the need to tackle global challenges such as climate change or ageing, and others given more domestic policymaking needs. The initiatives below present some recent initiatives in the area.

In 2022, the United States launched the year of Evidence for Action (The White House, 2022^[9]), following the sharing of a Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government through Scientific Integrity and Evidence Based Policy Making (The White House, 2021^[10]) sent by the President to all heads of executive departments and agencies. The initiative involves sharing leading practices from agencies to generate and use researched backed knowledge, strengthen existing strategies and structures, and increasing connection and collaboration among researchers, knowledge producers and decision makers, all in order to ensure that workers are as equipped as possible to effectively use evidence. The federal government is monitoring progress on the White House Year of Evidence for Action, with initial results released in 2023 (Evaluation Gov, 2023^[11]).

New Zealand has also recognised the importance of ensuring that workers within government have the skills needed to effectively use evidence, and thus in 2023 updated its Policy Skills Framework to include engaging and sustaining relationships as well as planning and managing work, both of which are key in incorporating science and evidence into the policymaking cycle. Italy’s civil servant e-learning platform, Syllabus, hosts three training modules on [data collection](#) to support evidence-based policymaking, digital public services [design and delivery](#), and public communication to improve [data availability](#) for citizens and businesses (over 240 800 public servants passed at least one training module).

In Europe, several countries have committed to improving their use of evidence within policymaking. The Ghent Declaration, adopted under the Belgian Presidency in February 2024, explicitly acknowledged the importance for all EU Member states to give attention to analytical skills and the capacity to mobilise evidence. Since January 2023 Lithuanian ministries have been required to justify with data why proposed measures should be applied when submitting draft legislation to government. In order to ensure civil servants are able to do this effectively, the statistics body has created competency trainings for analytical skills. In 2022, Czechia created a specific analytical unit at the centre of government to strengthen capacity for high quality evidence (VAU).

Several other countries have recognised that effective collaboration between researchers and policymakers, as well as between different types of policymakers, is crucial for the effective dissemination and uptake of evidence, and thus have put in place measures to improve such collaboration. For example, Estonia's Cross-Sector Mobility Programme, which opened for its first application round in 2023, aims to increase intersectoral movement of employees, encouraging co-operation between government, higher education institutions, the private sector and third sector institutions. In Belgium, the federal body for science policy introduced a funding mechanism for cross-institution initiatives in 2023, thereby incentivising different actors to collaborate, and in doing so share information and skills.

Despite these recent initiatives, more needs to be done to increase countries' capacity to tackle global challenges. The capacity to mobilise evidence for domestic policymaking needs is a first important step, which will need to be complemented with cross cutting and holistic approaches to tackle global issues, such as climate change, ageing or migration.

Using budgetary mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of public expenditure in relation to global challenges, and multidimensional considerations

The OECD 2022 RDI report emphasised the importance of better government spending to deliver on global priorities. It highlighted the role of budgeting in promoting green initiatives, supporting the SDGs, and investing in health to reduce pandemic risks.

Countries are increasingly adopting strategic budget initiatives, such as gender budgeting and green budgeting, to drive the transformations needed to deliver on global challenges demanding a whole-of-government response. Strategic budget initiatives allow governments to signal the importance of certain cross-cutting policy priorities both to citizens and within the administration. They provide the impetus for more inter-connected thinking, allowing governments address key policy issues through a more systematic and clearly defined manner.

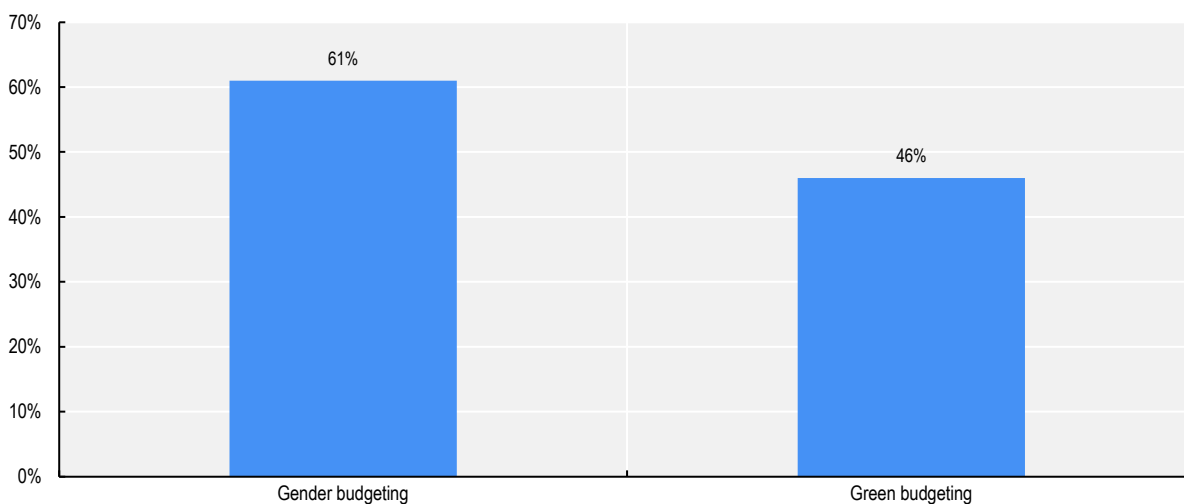
Gender budgeting was historically the first strategic budget initiative in many OECD countries and was discussed as part of the section on gender equality. In some countries – such as Canada, Finland and Sweden – gender budgeting has expanded to include intersectional analysis, allowing for consideration of how gender inequalities intersect with inequalities based on race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation² and disability. Other countries – such as Ireland – implement equality budgeting rather than gender budgeting, analysing the impact of policies and budget measures on individuals according to a range of factors including gender, age, ethnicity and race. Beyond these OECD countries, Brazil is aiming to integrate racial considerations into gender budgeting.

Specific OECD analysis, published in 2024, has investigated how countries address inequality in budgeting, looking at advanced recent practices in a set of OECD countries (OECD/KIPF, 2024_[12]). It found that countries employ two main types of approach to address distributional concerns in the budget process, including using microsimulation models, such as in the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Italy, or using results-based budgeting frameworks, as in New Zealand and Ireland, or a mix of both.

Countries have also made significant progress over the past 2 years in terms of green budgeting, moving beyond green tagging, and fully addressing the implications of global climate impacts in budget modelling

and costing (OECD, 2024^[13]). Overall, four out of five OECD countries (79%) have one strategic budget initiative in place and a growing number of countries are also employing more than one type of strategic budget initiative, many of which have legal underpinnings. Five OECD countries implement three or more (OECD, n.d.^[14]).

Figure 3.3. Percentage of strategic budget initiatives with legal underpinning in the OECD, 2022



Note: Legal underpinning includes initiatives underpinned by constitution, organic budget law or other legislation

Source: Nicol and Dosen (2024^[15]), "The emergence of strategic budget initiatives", *OECD Journal on Budgeting*, Vol. 23/3, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8053099b-en>.

Using public procurement strategically to take into account environmental and social considerations

The OECD 2022 RDI report recognised the importance of strategic public procurement for achieving government missions and addressing global challenges. Accounting for 12.9% of GDP in OECD countries in 2021 (OECD, 2023^[16]), public procurement can significantly influence health outcomes, climate actions, and social responsibility. OECD countries are increasingly using procurement to achieve strategic policy objectives, such as requiring suppliers to adhere to responsible business conduct, including human and labour rights, environmental protection, and inclusion. Since 2022, a greater emphasis on global value chains has given a new focus to strategic public procurement to drive market innovation and promote sustainability.

Recent OECD 2023 results (OECD, 2023^[17]) show that countries increasingly use public procurement to advance policy objectives aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). These objectives include promoting a circular and green economy, stimulating innovation, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting ethical behaviour and responsible business conduct, and fostering the inclusion of under-represented groups. Notably, 92% of OECD countries and accession countries³ have integrated environmental considerations into their procurement frameworks implementing national green public procurement policies or frameworks (see Chapter 4 on Governing Green) (OECD, 2024^[18]).

Some countries are also using their public procurement frameworks for economic empowerment of unrepresented groups or to address racial inequality. For example, Canada's Supplier Diversity Action Plan supports the participation of businesses from underrepresented groups in public procurement through measures such as targeted support and coaching (Government of Canada, 2024^[19]). The South African

constitution makes a direct reference to leveraging public contracts to advance economic empowerment of black-owned businesses (MAPS, forthcoming). Despite this progress and growing awareness of the potential risks of human and labour rights abuses in global supply chains, human rights considerations remain emerging in many countries.⁴

The potential human and labour rights issues brought about by global supply chains can create unique challenges for public buyers. It can thus be valuable to create communities of practice, where public buyers can share good practices and discuss ways to address these global challenges. In 2023, the Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ) and the OECD collaborated in the field of Strategic Public Procurement, with a special focus on human rights. The OECD facilitated knowledge sharing and peer learning workshops, gathering representatives from various contracting authorities from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark to discuss emerging issues around incorporating human rights considerations into public procurement. Examples shared by the participants highlighted how combining purchasing power and using joint procurement can help to address global challenges. For example, in the health sector area, the Swedish, Finnish, and Danish hospital procurement organisations signed a memorandum of agreement to share knowledge about the market, high-risk products, suppliers, audits, and criteria applied in tender procedures (see Box 3.1 and OECD (forthcoming_[20])).

Box 3.1. Nordic collaboration on sustainable procurement in the health sector

Norwegian and Swedish contracting authorities started their collaboration with investigating the benefits of co-operating in safeguarding human and labour rights in procurement.

Working together, healthcare institutions from the two countries developed contractual clauses to be used in tenders and collaborated on follow up of contracts. In 2022, the Common Nordic Criteria for more Sustainable Packaging in Healthcare were released with the aim of reducing material waste, increasing recycling, and increasing the usage of recycled or renewable materials in hospitals. In 2023, the stakeholders signed a letter of intent on sustainable public procurement in the Nordics.

Source: OECD (forthcoming_[20]), Human Rights and Public Procurement – the Nordic Approach - Workshop Report.

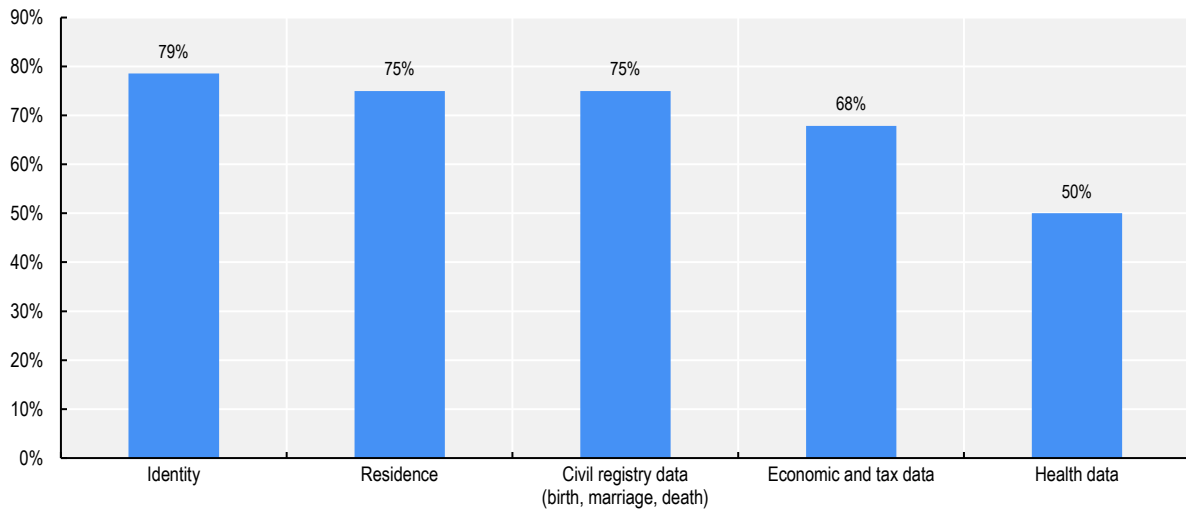
Ensuring that data and digital tools are inter-operable across ministries and international borders, enabling public administrations to exchange real-time data safely across borders and thus strengthen governments' ability to identify, understand, and address global challenges

Effective and efficient data access and sharing across ministries and international borders is an important element for democracies and their public services to thrive in a global environment. The 2023 OECD Recommendation on Enhancing Access to and Sharing of Data (OECD, 2021_[21]) promotes international co-operation to foster data access and sharing across jurisdictions, as well as the interoperability and mutual recognition of data access and sharing arrangements, considering applicable legal requirements and global standards.

In terms of national practices, as of 2022, 28 out of 33 OECD countries had a data interoperability system at the central or federal level of government (OECD Survey on Digital Government). Among those countries with an interoperability system, personal data is the type of data most frequently shared. This includes identity (22 out of 28), residence data (21 out of 28), and civil registry data such as birth, marriage or death records (or 21 out of 28) (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. Personal data is the type of data most frequently shared in interoperability systems

Types of data exchanged through the data interoperability system



Note: The data collection period is from 1 January 2020 to 31 October 2022. Data for Germany, Greece, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, and the United States are not included.

Source: OECD Survey on Digital Government (2022).

Several countries have national interoperability systems that facilitate secure and efficient data exchange in the public sector, such as Hungary's Central Governmental Service Bus and Sweden's 'Navet' for data exchange amongst agencies, regions and municipalities. However, implementing such data sharing systems at global level is more challenging. The European Union's Once-Only Technical System (OOTS) (European Commission, n.d.^[22]), introduced in 2023, addresses this by enabling cross-sectoral sharing of information between public administrations across EU borders. It implements the Once-Only Principle, ensuring that citizens are not required to provide information multiple times if its already held in electronic format by an authority.

Cross-border interoperability is increasingly relevant for digital identity. As of 2022, 48% of surveyed OECD countries have digital identity solutions for accessing public services domestically and in other countries. Additionally, 52% of OECD countries allow foreign citizens to use their own digital identity solutions to access public services within their country. Progress is particularly significant in Europe, as where all OECD countries where cross-border digital identity is already possible are also members of the European Union. In 2024, the European Parliament and the Council approved a new regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market. By 2026, all Members states should offer citizens and businesses digital wallets linking national digital identities with proof of other personal attributes (e.g., driving EU member states license, qualifications, bank account). These wallets will be usable across borders within the European Union.

Beyond the strict European level, other examples of cross-border interoperability of digital identity solutions also show significant progress in recent years, including bilateral co-operation agreements and free trade agreements. For example, in April 2024 the European Union and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to ensure co-operation on digital identity initiatives (European Commission, 2024^[23]), while in 2024 South Korea joined the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) between Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore, which allows parties to exchange knowledge related to digital identity policies and regulations (The Straits Times, 2024^[24]). In a similar vein, discussions of the G7 Digital & Tech Working

Group in 2024 led to a reaffirming of the commitment to the OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Digital Identity and an underlining of the importance of learning from each other (G7 Italia, 2024^[25]).

Systematising the consideration of transboundary impacts and mainstreaming International Regulatory Co-operation (IRC) in rulemaking to limit adverse impacts beyond international borders

As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, the results from the 2023 Trust Survey show that government is seen as less reliable in addressing complex policy challenges involving many unknowns or trade-offs (OECD, 2024^[8]). There is therefore a need for countries to invest in their public governance approaches to ensure that they have the necessary capacities to 'go global'. One such capacity is the ability to integrate transboundary impacts into domestic policy and rulemaking, to ensure that there is an understanding of how any new policies or laws are likely to impact other countries.

Overall, results on the implementation of the OECD Council Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PSD) show that 16 out of 25 respondents do use impact assessment tools to assess positive and negative impacts of policies on sustainable development (GRC, JPN, LUX, MEX, NLD, PRT). However, only six countries include impact on PCSD in information provided by Ministers to Parliament, and only four use impact assessment tools to assess transboundary impacts of policies (BEL, GRC, JPN, NLD). Therefore, assessing the transboundary impact of policies remains a key challenge (OECD, 2024^[26]).

As the need for International Regulatory Co-operation (IRC) is explicitly recognised in the OECD 2022 Recommendation on International Regulatory Co-operation to Tackle Global Challenges, countries are increasingly sharing IRC responsibilities across several central government bodies through a whole-of-government approach (OECD, 2021^[27]). As of 2020, two-thirds of OECD members had an explicit whole-of-government IRC policy in place, or a partial, sectoral policy. This is an area where countries are continuing to make progress. As they conduct their RIAs, some OECD countries increasingly take into consideration the international impacts of their proposed regulations, including in market openness, trade impacts, and impacts beyond jurisdiction. For example, in 2023 the United States adopted Circular No. A-4 which recommends regulators analyse effects of proposed regulations on noncitizens residing abroad, as well as effects within the US border (Office of Management and Budget, 2023^[28]). In the United Kingdom, IRC is highlighted as a key tool to achieve its environmental objectives, in particular in relation to the drive towards fusion and hydrogen energies as part of its net zero ambitions (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022^[29]). At a more global level, engagement by countries in international organisations can help to address transboundary effects, as evident in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, which has involved over 160 countries in negotiations on how to reduce plastic waste across the supply chain. Negotiations are expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Another dimension of transboundary effects is related to the citizen experience when accessing public services. While as it currently stands, it is rare for regulations, let alone international regulatory co-operation efforts, to be shaped based on citizen experience, some countries are beginning to explore the possibility of consulting citizens directly in the regulation formation process. For example, France and Germany have been working in 2023-24 with the European Union to form Franco-German Barometer on Administrative Complexity, which uses a citizen survey based on life-events to prioritise administrative transformation that is aligned with the most pressing needs of citizens.

Tackling global challenges through international collaboration on public sector innovation and policy experimentation

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlighted the potential for international collaboration on policy experimentation to be harnessed to tackle global challenges. It highlighted several areas in which this

could occur: behavioural science, which it noted to be particularly active in facilitating cross-border experimentation, and mission-oriented policies, which are defined as policy frameworks put in place to collectively address complex societal challenges, and which it noted to have been undertaken by organisations and governments alike. Most notably, it highlighted the European Commission's launching of five EU missions as part of its 2021-2027 Horizon Europe research and innovation programme: namely supporting climate resilience, tackling cancer, restoring oceans and waters, developing climate neutral smart cities, and fostering healthy soils.

The behavioural science community has continued to facilitate exchanging internationally on good practices on policy experimentation through the OECD [Network of Behavioural Insights Experts](#). A notable example is the successful application of the sludge audit methodology – i.e. a behaviourally-informed methodology to identify and address unnecessary frictions and psychological costs (OECD, 2024^[30]). In terms of policy experimentation, the Netherlands presented in 2024 a case study with an evaluation of a tool offering tailored sustainability advice to homeowners. The study found that personalised situation-specific advice significantly boosted the intension to adopt sustainability measures compared to standard advice, highlighting the value of citizen centred and targeted efforts.

Collaboration on mission-oriented innovation has also continued to evolve, as part of a maturing process. For example, the initiatives in place in the Netherlands led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs that mobilise public and private stakeholders around research higher education and innovation to achieve 25 missions have been recently streamlined and adapted to better leverage the mission oriented innovation. In 2024 Sweden launched Impact Innovation, its latest mission-oriented innovation funding instrument led by the Energy Agency, Innovation Agency, and Research Council for Sustainable Development. It aims to advance the green transition and enhance international competitiveness by funding five ecosystem-driven innovation platforms centred around missions ranging from net-zero to public sector reforms. Building on previous experiences, the funding agencies are integrating a dedicated cross-mission accelerator function to secure capacity-building to enable a truly mission-oriented approach.

Another area of recent progress is through the five EU missions, with increased horizon funding in 2024 and plans to streamline their governance and increase their capabilities and further support through the EU Mission Action Lab. With just some of the examples highlighted below:

- As part of the mission on supporting climate resilience, Valencia, in Spain, developed in 2023 a multi-level governance framework to help drive climate action across different levels of government, including by offering support to local governments in the design and implementation of local adaptation strategies (EU Missions, n.d.^[31]).
- In 2023, the Mission Action Lab conducted a diagnostic of the Austrian national implementation of the EU Missions.
- In 2024, in support of the combatting cancer mission, a series of focus groups were organised with citizens from Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, France, Lithuania, and Malta. These groups underlined the importance of improving information and communication on cancer prevention and early detection and screening for EU citizens (EU Missions, 2024^[32]).

Mobilising policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to report back to citizens on the progress made on tackling global challenges

The OECD 2022 RDI recognised the importance of monitoring and evaluation promoting government accountability and thus ensuring public trust in governments' capacity to tackle complex global issues.

While in 2022, OECD countries adopted the Recommendation on Public Policy Evaluation, thus committing to developing systematic approaches to evaluation (OECD, 2022^[33]), preliminary results from the 2023 OECD Survey on Public Policy Evaluation show that countries are still facing persistent challenges in developing such approaches. Many countries suffer from weak evaluation cultures in the public sector,

skills shortages, and limited resources to conduct evaluations (OECD, 2023^[34]). On the positive side, 80% of survey respondents have created a least one “evaluation champion”, in terms of an institution in charge of co-ordinating evaluation efforts nationally. For example, Australia’s Centre for Evaluation, developed in 2023, works with departments and agencies to help ensure evaluations are conducted in line with established principles, and that these evaluations are embedded into decision-making processes (Australian Centre for Evaluation, n.d.^[35]).

Governments are also monitoring and evaluating their efforts to address global challenges, such as the United Nation’s Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or global climate commitments. Evaluation results and data are often publicly disseminated, providing citizens with access to information on government action, thus enhancing transparency and potentially increasing trust in government. Countries have taken additional steps in this area in recent years, particularly in terms of Climate or the SDGs. In France for instance, the High Council for the Climate (HCC), placed under the authority of the Prime Minister, monitors France’s commitments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Its June 2024 annual report, released publicly, monitored compliance with the emissions reduction trajectory, tracked progress made in reducing these emissions, and provided recommendations on how to improve national climate policies (Haut Conseil pour le Climat, 2024^[36]). In Mexico, the national SDG information system - a joint initiative of the Office of the Presidency and the National Statistical and Geographical Institute – provides access to a set of indicators measuring progress in the achievement of 17 SDGs (Presidencia de la República & INEGI, n.d.^[37]). Similarly, in 2022, the United Kingdom’s Department for Science, Innovation and Technology published the results of an evaluation of the Global Challenges Research Fund which addresses SDGs, to provide evidence on how the fund is contributing to tackling these challenges (Vogel, Guthrie and Hepworth, 2022^[38]). In October 2023, the UK Climate Change Policy also provided an update on [progress towards reaching Net Zero in the UK](#).

There is also a growing recognition of the importance of disseminating evaluation results and monitoring data to relevant stakeholders, including citizens. As part of this trend, efforts continue to be invested to make evaluation findings and monitoring data increasingly accessible, as well as to tailor the presentation and packaging of evaluation data to the needs of different users and uses. In France, the Cour des Comptes launched a new platform in May 2024 which contains more than 900 evaluations performed by 37 French institutions between 2008 and 2023 (CRTC, 2024^[39]). The platform also provides a one page summary with the key results and the recommendations for each of the evaluations. This represents a good initiative to further disseminate the results of evaluations and keep citizens informed about the results of government action.

3.1.3. Build capacity for public servants to tackle global challenges

The OECD 2022 RDI report identified the importance of strengthening skills within government to think in a global manner. While this raises key questions on how to develop such global competencies in the public administration, skills gaps even at the domestic level mean that the primary focus of most governments continues to be on domestic policy issues. The Action Plan therefore calls on governments to define global competencies, and to develop them through appropriate talent management practices, including by demonstrating themselves to be attractive employers to people with the right experience and expertise.

Defining global competencies

Global competencies are multidimensional capabilities. Public servants with capacities to think in global terms understand the interactions between local and global policy issues, understand and appreciate different (intercultural) perspectives and world views, interact successfully with others (including in international forums), and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being. Therefore, global competencies can refer to skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to understand and address global challenges. Developing global competencies in the public service requires first identifying

what ‘global’ competencies entail, before deciding how they should be allocated, and developing them through relevant talent management tools and programmes.

Some countries have specific policy analysis tracks which incorporate global competencies. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the civil service competency framework highlights the need for policymakers to understand the international context, work effectively with international bodies, understand the role of international development work, and understand international trade implications for policy areas (Government of the United Kingdom, 2024^[40]). In New Zealand, the [2023 Policy skills framework](#) also recognises the need for developing understanding of the international level for current and emerging issues, and for developing an understanding of the international settings relevant to civil servants’ work.

One increasingly important skill for public servants is evidence literacy – that is, the capacity to work and engage with evidence – as they need to access and evaluate expertise and evidence from different sources. Understanding research, data and good practices produced in other countries represents an important share of the work of public servants designing policies. Knowing how to access, evaluate and translate this evidence into the local context, and use it to communicate with citizens, is thus an essential part of being a globally competent public service. Several countries have taken active steps in this area – for example, between 2023 and 2024, Belgium, Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands engaged in a project with the European Commission and the OECD, which has in part involved capacity building for senior policymakers to engage with evidence. In April 2024 the United States’ Office of Management and Budget opened up a call for participation by staff from federal agencies to take part in an Evidence Based Decision Making Leadership academy, opened to staff from all agencies.

As countries work together to address issues such as greenhouse emissions, biodiversity loss and sustainable development, ‘*green competencies*’ are becoming increasingly relevant in public management. An increasing number of policies have a green aspect to them and have a role to play in tackling climate change. In response to this, some countries are taking active steps to develop such “green competencies” among senior civil servants. For example, in late 2023 France’s National Institute for the Public Service announced its training module on the ecological transition for ambassadors. This module will aim to develop ambassador’s scientific knowledge of the causes and consequences of climate change, as well as carbon footprint of organisations and the links between human activity and biodiversity issues (INSP, 2023^[41]).

Attracting, strengthening and retaining global competencies in public administrations

Once identified, global competencies need to be developed and managed through appropriate talent and career management mechanisms throughout the public service, rather than being concentrated only in foreign ministries or international relations branches of Ministries. Three avenues to help achieve greater development and distribution of global competencies across administrations may be through an emphasis on non-formal ways of learning, mobility programmes, and dedicated strategic workforce planning.

Attracting global competencies may be challenging in a competitive labour market. These competences are part of an increasingly diverse range of experiences, many of whom may be less attracted by the traditional offering of the public service. Across any number of policy areas at the core of those global challenges – climate change, inequality, migration, the rise of AI – the public service is in competition for a range of skills that are also highly sought-after by the private sector.

Developing global competencies through learning and development opportunities is essential to ensure public servants are able to engage with complex and multidimensional policy challenges. However, much progress remains to be made, as only 8% of OECD member countries identified global competencies as one of the top competencies to train non-manager employees for, and none to train senior managers for (OECD, 2023^[42]). Few formal learning and development programmes therefore have an explicit focus on global competencies per se. France appears as an exception, as training offered on climate change and

its implications has a direct relation with global competencies. In 2022, France had highlighted training efforts to the green transition as a key priority. This is currently being done by prioritising training of senior level public servants at all levels of the administration as highlighted above.

National schools of government play an important role in formally developing these competencies. In 2022, only 33% of schools of government surveyed by the OECD network of schools of government had programmes in place covering global competencies, while 39% stated they were developing similar programmes. However, even though 62% of schools declared global competencies would be a high priority by 2027, the topic remains largely less prioritised than innovation, new types of leadership, digitisation, foresight, crisis management, AI or the SDGs (OECD, 2022^[43]).

International mobility programmes as a way to improve global competencies

International mobility programmes provide essential opportunities for individuals to enhance their global competencies by experiencing diverse perspectives and work environments. Through exposure to different languages, environments and professional practices, participants develop cross-cultural communication skills and a broader understanding of global issues. OECD member countries, especially members of the European Union, have largely developed international mobility programmes, and almost 70% of them have tools in place to enable international mobility (OECD, 2022^[44]). These tools can take different shapes and forms. For instance, 66% of OECD member countries use longer-term secondments to send public servants to work in other countries or in international organisations, 46% enable short term international assignments, and 23% have specific international exchange programmes (OECD, 2023^[42]). Therefore, even though learning and development programmes do not focus explicitly on development of global competencies, there is still strong recognition of the value of international postings as a way to bring an international outlook back to national policy work.

A recent important initiative is the ComPAct programme developed in the context of the European Union to enhance the European Administrative Space. ComPAct builds upon three pillars on public administration skills, capacity for the digital decade, and capacity to lead the green transition. Part of the public administration skills agenda relies on PACE (Public Administration Cooperation Exchange), a programme building global administrative capacity by organising international mobility across EU administrations in selected areas. As of 2023, over 300 public servants had participated to the more than 70 exchanges facilitated (European Commission, 2023^[45]). One of the main goals of the programme are to increase awareness of the European dimension in national administrations, facilitate knowledge transfers and enhance collaboration opportunities on areas of common interest.

3.2. Key Area 2: Building resilience to foreign undue influence in policymaking and democratic processes

3.2.1. Strengthen institutional and regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and integrity on lobbying and influence activities, including political finance from foreign governments and related entities, foreign political organisations, and foreign commercial interests

The 2022 OECD RDI report highlighted how foreign governments can attempt to influence policy- and decision-making processes by capitalising on loopholes in existing lobbying and political finance frameworks (OECD, 2022^[33]). Indeed, the evolving lobbying and influence landscape poses new risks for the integrity of public decision-making processes, particularly in a world with increased geopolitical tension, including the repercussions of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. These risks include new channels of influence, such as social media and artificial intelligence tools, as well as lobbying and

influence by foreign actors, including foreign governments and their related entities or individuals, foreign political organisations, and foreign state-owned and controlled entities. This makes it crucial for governments to strengthen transparency and openness of lobbying and influence activities in public decision-making processes, including from foreign state interest actors.

Among the public policies being implemented in various OECD countries, transparency registers are gaining traction and have been subject to greater scrutiny since 2022. Certain lobbying registers in force in OECD jurisdictions partially cover some of the lobbying and influence activities carried out on behalf of foreign governments, such as Canada, for example. In Europe the 2021 Interinstitutional Agreement on a common transparency register specifies that authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies, are excluded from the scope of application “*except where such authorities are represented by legal entities, offices or networks without diplomatic status or are represented by an intermediary*”, who are therefore required to register and disclose their interest representation activities carried out on behalf of third countries (EUR-Lex, 2021^[46]).

Building on the models of lobbying registers, an increasing number of countries are opting for a separate transparency register dedicated to foreign influence. While the United States and Australia have such systems in place since, respectively, 1938 (Foreign Agents Registration Act, FARA) and 2018 (Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme, FITS), the United Kingdom adopted its Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS) in 2023. France also recently made progress on these issues with the adoption in March 2024 of a law on preventing foreign interference, which took into account key recommendations from the OECD and provides for the establishment of a transparency register dedicated to influence activities conducted on behalf of foreign state interests (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. Recent foreign influence transparency schemes introduced in OECD countries

United Kingdom

The establishment of a Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS) was provided for in the National Security Bill (Part 4) passed in the summer of 2023. The register is scheduled to come into force in autumn 2024 and detailed guidelines will be published before the scheme’s requirements come into force.

The Scheme covers “**political influence activities**” conducted in the United Kingdom on behalf of foreign powers, including a foreign government or part of a foreign government, or a political party which is a governing political party of a foreign government. Foreign powers themselves are not required to register, only people who have entered into agreements with foreign powers. An arrangement involves a “direction” from the foreign power to carry out “political influence activities” in the United Kingdom, directly or through another natural or legal person.

An activity is considered a “political influence activity” (article 70 of the National Security Act 2023) if it meets the following two criteria:

- **Criterion 1** – the activity is one of the following:
 - A communication to a senior public official or politician.
 - A public communication (for example, the publication or production of an article) except where it is reasonably clear that it is made at the direction of a foreign power (for example, if an article is labelled in a way that makes this fact clear, or if the writer mentions this fact in the article itself).
 - The provision of money, goods or services to an individual or entity in the United Kingdom.
- **Criterion 2** – the purpose of the activity is to influence one of the following:

- An election or referendum in the United Kingdom.
- A decision of a Minister or Government department (including a Minister or Government department of Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland).
- The proceedings of a UK registered political party (such as their manifesto commitments).
- A Member of the House of Commons, House of Lords, Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament or Senedd Cymru (when acting in their capacity as such).

The FIRS distinguishes between two types of influence with distinct disclosure regimes: a “political influence tier”, which requires the registration of arrangements to carry out political influence activities in the United Kingdom at the direction of a foreign power, and an “enhanced tier” for all activities carried out on behalf of certain foreign powers or power-controlled entities that pose a risk to UK safety and interests.

France

The law on preventing foreign interference in France, adopted in March 2024, provides for the creation by 2025 of a register of foreign influence activities to be set up by the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP), and separate from the existing register of interest representatives established in 2016.

Registrable activities will include activities of any natural or legal person, regardless of nationality, acting on behalf of foreign powers outside the European Union and their related entities, and that aim to influence public decision making or the conduct of public policies, including France's European or foreign policy. These activities may involve communicating with elected representatives or public decision makers (declared candidates in national or European elections, leaders of political parties, ministers, ministerial advisers or advisers to the Head of State, members of parliament, regional and departmental executives, mayors of towns with more than 20 000 inhabitants, former presidents of the Republic or ministers for five years after leaving office, etc.). They also include carrying out communication campaigns and the disbursement of money for influence purposes.

Source: OECD (2024^[47]), *Strengthening the Transparency and Integrity of Foreign Influence Activities in France: A Tool for Tackling Foreign Interference Risks*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/438da77f-en>; United Kingdom Home Office, Foreign Influence Registration Scheme factsheet, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-bill-factsheets/foreign-influence-registration-scheme-factsheet>.

Since 2023, Canada has also been considering the possibility of establishing a separate foreign influence transparency registry and launched a public consultation on the matter (Public Safety Canada, 2023^[48]; Public Safety Canada, 2023^[49]). Furthermore, in December 2023, as part of the European Defence of Democracy Package, the European Union presented a proposal (European Commission, 2023^[50]) for a Directive that would establish harmonised requirements in the internal market regarding the transparency of interest representation activities carried on behalf of third countries (European Commission, 2023^[51]).

Another way through which foreign powers or their proxies can interfere in other countries' democratic processes is through the abuse of political financing. Interfering countries can help policymakers get elected to office and later ask for favours in return. This can be achieved, for instance, by providing financial contributions to candidates or political parties and their campaigns. Recent OECD evidence shows that countries' current political finance safeguards are leaving them exposed to foreign interference. While 30 OECD member states ban contributions to political parties from foreign sources, fewer than half of OECD countries ban anonymous contributions to political parties, enabling foreign states or enterprises to contribute anonymously and circumvent current prohibitions (Figure 3.5). These gaps should be filled if countries are to successfully mitigate the risks of foreign interference.

Figure 3.5. Restrictions on financial contributions to political parties

Regulations completely ban financial contributions from...

		Anonymous donations	Foreign states and foreign enterprises	Publicly owned enterprises
	Chile	✓	✓	✓
	Costa Rica	✓	✓	✓
	Czechia	✓	✓	✓
	Estonia	✓	✓	✓
	France	✓	✓	✓
	Iceland	✓	✓	✓
	Israel	✓	✓	✓
	Latvia	✓	✓	✓
	Lithuania	✓	✓	✓
	Luxembourg	✓	✓	✓
	Mexico	✓	✓	✓
	Norway	✓	✓	✓
	Slovak Republic	✓	✓	✓
	Slovenia	✓	✓	✓
	Spain	✓	✓	✓
	Türkiye	✓	✓	✓
	Switzerland	✓	✓	x
	Italy	✓	✓	
	Austria	x	✓	✓
	Canada	x	✓	✓
	Finland	x	✓	✓
	Japan	x	✓	✓
	Korea	x	✓	✓
	Poland	x	✓	✓
	Portugal	x	✓	✓
	United Kingdom	x	✓	✓
	United States	x	✓	✓
	Ireland	x	✓	x
	Netherlands	x	✓	x
	Greece	x	x	✓
	Australia	x	x	x
	Denmark	x	x	x
	Sweden	x	x	x

Note: The following OECD countries impose a threshold but not a complete ban on anonymous donations: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States. Australia imposes a threshold on financial contributions from foreign states and foreign enterprises. Ireland imposes a threshold on financial contributions from publicly owned enterprises. Italy did not provide information for the criterion regarding “publicly owned enterprises”. Data for Belgium, Colombia, Germany, Hungary and New Zealand were not provided.

How to read: Regulations in Chile impose a complete ban on political parties from receiving financial contributions from anonymous donations, foreign states and foreign enterprises, and publicly owned enterprises.

Source: OECD (2024^[52]), *Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/968587cd-en>; OECD Public Integrity Indicators Database.

3.2.2. Improve regulation and oversight of pre- and post-public employment restrictions for high-level public officials seeking positions or roles in foreign governments or related entities, or foreign companies

In addition to a transparency mechanism for foreign influence, policies relating to the integrity of public officials must take the risk of foreign interference into account. A particularly important issue to consider in the context of foreign influence is the “revolving door” between the public and private sectors. This has received increased attention since 2022 – as noted in the report by the European Parliament’s “Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation”, the employment of former public officials and civil servants in companies controlled directly or indirectly by foreign states may entail a risk of interference (European Parliament, 2022^[53]). The knowledge they may have acquired during their time in office or while carrying public functions, their network of influence within the administration or among elected representatives, or more broadly in society, may constitute valuable sources of influence for a foreign power carrying out interference activities. However, the specific risks to high level public officials seeking positions or roles in foreign governments, foreign companies, and related entities, currently appears to be poorly addressed within OECD countries, outside of general post-public employment rules (see Chapter 2 and Action Plan on enhancing representation, participation and openness in public life).

While the United States has explicitly recognised such risks in its post government restrictions for some time, other countries are now making progress. For example, in 2023 France implemented the Military Planning Act 2024-2030 and *Decree no. 2023-1171 of 13 December 2023*, tightening the rules for members of the armed forces: a declaration must now be made to the Ministry of the Armed Forces, which has the power to prevent the post-public employment activity of military personnel who have held positions in strategic areas. The recently adopted law to prevent foreign interference, also strengthens control over the professional reconversion in the private sector of former ministers, local executives and members of an independent authority has been strengthened. This control, currently carried out by the HATVP in relation to conflicts of interest, has been extended to cover the risks of foreign influence over a five-year period following recommendations from the OECD (OECD, 2024^[47]).

3.2.3. Require not-for-profit organisations and higher education institutions to apply transparency and integrity frameworks to activities and donations from abroad

The OECD 2022 RDI report had identified how actors from some autocratic regimes can undermine educational, social and cultural institutions in democracies. Indeed, academic and cultural co-operation, including through think-tanks and CSOs, offer rich possibilities for direct or indirect foreign interference. In recent years, several countries and organisations have established or discussed establishing transparency and integrity frameworks for not-for-profit organisations and higher-education institutions in order to better account for foreign interference risks. For example, in 2022, the European Commission published a toolkit on how to mitigate foreign interference in research and innovation. The publication outlines best practices to support EU Higher Education Institutions and Research Performing Organisations in safeguarding their fundamental values, including academic freedom, integrity and institutional autonomy, as well as to protect their staff, students, research findings and assets (European Commission, 2022^[54]).

In France, 2024 law to prevent foreign interference includes a requirement for think tanks to publish their sources of funding to the High Authority for transparency in public life (HATVP). In Chile, a special Ministerial Advisory Commission for the regulation of the relationship between private non-profit institutions and the State proposed in 2023 the creation of an electronic portal that allows monitoring and accessing information on transfers of public resources to civil society organisations (OECD, 2024^[55]).

3.2.4. Strengthen policy responses to counteract the threat of foreign information manipulation operations, including via the spread of disinformation and intentionally misleading information activities that seek to manipulate and unduly influence democratic processes and public debate

While it is important to recognise that foreign influence can effectively contribute to democratic debates if conducted transparently and through official channels, risks arise when foreign agents attempt to undermine democratic processes (OECD, 2024^[56]). As highlighted in the Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy report, undue foreign influence can destabilise democracies in a variety of forms, one of the most significant of which is through the spreading of disinformation and other divisive content (OECD, 2022^[57]). In order to combat this, since 2022, countries have adopted new legislation, as well as a number of governance measures to provide clearer strategic guidance.

The increasing attention paid to foreign disinformation threats is evident in the increasing frequency that they are included in legislation. For example, the UK Online Safety Act states that foreign interference is a priority threat, meaning it is a serious and prevalent online threat and companies must take proactive steps to tackle it. Schedule 7 Section 37 of the Act says that anything considered an offence under the 2023 National Security Act (which itself considers a wide variety of foreign interference risks, including disinformation) is also considered an offence under this Act (Government of the United Kingdom, 2023^[58]; Government of the United Kingdom, 2023^[59]). In Canada, *An Act respecting countering foreign interference* was announced in May 2024, which aims to modify various security acts for the internet era, and creates a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry, promoting transparency from people who advocate on behalf of a foreign principle (Government of Canada, 2024^[60]). Lithuania is also currently discussing modernisation efforts for existing laws, with a proposal to amend the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public and to the Criminal Code to include criminal liability for disinformation spread by 'bot farms', including automatically created fake accounts designed to spread disinformation (LRT, 2023^[61]).

Other countries have responded to these threats by developing existing strategies or creating new ones to better combat them. For example, the German National Security Strategy, adopted by the Federal Cabinet in June 2023, mentions a variety of measures to prevent disinformation campaigns and to understand how they intersect with other national security threats. In particular, it states its intention to set out a strategy on tackling disinformation that will improve the tools for early identification of manipulative communications, as well as its plan to increase support for research on disinformation (German Ministry of Defence, n.d.^[62]). Estonia has also recently further developed its approach to national security. Its updated National Security Concept, approved by the government in January 2023, recognises the threat posed by the dissemination of disinformation, and underlines the importance of ensuring that the people of Estonia are able to recognise and oppose such information (Republic of Estonia Government, 2023^[63]).

Increasing recognition of the threat that disinformation poses has also been seen at the international level, via cross-country agreements. For example, in September 2023 the Netherlands launched the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online, endorsed by 30 other countries⁵. The Declaration highlights the need to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation, both by state and non-state actors, and requests that the participating States abstain from conducting or sponsoring disinformation campaigns, and condemn any such acts (Government of the Netherlands, 2023^[64]).

Several countries have also set up new bodies in order to respond to foreign disinformation threats more effectively. While the French Agency VIGINUM and the United States Global Engagement Center of the State Department are well-known, another interesting example is Lithuania's National Crisis Management Centre (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023^[65]), which was founded in January 2023 and provides continuous monitoring of threats of interest to national security. Should a crisis occur, the Centre would be responsible for preparing data-based solutions and fostering inter-institutional co-ordination in their implementation. Latvia's State Chancellery also published a 2022 digital book titled "Handbook

against disinformation: recognise and oppose” which provides advice on handling information manipulation both for public sector employees and the general public (OECD, 2024^[56]). Similar to Lithuania’s Crisis Management Centre, Moldova’s Centre for Strategic Communication and Combatting Misinformation, approved in July 2023, takes on a co-ordination role, fostering inter-institutional co-ordination in its fight against foreign interference.

3.2.5. Ensure an enabling environment for journalists, media outlets, civil society organisations, including by ensuring protection from threats, intimidation and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)

The OECD 2022 RDI report warned of emerging attempts by foreign actors to undermine an enabling environment for journalists, media outlets and civil society organisations. As such, taking measures to protect all those who scrutinise and report on foreign interference operations from intimidation, threats, physical attacks and abusive strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), is of paramount importance to build resilience to foreign undue influence in policymaking and democratic processes (OECD, 2010^[66]). This is of course related to the issues of mis and disinformation analysed (see Chapter 1 on Public Governance for Combatting Mis- and Disinformation).

A first type of measure is to engage in initiatives to counter Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) that increasingly endanger freedom of expression for activists, media workers and members of CSOs with the aim of silencing them. Therefore, against a backdrop of rising awareness of the threats posed by SLAPPs, Belgium, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and United Kingdom are all in the process of, or have already, introduced related draft laws, focal points, and working groups (European Commission, 2023^[67]; European Commission, 2023^[68]; Houses of the Oireachtas, 2023^[69]; Senate of Italy, 2024^[70]; Senate of Italy, 2024^[71]; Senate of Italy, 2024^[72]; Senate of Italy, 2024^[73]; Senate of Italy, 2024^[74]; European Commission, 2023^[75]; Government of the United Kingdom, 2024^[76]). Moreover, **Ireland** is in the process of reforming its defamation law, introducing changes that are expected to help countering SLAPPs (Joint Committee on Justice, 2023^[77]). At European level, the European Union adopted a Directive in April 2024 to counter cross-border SLAPPs, introducing early dismissal procedures and requiring plaintiffs to cover estimated legal costs, in addition to additional penalties that can be imposed on plaintiffs by the courts, following an earlier Recommendation from the European Commission (EU, 2024^[78]). Moreover, in April 2024, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe approved a recommendation with guidelines for identifying and countering SLAPPs (Council of Europe, 2024^[79]).

Beyond the specific issue of SLAPPs, a number of countries including Germany, Italy, the Slovak Republic and Sweden have taken steps to protect journalists during assemblies. Recognising that media workers can be subject to harassment and violence during protests, these countries adopted a comprehensive action plan to safeguard journalists in 2023. Lithuania also has several measures in place to protect media workers, including specialised training sessions for prosecutors, police officers, and judges to address threats against journalists. Moreover, targeted training sessions and consultations between law enforcement agencies and journalists’ associations aim to prevent threats and attacks during public gatherings and demonstrations. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop a mechanism for gathering data on various forms of attacks against journalists (Article 19, 2023^[80]). (Reporters without Borders, 2023^[81]).

Finally, countries can also take action to support Human rights defenders (HRDs) which play an essential role in democratic societies by defending individuals’ rights to express dissenting opinions and advocate for marginalised voices (OECD, 2022^[82]). In 2022, Chile joined the Escazú Agreement, the first treaty on environmental matters to include binding, specific provisions for the protection of HRDs in environmental matters (United Nations, 2024^[83]). To implement the Escazú Agreement, Chile approved the “National Participatory Implementation Plan for the Escazú Agreement 2024-2030” in April 2024, with specific measures to collect data, raise awareness, train public officials, and establish a protection programme for

environmental defenders in the country (Government of Chile, 2024^[84]). In Denmark, the independent state-funded Danish Institute for Human Rights is the co-creator of the Inclusive SDG Data Partnerships initiative. The initiative aims to generate official data on HRDs worldwide through alliances in several countries. The partnerships comprise national statistics offices, CSOs and NHRIs. They identify missing data and plan how to fill the gaps (Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2022^[85]).

3.2.6. Designing and implementing policies to limit the abuse of Residence-by-Investment (RBI) and Citizenship-by-Investment (CBI) schemes by individuals that hide or facilitate financial and economic crimes, including corruption, tax evasion and money laundering

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlighted that Residence-by-Investment (RBI) and Citizen-by-Investment (CBI) schemes can be used and abused to hide or facilitate financial and economic crimes, including corruption, tax evasion and money-laundering. The involvement of multiple agencies across government as well as intermediaries can provide challenges in the regulation, implementation and oversight of these schemes and make them vulnerable to abuse by professional enablers and fraudsters targeting opportunities to service or exploit recipients (OECD/FATF, 2023^[86]). For example, in Türkiye good domestic co-ordination in processing CBI application has helped to prevent some individuals to apply to the programme.

The OECD/FATF 2023 report identifies a number of mitigation measures that can help address such abuse. Conducting sound analysis of money laundering and corruption risks, setting clear objectives, ensuring clarity around the respective roles and responsibilities of public and private sector actors and building accountability mechanisms into the design and implementation of RBI/CBI programmes can help mitigate above-mentioned risks (OECD/FATF, 2023^[86]). In terms of concrete country initiatives, in Malta, a regulator monitors and supervises the granting of CBI, with an annual report to Parliament. In Ireland, an immigrant investor programme was closed in 2023, even though an independent evaluation committee did assess all project applications under this programme. In Portugal the Court of Auditors has powers to audit the "Golden Visa programme", and made recommendations to improve the transparency and simplicity of the procedure. The United Kingdom has had a security vetting for immigration officials for quite some time, and New Zealand has established a code of conduct for immigration officials.

3.3. Working collectively through the OECD and priorities going forward

3.3.1. Working collectively through the OECD

Global Capacities

The OECD monitors its [Recommendation for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development](#) (PCSD), including a report on [Driving Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development](#) and [a Monitoring report on the implementation of the Recommendation for OECD Council](#) in 2024. The OECD also released a cross directorate report in 2024 on [OECD Contributions to the 2030 Agenda and Beyond](#), based on OECD knowledge, data, tools and best practices to prepare for future global challenges.

The [OECD Paris Collaborative on Green Budgeting](#) and the [OECD network on Gender Budgeting](#) also provide avenues to discuss strategic budget initiatives. The Working Party of the Leading Practitioners for Public Procurement supports countries in their efforts **towards strategic public procurement**, including cross-cutting objectives such as human rights and gender equality that are discussed throughout the annual **Public Procurement Weeks**.

The network of OECD behavioural experts has now helped to prepare an [Interactive BI Unit Map](#), featuring units across 43 countries, an [International Project Repository](#), including more than 100 BI projects, some of which related to global challenges. 2023 Guide to support policymakers in the use of different experimentation methodologies ([Seven routes to experimentation in policymaking](#)).

The OECD's cross directorate [Mission Action Lab](#) is supporting people across levels of government, as well as co-operating with the European Union, with the support of a Mission Community of Practice connecting over 250 policymakers and mission practitioners from around the world launched in 2024.

To discuss global competences of civil servants, the OECD convened a **Public Service Leaders' Roundtable** in 2024 to discuss the increasingly complex leadership challenges facing senior management of civil services. The **OECD's Network of Schools of Government** discussed the opportunities of training institutions to develop leaders of transformation in their public services. The European Commission's Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (PACE) can also greatly support those efforts, offering concrete opportunities to build such approaches at European level.

The OECD Public Governance Reviews to carry out comparative analysis of public governance competencies of governments to tackle global challenges, including through centres of government. The [Public Governance Monitor of Sweden](#) did address government capacity to lead and co-ordinate cross-cutting issues, with a focus on climate policies. Dedicated reviews have also been looking at the [role and capacities of government institutions in steering, coordinating and implementing the green agenda, particularly in Romania](#). These Reviews will increasingly integrate themes that support the reinforcement of democratic governance in the face of global challenges, such as participation, information integrity and governing with AI, as is the case with the Public Governance Review of Ukraine.

Finally, the OECD is actively engaging youth in contributing to policy solutions to global and intergenerational challenges. Over the 2023-24 period, the **OECD Horizontal Project "A Better Future for Young People in Ageing Societies"** has helped Members work together to identify good practices and inspire more ambitious government action. The **OECD Youth Policy Toolkit**, which will provide hands-on guidance to policymakers in line with the [OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People](#), is expected to be launched in 2024.

Foreign Interference

The OECD convened two **High-Level Dialogues on Building Resilience to Foreign Interference**, the first in November 2023 and the second in June 2024. The OECD is also supporting countries in the design of policy responses to the risk of foreign interference as exemplified by the report [Strengthening Transparency and Integrity of Foreign Influence Activities in France](#). The OECD is **currently conducting a stocktaking of countries' resilience policies with the** aim to support the development of an OECD Framework to Build Resilience to Foreign Interference in a Globalised World.

The [amended Recommendation of the Council on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying](#) and Influence was adopted by the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in Spring 2024.

Responding to the mandates of the ministerial meetings of the Financial Action Task Force in April 2022 and of the Public Governance Committee in November 2022, the OECD and FATF published the first ever joint [OECD-FATF report, on Misuse of Citizenship and Residency by Investment Programmes \(CBI/RBI\)](#) in November 2023.

3.3.2. *Conclusions and priorities for the future*

Governments are strengthening governance capacities to address global challenges. At the same time, there is a clear recognition that in many cases democracy is under threat in open and global societies, with intensifying foreign interference changing the landscape of international relations. Countries have taken many steps in this area by:

- **Reinforcing public governance capacities to address global challenges** including the systematic consideration of the transboundary impacts; strengthening civil servants' capacity to identify and select high quality evidence when considering global policy issues; new reporting and accountability mechanisms to ensure governments are complying with their commitments made at the global level (e.g. climate change); international co-operation to foster data access as well as interoperability and mutual recognition of data access and sharing arrangements.
- **Building resilience to foreign undue influence** in democratic processes. This includes strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and integrity of lobbying - including political finance from foreign sources; improving regulation and oversight of pre- and post-public employment restrictions on senior public officials; ensuring that journalists, media outlets, civil society organisations are protected from threats, intimidation and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).

However, the scale of the problem requires greater co-operation amongst democracies. This includes pursuing efforts to promote and share good practices on evidence informed policymaking to reinforce public governance capacities to address global challenges, as use of evidence is a key driver of trust in government.

This will also involve greater investments to better understand foreign interference and design appropriate policy responses. The OECD is supporting countries in strengthening their public governance systems to reap the benefits of global co-operation, while reducing the risk of malevolent interference by external actors. The OECD will be developing a Framework to Build Resilience to Foreign Interference in a Globalised World, enabling to distinguish transparent foreign influence and undue foreign interference, to support countries to better exercise their legitimate foreign influence in fully transparent and accountable terms. The Reinforcing Democracy Initiative will continue to offer opportunity for global dialogue to delineate foreign influence from foreign interference, putting transparency as a key requirement and countering the latter.

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Notes

¹ Section 2, clause 5.1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act 1999. The implementation framework is currently under development (Government of Canada, 2024^[87]).

² The Republic of Türkiye interprets the term “gender”, throughout the document, as identical with “sex” pursuant to the binary concept of biological female and male sex. The term “gender equality” shall be interpreted as “equality between women and men”.

³ Accession countries surveyed were Romania, Bulgaria and Brazil.

⁴ Results from the OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022) to which 38 countries, including 4 accession countries replied.

⁵ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay and United States.

4 Governing Green

Countries are employing tools such as green budgeting and public procurement to align government actions with environmental goals. Countries are also monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and environmental footprints. Some are engaging with civil society, strengthening public communication and citizen participation to foster consensus for green policies. However, more is needed to accelerate the transition to a green economy. Democratic governments need to garner public understanding and support for policies that may be seen as contentious. Governments can act to refine governance processes, streamlining the permitting of green infrastructure, and making use of strategic public procurement. Finally, they need to make further efforts in employing public communication and engaging with citizens to build trust and buy in.

4.1. Introduction

The OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative's pillar on Governing Green underscores the crucial interlinkage between the future of democratic governance and environmental action, highlighting the expectation on democratic governments to effectively manage complex, interconnected, and long-term policy challenges, including the intricate trade-offs necessary for the collective good. The efficacy of climate and environmental policies hinges on robust and efficient public governance, calling for a clear strategic direction, long-term priorities, coherence, trust in governmental action, and co-ordinated approaches across different sectors and levels of government. A transformative shift in governance is essential to effectively tackle environmental pressures, especially the urgent climate crisis, requiring not only society-wide efforts but also specific, government-led initiatives.

This draft chapter discusses country's action to advance on key areas included in the [Action Plan on Governing Green](#), welcomed in the OECD Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy [[OECD/LEGAL/0484](#)], namely focused on:

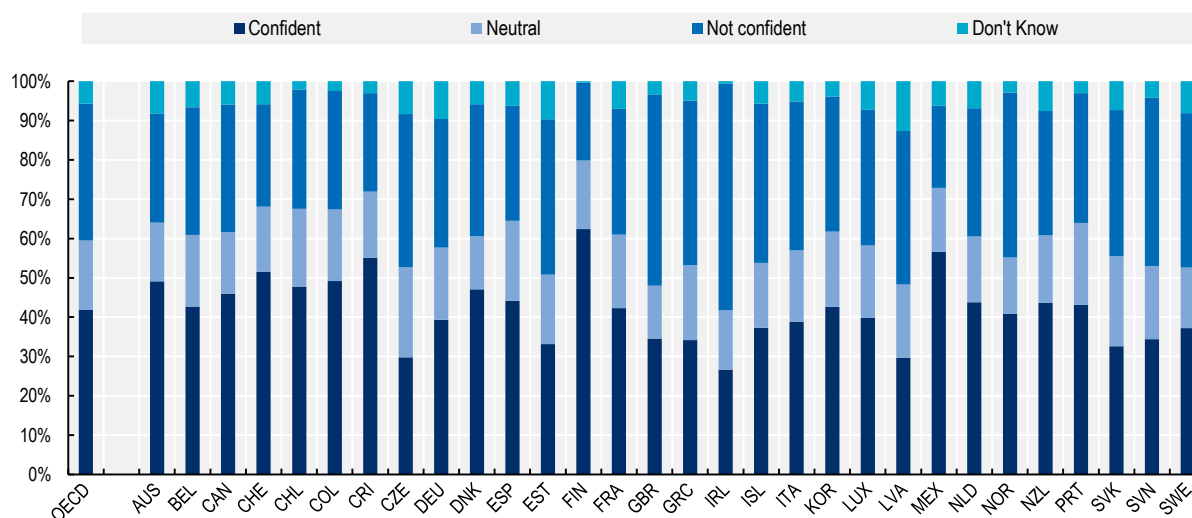
- **Key area 1** –Steering and building consensus and trust for delivering green in the next decade.
- **Key area 2** – Using the right tools for climate and environmental action.
- **Key area 3** – Leading by example – a greener and more resilient public sector.

This draft chapter has been developed mainly building on the work carried out by OECD bodies and integrates the latest results from the 2023 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (OECD, 2024^[1]). These results show that only an overage of four in ten among citizens from countries participating in the survey are confident that their country will reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Figure 4.1).

This chapter provide a brief description of the current context and challenges for governments to deliver on climate. It will identify progress by OECD countries in their efforts to govern green and potential gaps and barriers for further progress, building on the PGC's work and on work of relevant OECD bodies.

Figure 4.1. An average of four in ten are confident their country will reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Share of population reporting different levels of confidence that their country will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next ten years, 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that [COUNTRY] will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next ten years?”. The “confident” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “not confident” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average of responses across countries.

Source: OECD (2024^[11]), *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en>.

4.2. Key area 1 - Steering and building consensus and trust for delivering green in the next decade

4.2.1. Promote meaningful and two-way dialogue that enhances opportunities for stakeholder exchange and promotes effective citizen participation in the decision-making process for climate action and the green transition, including through innovative processes such as deliberative democracy mechanisms

More recently, public authorities have been using civic technologies to enable citizens to collect data and better inform decision making or alert the authorities on environmental challenges. These have been used in many cities around the world, with several examples available on the OECD surveys and OPSI platform (see the general discussion on participation and deliberation in Chapter 2, which also has numerous climate related examples).

Governments reliance on more democratic and participatory approaches to address the pressing challenges of climate change and the green transition is a settled practice. Countries have continued to step up their efforts to develop innovative and deliberative processes to give a greater voice to citizens, broaden dialogue and strengthen a sense of ownership of the decisions taken.

There continues to be an increasing use of deliberative processes, as part of a wider effort by democratic institutions to become more participatory and open to informed citizen input and collective intelligence (see Chapter 2). Representative deliberative processes offer a means for public authorities to involve citizens

in public decision making, including sectors and population groups that are usually marginalised¹ or excluded. These processes can contribute to better policy outcomes by generating public judgements rather than mere public opinions. When conducted effectively, they can empower policymakers to address public policy issues and build trust between citizens and government building consensus around policy challenges that require complex trade-offs.

Many deliberative assemblies dealing with a subject directly related to the green transition have been set in place in recent years (OECD, 2023^[2]). They involve a group of citizens selected at random and statistically stratified to form a microcosm of society that deliberates on environmental issues. For example, in Denmark, a set of citizens deliberated in the presence of representatives from five political organisations in order to produce a set of recommendations on the future of sustainable consumption, recommendations that these representatives were then obliged to present to the relevant councils/committees (OECD, 2023^[2]). At a broader European level, 150 citizens contributed 23 recommendations to reduce food waste during a 2022 citizen's panel. In some cases, such deliberative forums have been institutionalised, such as the Permanent Climate Assembly of Brussels (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. The Permanent Climate Assembly of Brussels

The Citizen's Climate Assembly is a permanent deliberative process founded in 2023 and run by Brussels Environment, the administration responsible for climate and energy in the Brussels region. It aims to mobilise the experience of Brussels citizens and enable them to feed into government policies and strategies developed to achieve the Region's climate objectives. Brussels Environment plans to organise a new cycle of the Assembly once a year, each time made up of 100 randomly selected citizens.

The first cycle of the Climate Assembly focused on housing in Brussels. It was supported by a technical expert group, which provided input on the content of the discussion, as well as by an advisory committee, whose role was to consider the overall process – i.e. how inclusion was considered, what impact was had on the administration, etc. The participating citizens ultimately made more than 40 recommendations, including on fair renovation, new ways of living, and the role of nature in the city. The government of the Brussels-Capital Region has committed to developing a roadmap to integrate these recommendations into the climate governance of the Region.

The Climate Assembly's second cycle, focusing on food sustainability, is currently underway and expected to come to an end in October 2023.

Source: (OECD, 2023^[2]; Climate Assembly Brussels, 2023^[3]).

Countries have also made progress institutionalising deliberative process to go beyond one-off exercises, helping ensure their continuity through the political cycle, and increases the opportunities for citizens to participate in such processes. Institutionalising deliberation can help governments plan for the long term. Some countries have created institutions responsible for taking decisions relating to future generations, particularly about the green agenda. Recent years have shown striking progress. The institutionalised or permanent cases collected by the OECD doubled between 2020 to 2023, going from 22 to 41 — the majority of which are implemented by subnational governments at the local or regional levels and on topics related to the green agenda. In Portugal, the 50-member Lisbon's Citizen Council deliberated in 2022 on strategies to enable the city to face the climate crisis and in 2023 on how to make Lisbon a 15-minute city.

Several studies have found that young people feel more strongly about government action for climate change than other age groups – for example, a 2022 OECD survey found that 62% of those aged 18-29 support more government action on climate, compared to 57-58% in other age groups (OECD, 2023^[4]). In

this light, OECD countries have started taking innovative approaches to enhance opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes for climate action at the global, national and local levels. At the global level, OECD countries as Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have reiterated the role of youth as agents of change in addressing and responding to climate change in the COP28 negotiated outcomes (COP28 UAE, 2023^[5]). The Parties also decided that all future COP Presidencies should appoint a Presidency Youth Climate Champion to help facilitate the engagement of children and young people in climate action. Engaging and empowering young people through innovative channels can also sustain political ambition in the climate policy agenda; youth-led mobilisations, including through the Fridays for the Future movement, have been critical in placing climate justice at the top of the political agenda.

At the national level, countries such as Ireland established advisory bodies and organised deliberative processes to strengthen young people's participation in decision making on climate action (Box 4.2). In 2023, the Irish government renewed funding for empowering voluntary youth organisations to address climate change by reallocating approximately EUR 500 000 to the Youth Climate Justice Fund (Government of Ireland, 2024^[6]). In Canada, the Local Conference of Youth (LCOY), was also established in 2022 to gather young people and youth organisations to share perspectives on topics related to climate change and environmental matters. As a result, a yearly "Output Policy Document" including policy actions is developed to communicate demands to the government. This document, merged with more than 88 others from similar assemblies worldwide, was also presented at COP28 in 2023 (LCOY Canada, 2023^[7]).

Box 4.2. Ireland's National Youth Assembly on Climate

Since 2019, Ireland convenes a National Youth Assembly on Climate. In 2023, the Assembly was hosted by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) in partnership with the National Participation Office. It consisted of 50 young people, aged 12-24 years, representing Comhairle an Óg (youth councils), youth organisations and climate organisations from across Ireland. Young people were tasked to identify priorities, shape the agenda and formulate recommendations on sustainable transport, circular economy, communications and engagement for the consideration of the Government of Ireland to inform the Climate Action Plan 2024. When reporting on the 2024 Assembly's proceedings, the Government of Ireland also outlined how the recommendations from the 2022 Assembly were addressed in Ireland's 2023 Climate Action Plan (Government of Ireland, 2024^[6]).

Source: (Government of Ireland, 2023^[8]; UNDP, 2022^[9]).

Besides youth, empowering and engaging with those most impacted by climate change, such as indigenous people (where applicable) matters to improve the legitimacy and sustainability of green policymaking is crucial. Mindful of these considerations, governments across OECD countries have already started to establish new institutions, structures and processes to involve young people and indigenous groups (where applicable) in the process and to support them in leading action and innovation on climate justice. In this regard, Canada funded several projects led by indigenous organisations through its Environmental Damage Fund administered by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). For example, between 2023 and 2024, the Okanagan Nation Alliance was granted CAD 129 409.61 to implement a project on Salmon reintroduction in the Upper Columbia River (Government of Canada, 2024^[10]). Furthermore, in 2023, Finland undertook a significant step in actively involving indigenous peoples in the climate policy process. The government appointed a climate council with at least half of the members holding traditional Sámi knowledge, the Sámi Climate Council. For a four-year term, the council will act as an independent expert body to bring the knowledge and perspectives of the Sámi people to

environmental policies (Government of Finland, 2023^[11]). Similarly, in Australia a First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee, composed solely of First Australians, was created in April 2023 to provide advice directly to the Australian government on First Nations' perspectives regarding climate change priorities and ensure that they are appropriately considered in the development of policy, reform, and program implementation (Government of Australia, 2023^[12]).

Moving forward, ensuring full citizen participation in decision-making processes is essential for success. This includes paying specific attention to groups with specific needs and rights, adopting a people- and right-centred approach to environmental justice. Building a strong case for strengthening green related actions and better understanding the barriers that hinder meaningful engagement opportunities remain a priority. While innovative participation processes and tools offer valuable opportunities for effective participation, it is imperative that they are genuinely inclusive. Governments should take an active role in fostering effective two-way dialogue through these new instruments. Further efforts in promoting climate and civic education and awareness must also be undertaken to enhance both participation in decision-making processes related to the green agenda.

4.2.2. Ensure that climate and environmental governance institutions meet integrity and transparency standards and have the expertise and tools to ensure lobbying and other influence activities concerning climate policy design and implementation do not undermine international and domestic climate commitments

Addressing climate change and other environmental goals is a priority for governments across the OECD and beyond. Faced with this long-term, complex, and systemic challenge, public policymaking is under unprecedented pressure, as governments try to manage difficult trade-offs and competing interests, and respond to rapidly changing and unknown circumstances. Complicating matters further, governments cannot deliver climate targets by themselves, and the response to climate change and the green transition requires the expertise, experience and innovation of a range of actors, notably the private sector.

The speed and scale of the green transition is putting an increased strain on public integrity systems within OECD countries. This impact on public integrity may in turn be leading to less effective green policy development. In particular:

- While increased engagement with external stakeholders brings a wider range of interests, knowledge and expertise to bear on the policymaking process, there is also evidence that misleading lobbying and conflicts of interest may be obstructing the delivery of the green transition.
- Shortcomings in law enforcement against transnational corruption can also impede the green transition.

Maintaining integrity standards to ensure that increased engagement with external stakeholders related to the green transition enables governments to meet their climate goals and uphold the public interest. Governments across the OECD are committed to deliver their climate and sustainability targets through co-operation with a broad range of external actors. This increased engagement brings a wider range of interests, knowledge and expertise to bear on the policymaking process, and is also crucial for the business sectors and industries which often have significant stakes in ongoing debates, negotiations, and policy development around climate change.

However, evidence of lobbying and other influence practices aimed at blocking progress on climate change policies demonstrates the risks this increased engagement can bring emissions (Oreskes and Conway, 2010^[13]; Supran and Oreskes, 2017^[14]; Influence Map, 2022^[15]). While these instances are not representative of all lobbying on climate targets, these illegitimate or misleading lobbying practices affect public integrity as they diminish public office holders' ability to act in the public interest. In the worst cases, where lobbying activity is designed to influence policy development away from established science, it also

increases the risk that policy is made which is less suited to meeting governments' climate goals and delivering the green transition.

Many OECD governments are also benefitting from external input on climate initiatives through advisory bodies and expert groups, which through their diverse membership can bring much needed knowledge and skills to policy development. These groups can, however, increase risks around conflict of interest and revolving door, particularly where they do not have adequate transparency and integrity standards to ensure the legitimacy of their advice. Private sector representatives participating in these groups often have direct access to policymaking processes without being considered external lobbyists or subject to rules and conventions on engagement with outside organisations. Several studies have explored how, whether consciously or not, members of these groups may favour the interests of their company or industry, increasing the risk that policy is not made in the public interest or as effective as it could otherwise have been (Conway and Hermann, 2021^[16]; OECD, 2022^[17]).

The race to secure transition minerals is an important part of the green transition, but is particularly vulnerable to corruption risks. The world's energy and digital transitions are dependent on the vast expansion of renewable energy and the electrification of the global economy. The development of this infrastructure and production capacity is dependent on large amounts of minerals and other critical raw materials, and OECD countries are making substantial new investments and a wave of new policies and regulations to secure mineral supplies (IEA, 2021^[18]; IEA, 2023^[19]). As they do so, countries are encountering corruption risks throughout the supply chain, including through increased influencing activity around regulatory processes or financing initiatives, greater pressure on licensing processes, or bribery in contracts or infrastructure projects (OECD, 2024^[20]).

Strong conflict-of-interest regimes, political finance regulations, lobbying regulations and open government agendas provide a framework to ensure engagement on environmental and climate policies happens in a way that upholds democratic principles of integrity and accountability. Countries have taken action in these areas. For example, the Lobbying Register of Finland came into force on 1 January 2024 (National Audit Office of Finland, 2024^[21]) and Germany recently introduced reforms to its lobbying register to extend its scope and require a greater level of transparency. In addition, new initiatives are ensuring that companies' lobbying activities are consistent with their commitments and goals on responsible business conduct matters. Sustainability reporting standards have been developed in particular at the European level, with the European Commission's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), including G1-5 "Political influence and lobbying activities" (European Commission, 2023^[22]). These provide additional disclosure requirements on companies' political contributions and lobbying activities to ensure that they align with their sustainability goals and commitments related to climate change (Box 4.3). The standards cover the full range of environmental, social, and governance issues, including climate change, biodiversity and human rights. While these are positive steps, as Chapter 2 above shows, there is scope to continue to improve implementation and monitoring of integrity frameworks in future.

Box 4.3. The European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) on Political influence and lobbying activities

The undertaking shall provide information on the activities and commitments related to exerting its political influence, including its lobbying activities related to its material impacts, risks and opportunities.

The objective of this Disclosure Requirement is to provide transparency on the undertaking's activities and commitments related to exerting its political influence with political contributions, including the types and purpose of lobbying activities. The disclosure required shall include:

- (a) If applicable, the representative(s) responsible in the administrative, management and supervisory bodies for the oversight of these activities;
- (b) for financial or in-kind political contributions:
 - i. the total monetary value of financial and in-kind political contributions made directly and indirectly by the undertaking aggregated by country or geographical area where relevant, as well as type of recipient/beneficiary; and
 - ii. where appropriate, how the monetary value of in-kind contributions is estimated.
- (c) the main topics covered by its lobbying activities and the undertaking's main positions on these in brief. This shall include explanations on how this interacts with its material impacts, risks and opportunities identified in its materiality assessment per ESRS 2; and
- (d) if the undertaking is registered in the EU Transparency Register or in an equivalent transparency register in a Member State, the name of any such register and its identification number in the register.

The disclosure shall also include information about the appointment of any members of the administrative, management and supervisory bodies who held a comparable position in public administration (including regulators) in the 2 years preceding such appointment in the current reporting period.

Source: European Commission (2023^[23]), Annex to the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) .../... supplementing Directive 2013/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards sustainability reporting standards, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a17f44bd-2f9c-11ee-9e98-01aa75ed71a1.0008.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

4.2.3. Strengthening law enforcement against transnational corruption to safeguard the green transition

International bribery, particularly where it is not met with a strong law enforcement response, is an important way in which governments' responses to climate change can be undermined. A key challenge in, for instance, the forestry, fisheries or conservation sectors is regulatory capture, where regulatory agencies tasked with safeguarding the public interest become influenced or controlled by the industries they are meant to oversee. Regulatory capture often involves transnational criminal networks, which use bribery to exploit opportunities for high profits, legal discrepancies among countries, low risk of detection, and marginal penalties (Europol, 2022^[24]). Corrupt relationships between private industry and regulatory authorities, often with the involvement of criminal entrepreneurs, may lead to lax enforcement of regulations, allowing companies to engage in illegal and unsustainable practices without fear of repercussions. This weakening of the regulatory framework undermines sustainability goals, perpetuates a cycle of environmental exploitation, and can have enormous financial impacts for the governments and corporations involved.

To address the challenges which the green transition presents for bribery investigations, law enforcement authorities need to adopt a proactive approach to tackling corruption in sectors critical to the green transition and which present complicated corruption risks. Drawing from the lessons learnt from the fossil fuel or forestry industry, for instance relating to licencing or the award of contracts, law enforcement agencies should strengthen their capacities to identify and investigate similar criminal patterns in a growing number of projects related to the green transition.

Given the transnational nature of the green transition and of corruption schemes, robust international co-operation between law enforcement authorities is paramount. Collaborative efforts to establish and enforce international anti-corruption standards, share best practices, and provide oversight can help mitigate the risks associated with corruption in the global green agenda. Facilitating the exchange of intelligence and information across borders to identify and track corrupt actors involved in green initiatives, collaborative efforts to investigate and prosecute transnational bribery cases are key to strengthening international co-operation between authorities. In addition, building robust co-operation of law enforcement with the private sector and the expert community can contribute to developing a much-needed level of knowledge and expertise with respect to corruption risks linked to the green transition. This, in combination with effective whistleblower protection mechanisms and partnerships with investigative media, can help law enforcement agencies recognise corruption and take appropriate measures to combat it in these sectors. The role of the private sector in investing in integrity in the context of the green transition, supporting the efforts of public actors and civil society, is of paramount importance.

4.2.4. Strengthening integrity standards in public institutions involved in green policies

The public institutions responsible for green governance must be trustworthy and meet integrity and transparency requirements if the policies they design are to be seen as legitimate and acceptable. Public integrity frameworks need to remain resilient in the face of the added challenges which the green transition is presenting to policymaking. Using a risk-based approach to reviewing and strengthening existing integrity systems in public institutions allows government to identify the public employees involved in the design, implementation or evaluation of climate change policies that may be at higher risk and to take steps to mitigate them. National and international regulatory bodies, such as institutions that govern natural resource management or set pollution standards, for example, should have robust integrity standards including clear and proportionate measures to identify and manage conflicts of interest. In addition, governments should set rules for people from the private sector taking up employment in these bodies (and vice-versa), as well as cooling-off periods tailored to the level of seniority. In particular, OECD countries must introduce precise and clear criteria for the award of licences and contracts, and ensure that public office holders working in licensing and regulation are subject to adequate conflict-of-interest processes and that, where appropriate, licensing decisions are subject to strong transparency requirements and open government policies.

4.2.5. Ensure that governance mechanisms are in place to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent approach to address climate change and other environmental threats across the whole of government, using centres of governments to effectively steer and set strategies promoting co-ordination among different government actors

The Action Plan and OECD 2022 report recognised the role of government leadership and highlighted opportunities for placing climate portfolios at the centre of government. They underscored the role of institutional arrangements in ensuring that government decisions align with climate action. Centres of government have an important role to play in steering the green transition, supporting the development and monitoring of national strategies, facilitating dialogue amongst stakeholders, among other roles. However, the OECD 2022 RDI report also highlighted that effective cross-government co-ordination on climate change has been a significant challenge for most governments.

A recent OECD stocktaking of the institutional arrangements used to steer and govern climate action shows that centres of government in OECD Member countries often play a crucial role in providing leadership and co-ordination for climate policy (Kaur et al., 2023^[25]). It identifies four categories: i) a lead unit at the centre of government; ii) appointment of special advisors; iii) permanent intergovernmental committees or commissions; and iv) climate focal points within line ministries and government agencies (Figure 4.2). The diverse institutional approaches underscore a lack of internationally recognised best practices, though OECD data suggests dedicated units within government centres can facilitate co-ordinated actions.

Figure 4.2. Institutional arrangements for environmental and climate policy at the national level

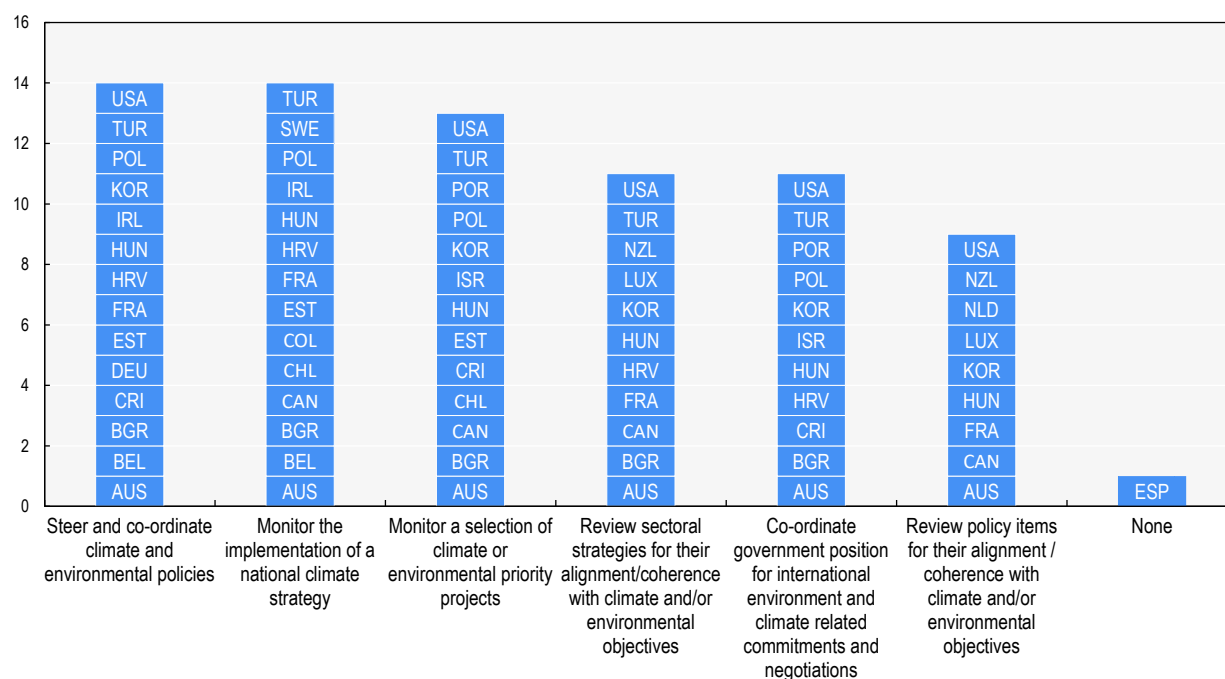
OECD Member countries

Unit or responsibility at the CoG and line ministries	Super ministry and responsibility at the CoG	Super ministry and line ministries	Dedicated Ministry of Environment and responsibility at the CoG	Dedicated Ministry of Environment and lines ministries	Line Ministries only
United States	France Iceland Ireland Poland United Kingdom	Australia Austria Costa Rica Croatia Denmark Germany Greece Hungary Latvia Netherlands Portugal Slovenia Spain Sweden Switzerland Türkiye	Canada New Zealand	Belgium Chile Colombia Czechia Estonia Finland Israel Italy Japan Korea Lithuania Luxembourg Mexico Norway Slovak Republic	-

Note: "CoG" stands for Centre of Government.

Source: Kaur, M., et al. (2023^[25]), "Steering responses to climate change from the centre of government: A stocktaking", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 65, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b95c8396-en>.

When it comes to policies related to climate change, centres of government in several OECD countries follow up on the implementation of priorities to ensure that goals are being achieved. According to data from the OECD Survey on Strategic Decision-making at the Centre of Government, centres of government in 52% of the countries surveyed monitor the implementation of the national climate strategy and 48% monitor a selection of climate and/or environmental policies (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. The functions of the CoG in climate and environmental policy

Note: n=27; Respondents to the survey were asked “What is the centre of government’s role with regards to climate and environmental policy?”
 Source: Kaur, M., et al. (2023^[25]), “Steering responses to climate change from the centre of government: A stocktaking”, *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 65, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b95c8396-en>.

4.2.6. Pursue holistic public communications efforts to support the timely and effective sharing of information and data around climate change and other environmental pressures and develop strategies for preparedness and prevention of mis- and dis-information on environmental threats and policy responses

The OECD RDI report (OECD, 2022^[26]) underlined the need for governments to transform how their approach to public communication to effectively inform and engage with the public, and prevent and tackle to mis- and disinformation on climate and environmental action. Governments need to be able to communicate complex policy narratives in a compelling and meaningful manner. Public communication is key to strengthen the link between awareness, intention and action on climate change and environmental threats.

OECD countries continue to undertake action to promote citizen engagement with the green agenda through communication campaigns. Some of these efforts aim to foster behavioural change in support of environmental goals. One notable example is the United Kingdom’s “It all Adds Up” campaign, launched in December 2022. The initiative highlighted individual actions to reduce energy usage and save money, leveraging several platforms including TV, radio, social and traditional media. As a result, it reduced household energy consumption by an estimated 1 200 GWh and saved UK households GBP 120 million.

Public communicators in OECD countries have collaborated with third party messengers, such as social media influencers, to amplify key messages. For instance, in France, the Government Information Service partnered with different actors including supermarkets to launch a campaign promoting energy reduction and “energy sobriety” in October 2023. The campaign highlighted short-term changes to avoid power cuts and encouraged long-term commitment to energy sobriety.

Furthermore, communications efforts on the green agenda have also been co-ordinated at the level of centres of government to ensure a whole-of-government approach. Ireland's Government Information Service, operating under the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister's Office), developed a values-based communication framework as part of the government's 2024 Climate Action Plan. This framework, based on audience insights and workshops with communications and policy experts, a checklist for green transition-related communications to ensure consistent messaging.

Public communication is crucial for addressing the “*policy adoption gap*” (the difference between the policies that should have been adopted versus those that were actually adopted) and the “*policy outcome gap*” (the difference between the expected impact of a policy and its actual results). The OECD Environmental Policies and Individual Behaviour Change (EPIC) Survey 2022 and other work point to the importance of communicating in a manner that addresses public concerns over the *effectiveness* and *fairness* of green agenda policies in order to increase public support for such policies (Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022^[27]). Values-based communication strategies, tailor to resonate with different segments of the population, including through relatable messengers, are key to driving acceptance of green reforms and fostering engagement for their implementation.

4.2.7. Reinforce the capacity of the justice system to resolve environmental claims and enforce environmental commitments, including through dispute resolution mechanisms

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlights the importance of enhancing justice systems capacity to improve environmental accountability. Strengthening countries' capacities to identify and respond to specific legal needs related the environment is crucial for building trust, maintaining accountability, and upholding environmental law. This includes addressing both direct legal issues, like those concerning natural resource use, and indirect issues stemming from environmental degradation. Many OECD countries, including Australia, Germany, New Zealand and Sweden paved the way more than 25 years ago by establishing specialised courts and tribunals for environmental justice. Constant progress continues among OECD countries. For instance, in 2022, Belgium inaugurated its first specialised chamber within the Mons Court of Appeal to deal with both civil and criminal cases related to environmental and town planning matters. Other countries such as Colombia are also exploring the feasibility of creating an environmental jurisdiction (UNEP, 2023^[28]).

This becomes increasingly important as the range of environmental and climate-related legal cases expands, a trend that has accelerated over the past two years. The “youth lens” is also essential here: youth-led mobilisations have been critical in reintroducing climate justice at the top of the political agenda, highlighting that young people and future generations are the primary groups affected by long-term environmental degradation. There is increasing global recognition of intergenerational concerns posed by climate change in legal judgments, notably with references to future generations in courts' decisions on climate-related cases (OECD, 2022^[26]). In recent years, young individuals have brought forward lawsuits to enforce government compliance with climate targets, sometimes successfully (OECD, 2022^[26]). Notable cases include a 2023 ruling by the Judicial District Court of Montana (USA) in favour 16 young people (Box 4.4) and a pending judgement in Sweden on a class action by over 600 young people born between 1996 and 2015, challenging the adequacy of Sweden's climate change mitigation efforts in ensuring their rights to life, private and family life, and non-discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Box 4.4. Climate lawsuit: Held v. State of Montana

In an unprecedented decision, a judge ruled wholly in favour of the youth plaintiffs in *Held v. State of Montana* (August 2023), the first youth climate lawsuit to make it to trial in the United States. In March 2020, sixteen young people from Montana sued their government for promoting fossil fuel extraction, a catalyst for climate change. They argued that the current energy system is contributing to the depletion of the quality of the atmosphere and the diversity of the wildlife despite their status of protected public trust resources. By supporting this system, the state of Montana was accused of violating their rights to a “clean and healthful environment” (Article IX, Section 1 of the Montana Constitution), as well as transgressing individual dignity and equal protection of the law. The Court declared that the state of Montana was indeed violating the youth’s rights to equal protection, dignity, liberty, health, and public trust. It was stated that the government has the “discretion to deny permits for fossil fuel activities that would result in unconstitutional levels of GHG emissions, unconstitutional degradation and depletion of Montana’s environment and natural resources, or infringement of the constitutional rights of Montanans and Youth Plaintiffs” (Montana First Judicial District Court, Lewis and Clark County).

The young complainants are represented by Our Children’s Trust, a not-for-profit law firm, in the context of Youth v. Gov legal campaign carried out across the United States to press states to act on climate change. Most of the cases were dismissed but some have seen success, such as *Juliana v. United States*, a case where 21 young people asserted that the federal government violated their constitutional rights by causing dangerous carbon dioxide emissions levels, which can now proceed to trial after the ruling of a U.S. District Court Judge rejected the Department of Justice’s motion to halt proceedings in December 2023 and again in February 2024.

Source: (Our Children’s Trust, 2024^[29]; Our Children’s Trust, 2023^[30]).

Reinforcing capacities to address environmental claims also involves promoting training in environmental law and related fields for judges, magistrates, and government officials. Countries are making efforts to provide effective and appropriate training for judges; EU national judges at first instance (and prosecutors) report that their knowledge of EU environmental law is poor (55%) or only adequate (30%) (European Commission, 2022^[31]). In 2022, French magistrates created the “French Society of Judges and Prosecutors for Environmental Justice” to promote and disseminate environmental law among magistrates, both in France and abroad, through dialogue and exchange of best practices, tools, and a common international database (EUFJE, 2023^[32]). Considering that environmental justice intersects with criminal, administrative and civil justice, an interdisciplinary approach in training and practice in environmental law is essential. In May 2022, the U.S Department of Justice (DoJ) launched a “Comprehensive Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy” and created the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) to monitor its implementation, as detailed in its 2023 annual report. Recent initiatives of the DoJ include the development of environmental justice training materials, training sessions, monthly sessions for Environmental Justice Coordinators, and the incorporation of environmental justice into various training programmes (Government of the United States of America, 2023^[33]).

Although some alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms addressing environmental issues exist in OECD countries, many handle a broad spectrum of claims and lack specialisation in environmental matters. As the number of litigations involving private corporate actors increases, progress should be made in developing out-of-court dispute resolution mechanisms, involving specialised mediators and arbitrators with expertise in environmental matters. Integrating environmental ADR mechanisms within court systems should also be considered when building capacities of justice systems, as this can significantly enhance their responsiveness in effectively managing environmental cases.

As countries work to develop justice systems' capacities to address environmental actions, some have placed focus on making legal remedies accessible and the justice system more centred around the needs of people. For example, in British Columbia, Canada, the Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund (EDRF) distributes USD 150 000 in grants annually. These grants are available to individuals, community groups, non-profit organisations, and First Nations, supporting them to engage more effectively with legal processes concerning environmental issues (West Coast Environmental Law, 2024^[34]).

4.2.8. Establish effective, open and transparent accountability mechanisms to monitor and disclose government progress in implementing its national and international commitments for action on climate

The OECD 2022 RDI report underscored the importance of establishing effective, open, and transparent accountability mechanisms to monitor and disclose government progress in implementing national and international commitments on climate action. This can promote public ownership of policy measures. Access to environmental information has long been recognised as a key element of sustainable development since the adoption of the Rio Declaration in 1992 and the Aarhus Declaration in 1998. Since then, the principles of transparency, participation and disclose of information are central to international instruments supporting the green transition exemplified by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and the Escazu Agreement signed by Chile, Colombia and Mexico. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also highlights the role of access to information in connecting decision makers and stakeholder impacted by climate change (UNFCCC, n.d.^[35]).

In recent years, countries have actively established dedicated websites or platforms to share information and data on their climate policies, strategies, and progress, enabling citizens and stakeholders to monitor and oversee their implementation. These platforms often include reports, action plans, and updates on specific programmes and initiatives. For example, Canada has a webpages, both at national and in some cases at provincial level, on climate change which includes details on emissions-reduction targets, climate resilience, international partnerships and agreements, and progress reports (British Columbia, n.d.^[36]). The United States also provides information on its climate policies through various agencies and platforms, for instance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Energy (DOE) both share relevant data and showcase progress on climate initiatives.

OECD countries have also made this part of their open data strategies. Most OECD countries have identified priority datasets to publish as open data to support climate action: 34 out of 35 OECD countries (97%) have identified a list of datasets to be released as open data for the purpose of monitoring or tackling climate change (OECD, 2023^[37]). Moreover, 30 out of 36 OECD countries (83%) have an open government strategy or action plan in place, and some, such as France and Sweden, have integrated green data provisions in their strategy (OECD, 2023^[38]).

Efforts also focus on sharing of environmental information, allowing citizens to contribute to scientific research and build collaborative evidence, holding governments accountable for their climate action progress. For example, in Barcelona, Spain individuals can obtain sensors to monitor air quality and provide real-time data to the city council. This citizen-led data collection supports permanent mechanisms such as advisory committees or expert groups, providing the government with expert advice and public feedback. These mechanisms represent best practice for effective and open accountability.

Acting on climate and the green transition requires governments to adopt innovative and comprehensive approaches, including mobilising data for transparency and accountability. This allows actors to hold governments accountable for the implementation of national and international climate and environmental commitments. However, these efforts have not always gone far enough – the 2024 OECD Trust Survey shows that more than a third of people believe that government-provided statistics do not allow them to assess whether a government keeps its promises (OECD, 2024^[11]). Going forward, key efforts will continue

to be needed to ensure access to timely, accurate, and re-usable information on these commitments to raise public awareness and accountability among governments and private actors. Additionally, greater efforts to publish open green data to inform policymaking, stimulate innovation, and provide means to monitor government actions. Developing accountability mechanisms involve integrating diverse stakeholders and extensive data across sectors and institutions. This complexity underscores the need for adequate governance arrangements, and systematic data-sharing practices within the public sector and across sectors at both domestic and international levels.

4.2.9. Strengthen government global climate and other environmental competences, boosting civil service capacities, establishing adequate mechanisms to ensure that global issues are considered across government and considering a stronger global perspective in rulemaking through international regulatory co-operation

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlighted the need to enhance government competencies to address climate and other environmental challenges. This involves improving the skill set of the civil service and ensuring that mechanisms are in place for considering global issues, such as the green transition, across all government activities, including rulemaking.

Within government, building competencies and enhancing civil service capacities in global climate issues and other environmental areas, requires action at the level of senior leadership. Leaders and managers bear a significant responsibility in fostering green skills and awareness and should therefore be at the forefront of this effort. However, despite their importance, virtually no OECD Member has identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² or global competencies³ as a priority area for learning and development of managers (OECD, 2022^[39]).

Governments in Chile, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and the United Kingdom are placing specific focus on developing a workforce to support climate issues. For example, since 2022 the green transition is a key priority in the training of French civil servants. The main objective is to ensure all civil servants understand environmental stakes – including climate, adaptation to climate change, biodiversity, resources and environmental health- and contribute to improving the ecological performance of public policy. The training of senior-level public officials has been prioritised, with a goal to train 25 000 senior-level public servants by the end of 2024. The French government’s ambition is that all civil servants will have benefited from the training by 2027. In the United Kingdom, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are working towards embedding specific training on climate in the competency frameworks, training activities and curricula (Kaur et al., 2023^[25]). The green transition has also been a core topic for the training of Italian public servants since 2023. Syllabus, the e-learning platform for the Italian public service, hosts two training modules on governing green, Agenda 2030 and sustainable development goals. Over 510 000 public servants have joined the training courses (Syllabus, n.d.^[40]).

In terms of global co-operation and despite the availability of many mechanisms, domestic and international regulatory action remains decentralised and often disconnected (OECD, 2021^[41]). Addressing this disconnect is particularly important for environmental regulation. International regulatory co-operation (IRC) allows countries to exchange regulatory experiences, learn from each other, ensure coherent approaches and, when possible, adopt joint regulatory approaches, as per the OECD Recommendation on International Regulatory Co-operation to Tackle Global Challenges (OECD, 2022^[42]). However, national regulatory frameworks do not sufficiently reflect international environmental considerations. As part of regulatory impact assessment, impacts of the policy on foreign jurisdictions are not sufficiently assessed during policy development. Even though environmental issues are frequently transboundary issues, only 5 out of 36 OECD members require the assessment of transboundary impacts.

More broadly, national regulatory frameworks need to be complemented by a complex system of public and private actors that support regulators to ensure the right measurement, technical standards, testing or certification, and accreditation takes place and contribute to achieving environmental objectives. While this

system is essential to support the global nature of global climate action, it has become incredibly difficult to distinguish between product marketing and governmental requirements to ensure a true protection of the planet. This complexity and disconnect between regulators and policymakers risks undermining its contribution to effective protection of the environment with implications for citizens' trust in government acting for the green transition.

4.2.10. Promote the collection of evidence on people's trust in climate policies to inform decision making and strengthen public support and acceptability for green reforms

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlights that trust in government is a significant factor in citizens' willingness to support climate policies. Results from the more recent 2023 Trust Survey show that public perceptions by people tend to be more optimistic than the evidence should allow, as 42% are confident that their country will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, against 35% who lack confidence, whereas current predictions show that greenhouse gas emissions are not currently on a path that would allow to limit global warming by 1.5 °C, and this confidence has tended to slightly increase in many countries compared to the 2021 survey. This points to the need for further action to increase people's understanding and trust in climate policies in relation to actual targets. However, contrasting results also emerge from other sources, including specific OCDE country case studies on trust, which offer more granular results as well as some European data. In Portugal, just under half of respondents said that they wanted the government to do more to reduce their country's contribution to climate change (OECD, 2023^[43]). Across the European Union, 67% of EU citizens believing that their government is not doing enough to tackle climate change (European Commission, 2023^[44]).

An example of public desire to see government tackle climate change is that in 2022 in Brazil 65% of survey respondents said that their government should prioritise reducing their country's contribution to climate change. At that time, however, only 40% were confident that their government would succeed. This may reflect setbacks at the time in Brazil's pledge to reduce its emissions. However, since 2023 Brazil has taken positive action, including developing legislation on environmental information, water and waste management, and biodiversity (OECD, 2023^[45]). Additionally, the launch of [the Participatory Climate Plan \(Plano Clima Participativo\)](#) in late 2023 by an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change, which includes representatives from 23 ministries, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the resilience of cities and natural environments in alignment with Brazil's commitments under the Paris Agreement. This initiative reflects a comprehensive approach to climate action that incorporates social justice, transparency, and civic engagement, emphasising broad social participation through hybrid processes that combine digital tools with in-person meetings and conferences.

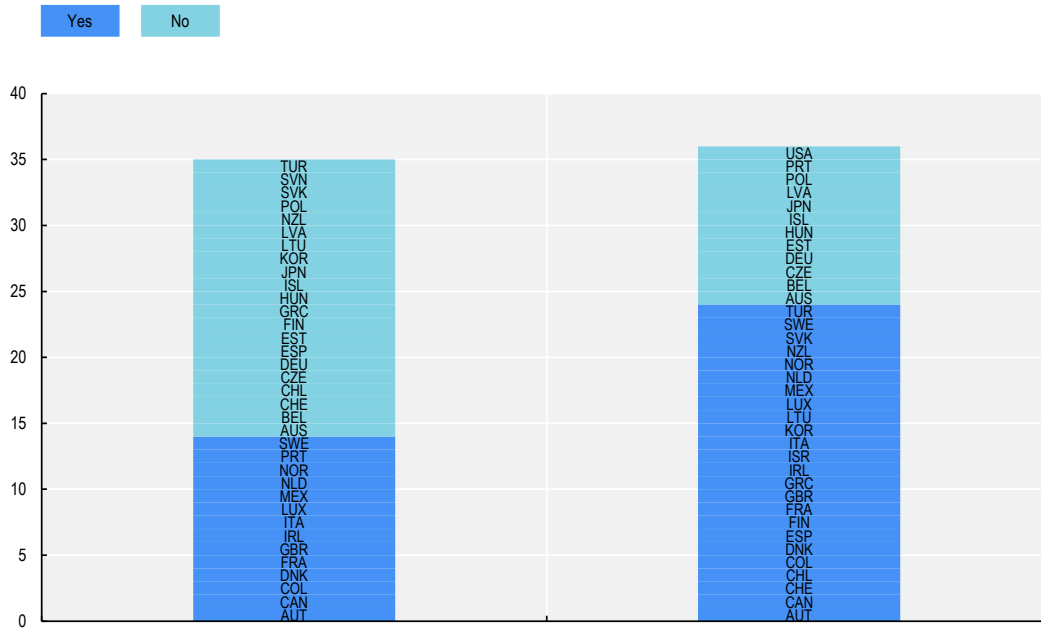
4.3. Key Area 2 - Using the right tools for climate and environmental action

4.3.1. Adopt and expand green budgeting practices to improve the consistency of public expenditure with climate and environmental goals

The OECD 2022 RDI report recognised the importance of budgetary tools. Budgets can be a powerful instrument to align policies with climate and environmental commitments at national. Green budgeting practices are becoming widespread across OECD countries. While in 2021, 14 out of 38 OECD countries reported practising green budgeting, the breadth and depth of such practices varies. Countries are facing a number of challenges: the lack of common methodologies to assess environmental effects, the absence of a modern multi-annual budgetary framework linked to strategic planning, and capacity challenges, including lack of relevant knowledge and technical expertise.

Countries have made significant progress in this area. Since 2020, the number of countries reporting such practices has doubled, increasing from 14 to 24 out of 38, (Figure 4.4).⁴ The 11 OECD countries that introduced green budgeting since 2021 were Chile, Finland, Greece, Israel, Korea, Lithuania, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Spain, Switzerland and Türkiye.

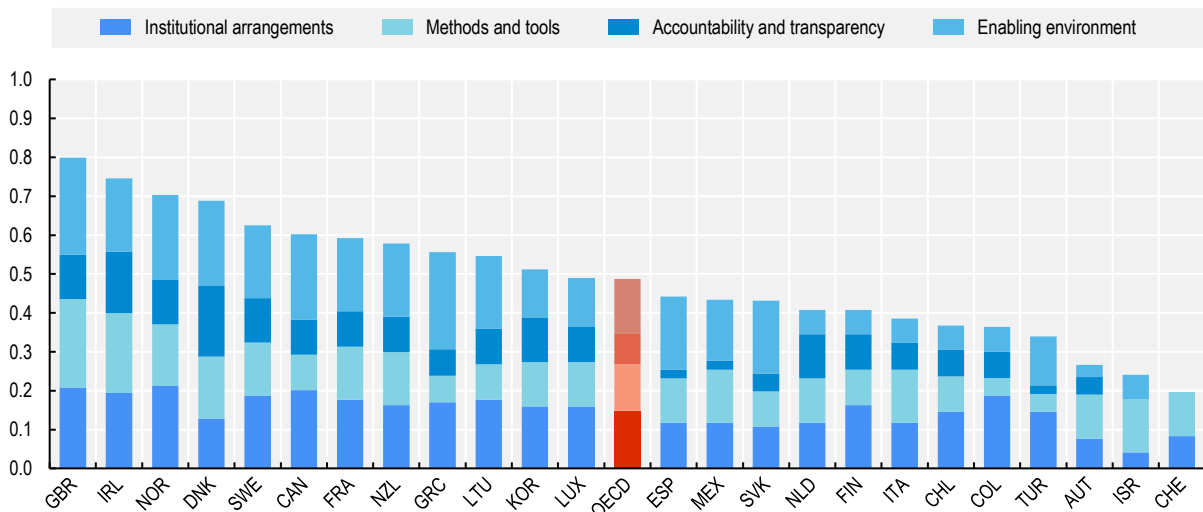
Figure 4.4. Existence of green budgeting, in 2021 and 2022



Note: For 2022, data for Costa Rica and Slovenia are not available, and Hungary, Latvia and Portugal are not practicing green budgeting but have plans to introduce green budgeting in the future. For 2021, data for Costa Rica, Israel and the United States are not available.
 Source: OECD (2023^[38]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

The OECD has made progress to understand the extent to which countries are addressing the challenges highlighted above, in terms of depth and adequacy of green practices. The 2022 OECD Green Budgeting Index⁵ shows the varying degrees to which OECD countries have adopted green budgeting (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. OECD Green Budgeting Index, 2022



Note: OECD Green Budgeting Index reflecting changing practices.
 Source: OECD (2023^[38]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

The results show that progress has been made in all four building blocks in the index:

- *Institutional arrangements* were strengthened in most OECD countries. Countries with developed practices have passed legislation on green budgeting, as is the case in Norway. Most countries have developed frameworks through administrative practices.
- *Methods and tools used to implement green budgeting* are widely adopted (Figure 4.6). Most countries have carbon pricing mechanisms (22 out of 24, 92%), environmental impact assessments (18 out of 24, 75%), and sovereign green bonds (18 out of 24, 75%) as tools to implement green budgeting. Emerging tools include for example green elements in medium-term budgets (8 out of 24, 33%), or green perspectives in spending reviews (6 out of 24, 25%).
- *Accountability and transparency arrangements* are progressing but are an emerging practice. The involvement of civil society, monitoring of green budgeting and the submission of a green budget statement to parliament are not widespread practices. Green accounting standards and oversight mechanisms are at an early stage of development.
- *Enabling Environment* displays large disparities among OECD countries. Countries that fare comparatively well are those that have implemented programme and performance budgeting with relevant links to green initiatives, as is the case in France and Sweden. Many countries have put in place capacity building initiatives, with 10 out of 24 countries initiating training and skills development for line ministries (42%) in 2022.

Figure 4.6. Green Budgeting Methods and Tools

Country	Carbon pricing instruments	Environmental impact assessments	Sovereign green bonds	Green budget tagging	Review of harmful tax expenditures	Environmental cost benefit analysis	Green in multi-annual budgets	Green perspective in spending review	Carbon budget
Austria	•	•	•					•	
Canada	•	•	•		•				
Chile	•		•	•		•			
Colombia			•						
Denmark	•	•	•			•			
Finland	•	•		•	•				
France	•	•	•	•	•	•			•
Greece	•			•				•	
Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Israel	•	•	•		•	•			
Italy	•	•	•	•	•		•		
Korea	•	•	•	•				•	
Lithuania	•	•	•			•			
Luxembourg	•	•	•	•			•		
Mexico	•	•	•	•	•				
Netherlands	•	•	•		•	•			
New Zealand	•	•				•	•		•
Norway	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Slovak Republic	•				•		•		
Spain	•	•	•	•					
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•				
Switzerland	•		•				•		
Türkiye						•	•		
United Kingdom	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
OECD Total									
• Yes	22	18	18	13	12	11	8	6	5

Source: OECD (2023^[38]), *Government at a Glance 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>.

4.3.2. Ensure that regulations are aligned with green goals by promoting the systematic use of regulatory management tools (including RIA, ex post assessment and stakeholder consultation) that take into account climate and environmental impacts

The OECD 2022 RDI report recognised the importance of regulatory policy to help governments put the economy and society on a carbon-neutral, resilient and sustainable path to achieve climate action and the green transition. The report highlighted the need for regulatory policy to evolve along with green government priorities through adjusting and refocusing traditional regulatory management tools – stakeholder engagement, regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and *ex post* evaluation of existing regulations on climate goals – while simultaneously suggesting the introduction of new approaches and more recent tools such as international regulatory co-operation (IRC) to achieve environmental goals. The report also stressed the need for both agile and risk-based regulation so that innovators can move quickly to deploy sustainable technologies.

Recent country experiences highlight that, while regulation is a key tool for achieving environmental goals, governments still face significant challenges in designing and implementing regulations that effectively pursue these objectives. The challenge lies in balancing competing economic, social, and environmental targets and trade-offs. Economic concerns often take precedence over environmental (particularly non-climate) and distributional considerations, resulting in negative consequences for the environment and society.

Recent OECD work highlights the potential of better regulation tools to efficiently and effectively design, implement and evaluate regulations for the environment (OECD, 2023^[46]). Currently, assessments of regulations' environmental impacts are not sufficiently integrated in governments' *ex ante* impact assessment processes. Implementation across different ministries is often uneven. A robust appraisal of the different policy options and their impacts on economy, society and the environment would help minimise unintended consequences. While preliminary data of the 2023 *Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance* (iReg) survey suggests that countries are increasingly assessing environmental impacts as part of regulatory impact assessment (RIA), more granular assessment are not conducted systematically and often limited to a narrow range of issues. Adopting a more horizontal approach to RIA and adapting its methodologies accordingly could promote policy effectiveness, coherence and predictability. As an example of how to assess distributional impacts when drafting regulations, the United States Environmental Protection Agency recently revised its estimate of the social cost of greenhouse gases based on up-to date scientific and economic understanding (Government of the United States of America, 2023^[47]).

Due to the urgency of environmental threats, it is key to ensure that regulations, once in place, remain fit-for-purpose, encourage innovation and support environmental goals. This requires *ex post* assessment and managing the stock of existing regulations. OECD work underscores the benefits of a whole-of-government approach to review regulations from an environmental perspective (OECD, 2023^[46]). Although *ex post* evaluations are essential for adjusting regulations based on new evidence and experiences, currently only a minority of OECD countries systematically evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing regulations with a green lens that prioritises environmental and sustainability consideration and commitments. Evaluations of individual regulations are not always complemented with sector-wide reviews. Principle-based reviews in specific sectors can capture the cumulative environmental impacts and help balance synergies and trade-offs. The upcoming OECD 2025 Regulatory Policy Outlook will include a chapter on Regulation for the Planet, highlighting the need for comprehensive sector-wide reviews that go beyond initial impacts to include indirect and second-order environmental effects.

Stakeholder engagement in rulemaking is also key and should be related to the broader challenges of citizen engagement highlighted above. In the regulatory area, governments are not sufficiently engaging with a wide range of stakeholders at all stages of the regulatory cycle (OECD, 2023^[46]). While preliminary evidence from the iReg survey finds that a majority of OECD countries make systematic efforts to engage with stakeholders, only few countries consult systematically at the early stage of the process, to define

policy problems and consider potential solutions and only a limited number of countries consult when reviewing existing regulations. Moreover, marginalised groups⁶ and minorities are disproportionately affected by environmental threats, but they are often underrepresented in the participatory process. As a result, government regulations can be poorly planned, ineffective, and negatively impact vulnerable groups in society. Adopting innovative forms of public consultation can help engage a more diverse group of stakeholders, improve regulations and foster public trust.⁷

Effective regulatory delivery, including licensing and permitting, regulatory enforcement and inspections, is essential to close the compliance gap in environmental regulation. However, recent OECD data shows that the implementation and enforcement of these regulations falls short of what is required to address both environmental and economic challenges effectively (OECD, 2023^[46]). Environmental permits and licenses can burden businesses, hinder investment and stifle innovation. Adopting a risk-based approach to permitting and enforcement can help minimise these while protecting the environment.

Economic regulators can substantially affect environmental outcomes by developing regulations to target producer and consumer behaviour in key sectors such as water, energy, e-communications and transport. To reconcile economic, social and environmental objectives, regulators may have to effectively manage trade-offs. Preliminary iReg data shows that not enough regulators are legally empowered to collect data related to environmental sustainability on the sectors that they oversee. This limits regulators' ability to focus on outcomes, remain agile, risk-based and take a whole of government approach to environmental goals. Governments can help regulators meet these goals by providing them with a clear role, appropriate powers, and sufficient capacities.

In short, while sound laws and regulations, grounded in evidence, are vital in combating environmental challenges, but broader and more systemic action is needed. In the broader climate change discussions, the use of regulatory tools takes a broader perspective, which also includes technology standards and performance standards as well as bans and phase outs. From a governance perspective, two areas can be highlighted for further action (OECD, 2023^[46]):

- **Introducing a green lens to regulatory design:** While data indicates that many governments do assess regulatory impact on the environment, data also shows that many individual regulators lack data gathering power which may be preventing a whole-of-government approach. Because climate change disproportionately affects minorities and marginalised groups⁸, governments should ensure to systematically consult these groups throughout the regulatory process.
- **Risk-informed regulation:** Governments should move away from process focused approach to focus on outcome-based, risk-informed regulation. Outcome-based regulation allows economic actors to choose the best way for them to meet the requirements and thus can enhance innovation and compliance. Informing regulations by the goals they want to achieve and the risks they aim to prevent can foster a proportional approach. Putting in place agile and risk-based regulatory systems can help encourage innovation and promote green investment and economic growth all while protecting the environment.

4.3.3. Link major infrastructure decisions and plans with climate and environmental objectives, including by developing long-term strategic infrastructure plans that align with commitments on environmental protection and climate change mitigation as well as adaptation, and by promoting comprehensive socioeconomic assessment of projects

The OECD 2022 RDI report identified the need for a new holistic approach to infrastructure planning and delivery: the long lifespan of infrastructure projects entails that decisions made today will have enduring consequences for the environment and might lock in vulnerability if they fail to consider the environmental and climate dimensions. New infrastructure assets need to be designed, built, and operated to account for climate change over their life cycle. Moreover, existing infrastructure may need to be retrofitted or managed

differently given the impacts of changing climate conditions and extreme weather events (OECD, 2018^[48]). This calls for mobilising existing and new governance strategies and tools to integrate environmental and climate considerations into infrastructure planning and delivery.

Delivering environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure requires a clear vision for the future and a credible roadmap to achieve it, with long-term infrastructure strategies that are aligned with environmental goals and climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives. In fact, a 2022 survey shows that most OECD countries consider several environmental and climate dimensions when developing national or sectoral infrastructure strategies: climate change mitigation (97% or 28 out of 29 countries), climate change adaptation (93% or 27 countries), protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems (93% or 27 countries), pollution prevention and control (79% or 23 countries), sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources (79% or 23 countries), and transition to a circular economy (69% or 20 countries). (OECD, 2022^[49])

Many OECD countries have also developed guidelines to integrate environmental and climate considerations into infrastructure decision making: 71% (20 out of 28) have developed infrastructure guidelines specifically addressing adaptation, 68% (19 countries) for mitigation, and 57% (16 countries) have focused on biodiversity considerations (OECD, 2023^[38]). Such guidelines can increase the integration of environmental and climate considerations into infrastructure planning and delivery. For example, Spain's *Centro de Estudios y Experimentación de Obras Públicas* co-ordinates the cross-cutting working group on climate change and resilience in roads to provide guidelines for incorporating climate change considerations into all phases of the road life cycle (OECD, 2023^[50]).

Despite the efforts undertaken by countries, more could be done to promote the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into infrastructure design. Less than half of the countries (14 out of 29 or 48%) have guidelines on the use of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in infrastructure development (OECD, 2023^[38]). NbS offer innovative, cost-effective opportunities for supporting infrastructure sustainability and resilience to extreme weather events. Other socioeconomic benefits of NbS include long-term cost savings from reduced need for retrofitting, the potential for creating green jobs, and the economic resilience from climate change mitigation. Scaling up the use of NbS requires strategic government leadership. For example, the region of Flanders in Belgium has developed a handbook for planning, design and management of green-blue spaces as building blocks of healthy and resilient living environments (OECD, 2023^[51]). Similarly, OECD has proposed an integrated approach to green infrastructure (GI) and NbS in Italy in the planning, appraisal, financing, procurement, and maintenance of infrastructure (OECD, 2023^[52]).

While countries have developed long-term strategic visions for sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure, there is potential for improvement in integrating these visions into effective governance throughout the infrastructure lifecycle. Project appraisal tools can assess the present and future resilience, biodiversity impact, and both present and future cost and benefits of project. These tools enable decision makers to consider a broader range of responses to natural hazards, factoring in frequency, potential costs to lives, businesses, or access to essential services, and help prioritise projects with greater resilience or minimal biodiversity impact. For instance, the Netherlands has introduced a novel approach called biodiversity points, which enhances cost-benefit analyses by measuring the volume and quality of ecosystem services and biodiversity (OECD, 2023^[53]).

Countries could make greater use of methodological tools to integrate environmental and climate considerations into the project appraisal process. While 28 OECD countries require an environmental impact assessment to evaluate the possible impacts of a transport infrastructure project, only 68% (19 out of 28) systematically use the assessment results to inform project selection and prioritisation. Similarly, while 63% (17 out of 27) require a climate impact assessment to estimate the potential emissions of a transport infrastructure project, only 44% (12 out of 27) systematically use the results to select or prioritise projects. Less than half of the countries (12 out of 26 or 46%) require climate change adaptation measures

to be integrated into the design of transport infrastructure projects. Only 35% (9 out of 26) systematically use climate resilience criteria to inform project selection and prioritisation (OECD, 2023^[38]). For example, new methodologies can be developed for assessing a project's contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as was recently proposed by the OECD to Ireland under the EU Technical Support Instrument (Percoco et al., 2023^[54]).

Government leadership is crucial in attracting private investment in sustainable infrastructure. To facilitate the delivery of environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure, countries must set in place enabling policy and regulatory frameworks. This includes updating land use regulations, spatial plans, and providing investment signals that guide market investment in low-carbon infrastructure. Streamlining permit procedures is particularly important to expedite infrastructure projects that promote the green transition. Many OECD countries have adopted good practices in promoting transparency in permit procedures; 87% of them (27 out of 31) allow public tracking of progress in issuing transport infrastructure permits. However, more could be done to increase the accountability of permitting agencies. Currently, only 43% of OECD countries (13 out of 30) assess permitting agencies' performance based on regulatory goals in the transport sector (based on outcomes rather than on outputs). For example, the United States' Department of Transportation is required to establish system to monitor the environmental review and permit process for major projects (OECD, 2023^[38]). There is also significant potential to establish synergies with efforts to scale up mobilisation of private finance for climate action both in OECD and developing countries (OECD, 2023^[55]).

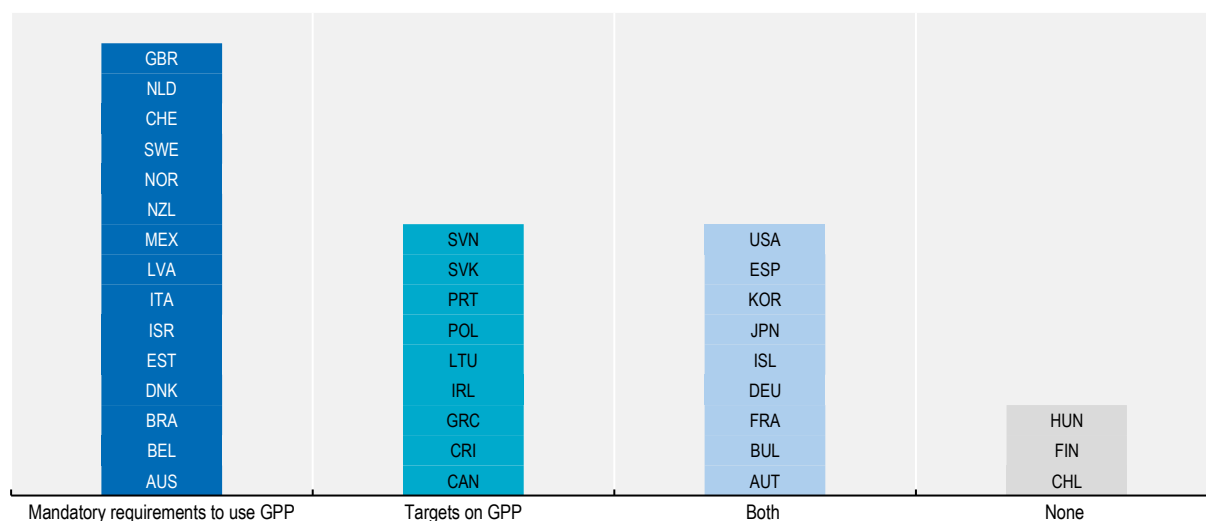
Going forward, climate change may increasingly expose infrastructure assets and networks to damage and disruption. This is compounded by ongoing infrastructure governance challenges such as ageing and poor maintenance. A lifecycle approach to infrastructure planning and management can help increase assets' resilience, which will require broader measurement tools.

4.3.4. Expand the use of green public procurement ensuring, to the extent possible, that all participants in the supply chain for public contracts meet environmental rules and standards, and improve the measurement of the impact of green procurement practices

The OECD 2022 RDI report (OECD, 2022^[26]) underscores persistent challenges in greening government procurement which helped to identify areas for action. Governments aspiring to enhance the implementation of green public procurement must address the existing data gap, which hinders a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of green procurement strategies. This step is crucial for gaining insights into the environmental advantages derived from more sustainable government operations and fosters sustainable economic development as public procurement represents almost 13% of GDP across OECD countries. Green Public Procurement (GPP) is increasingly seen as a strategic policy tool to achieve sustainability objectives and meet countries' commitments on climate change.

The results of the OECD 2022 Survey on Green Public Procurement offer comparative results across a range of 34 OECD countries, and four non-members (Brazil, Bulgaria, Peru and Romania). Results show that, in terms of whether all participants in the SC for public contracts meet environmental rules and standards, 34 out of the 38 countries surveyed had an active GPP policy or strategic framework. The broad objectives contained in GPP policies are usually translated into more tangible obligations or objectives assigned to public procurement officers (Figure 4.7). Countries might establish an obligation to introduce green requirements in public tenders or they can set more incremental targets such as the percentage of goods or services subject to green public procurement strategies. The provision of mandatory requirements to use GPP in specific instances as well as targets in terms of share of procurement subject to GPP limit the discretionary power of public contracting authorities to decide whether and how to adopt GPP.

Figure 4.7. GPP mandatory requirements and targets



Note: Figures shows respondents responses to two different questions: (1) “Does the national policy or strategic framework include a mandatory requirement to use GPP in specific instances?”, (2) “Does the national policy or strategic GPP framework include targets in terms of share of procurement subject to GPP?”

Source: OECD (2024^[56]), *Harnessing Public Procurement for the Green Transition: Good Practices in OECD Countries*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e551f448-en>.

For example, Italy has developed Minimum Environmental Criteria for 18 product categories that are mandatory for all contracting authorities at every level of government and for all public tenders, irrespective of the contract’s value (Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, n.d.^[57]). However, none of the countries examined have adopted mandatory GPP requirements for all procurement categories. In the Slovak Republic, according to the Strategy for environmental policy, the targets for GPP are 70% of the total value and number of contracts by 2030, applicable across levels of government.

The survey shows that only a limited number of countries require reporting on the use of green criteria in procurement processes, focusing mainly on immediate outputs such as the value or number of contracts, rather than on outcomes such as impact on greenhouse gas emissions. A major challenge in monitoring is the granularity of procurement data, which often does not distinguish between different product types (e.g. electric cars vs. diesel cars). Most e-Procurement systems broadly categorise products, such as “car purchase”, where environmental footprints are averaged, hindering the assessment of the impact of specific procurement strategies. However, some positive practices have emerged; both Slovenia and Croatia have developed frameworks to measure the environmental effects, including GHG emissions, of green procurement for certain product categories (Box 4.5).

Box 4.5. Slovenia's measurement framework to assess the environmental effects of GPP

As part of the larger initiative CARE4CLIMATE, co-founded by the European LIFE Programme and aimed at supporting Slovenia in achieving its emissions reduction targets, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning has been working to develop a measurement framework to monitor the environmental, social, and economic effects of Green Public Procurement. Notably, the methodology covers impacts that can be measured either directly or indirectly, and it applies to three procurement categories: electrical and electronic appliances, road vehicles, design/construction of buildings. In the case of environmental impacts, in addition to directly measuring the reduction (or increase) in GHG emissions, the methodology indirectly measures pollution, waste generation and recycling, threats to biodiversity, and smog generation. Moreover, the methodology is comprehensive and considers all stages of a product lifecycle.

To assess the impacts of green procurement decisions, a baseline is always identified for comparison. The baseline can be defined in different ways, also according to the procurement category considered. For example, it can be defined through an energy label that provides information on the energy consumption of products and appliances, and it is useful for electronic devices and indirectly for road vehicles and building construction. In the absence of this, the baseline can be determined as an average of the items of a comparable class of product/service.

Beside creating a yardstick for the monitoring of the effects of green procurement strategies over time, results from measurement are also used to further improve GPP policy design and related instruments.

Source: Lakić, Gregor Golja and Ferdo Gubina (2022^[58]), "Analiza Učinkov Zelenega Javnega Naročanja V Republiki Sloveniji" [Analysis of the effects of green public procurement in the Republic of Slovenia], <https://www.care4climate.si/sl/novice/vse-novice/analiza-ucinkov-zelenega-javnega-narocanja-v-republiki-sloveniji>.

The results above highlight the value of holistic approaches to expand the reach and impact of green public procurement. Countries need to invest in monitoring systems, leverage e-Procurement for efficiency, and focus on standardised environmental standards across supply chains. The emphasis should be not only on formalising policies but ensuring their effective implementation, with the ultimate aim of realising tangible environmental benefits.

4.3.5. Enable public institutions and economic and network regulators to promote environmental action through mandates, funding, tools and governance arrangements that allow them to achieve environmental goals

The network sectors that economic regulators oversee – typically energy, transport, e-communications and water - often have significant environmental impacts and are highly resource intensive. Green transition involves the profound transformation of these network sectors. As leading public bodies in the governance of these sectors, economic regulators can substantially influence environmental outcomes. There is a growing expectation from stakeholders, regulated entities and citizens that economic regulators, as contributors to the implementation of the government policy agendas, also play a role in meeting environmental objectives.

Whilst regulators are already starting to respond, there is currently no standard approach taken toward defining the role of economic regulators in contributing to environmental policy objectives and the green transition.

Several functions that economic regulators routinely carry out can have important impacts on environmental outcomes and are therefore potential levers to contribute to the green transition. The

OECD's report on Better Regulation for the Green Transition (OECD, 2023^[46]) provides examples of some of those available levers, which include tariff-setting, infrastructure access and planning, measures that target consumer and operator behaviour, collecting and publishing data, and monitoring standards and ensuring compliance, among others. More broadly, the choice of regulatory approach could support environmental objectives. For example, innovation can be stimulated through outcome-based regulation, where regulators set envisaged outcomes rather than dictate procedures for how operators should achieve them. Regulatory experimentation through regulatory sandboxes, pilot projects and pilot regulations can also be used to harness innovations that will have a beneficial environmental impact.

The potential contribution of economic regulators to the green transition rests on several important considerations around governance arrangements, which may be summarised under the themes of role clarity, the adapting of regulatory tools and processes, and addressing capacity and resources.

Providing clear objectives for regulators will motivate intervention, whilst setting clear roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework can help avoid misalignment regarding the delivery of those objectives. Lacking or unclear legal mandates may limit potential action beyond information gathering and knowledge building, as Economic regulators would not be able to employ the levers noted above and promote environmental goals when doing so would compromise on the attainment of their primary objectives as defined in legislation. Furthermore, if the mandates of economic regulators expand to encompass environmental goals, regulators must be afforded the appropriate powers to deliver their objectives.

Where mandates are broadened, regulators will inevitably be required to balance multiple objectives and clear guidance from the executive or within legislation on priorities and resolving trade-offs should be provided. Having clear guidance can help mitigate the risk of blurring the boundary between political and technical decision making.

Since a regulator's ability to make accurate assessments and informed regulatory decisions, including on trade-offs, rests on its knowledge and understanding of the regulated sector, consideration should also be given to the regulators' powers to collect and manage data and information.

Co-ordination between economic regulators and other public institutions becomes increasingly important in the context of a broadened mandate that encompasses economic, social, and environmental objectives, given the complex interactions between these issues. At a minimum, joint efforts can be useful to explore and understand how regulation can support environmental objectives. In some cases, more extensive co-ordination may be required.

Regulators can also take advantage of regulatory management tools to support the delivery of broadened remits. Regulatory impact assessments (RIA) that encompass cost benefit analyses can help to reveal potential trade-offs and identify solutions with the greatest net benefits for the environment. It is important that regulators are aware of the impacts of their regulatory actions and decisions. This helps drive improvements and enhance systems and processes internally. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of the regulator to whom it is accountable and helps to build confidence in the regulatory system.

Regulators may need to reassess the design of stakeholder engagement processes to support the delivery of broadened remits. The knowledge of regulated sectors and the businesses and citizens affected by regulatory schemes assists regulators to regulate effectively and regulators may need to engage with a more diverse range of stakeholder groups if they need to consider environmental goals in their decision making.

Approaches to managing regulation and the regulatory design process may need to adapt to better support environmental objectives and ensure regulation remains fit-for-purpose, especially where economic regulators are provided with a broadened mandate and therefore have responsibilities to manage new risks on the horizon. For example, innovation can be stimulated through outcome-based regulation,

regulatory experimentation can be used to harness innovation with environmental benefits, and regulators involved in licensing and inspection may reap the benefits of a risk-based system of regulatory delivery.

Importantly, regulators will need to build sufficient capacity and capabilities to deliver on new or expanded mandates for environmental protection. This will entail ensuring that they have the right skills, appropriate technologies, and sufficient financial resources.

Regulators with mandates relating to environmental sustainability will need to continually update and enhance the skills, knowledge, and capacity of their staff to keep pace with changes in the sector, including relevant technological developments, and the possibilities available to all regulators due to digitalisation and the use of big data. However, many regulators report difficulties in hiring well-qualified staff, especially IT and data specialists, which can affect their ability to execute their regulatory activities (OECD, 2022^[59]).

Close attention will be needed around regulators' staffing and funding arrangements – such as its ability to hire new staff, allow existing staff to build new capacities, re-organise itself internally, or to manage resources autonomously – as these can have an important bearing on its agility to respond to new roles and expectations. At the same time, funding levels should be adequate to enable the regulator, operating efficiently, to effectively fulfil the objectives set by government, including obligations relating to environmental sustainability and the green transition.

Finally, broadened remits and new objectives for economic regulators relating to environmental sustainability may require new ways of thinking and working. Regulators should identify the need for organisational change, diagnose the current state, and take steps to anticipate and understand the potential implications of change, which may include a process institutional and cultural adjustment too.

4.3.6. Promote green competencies, skills and leadership practices in government that allow them to mainstream awareness and consideration of the environmental impacts of all government policies and action and ensure environmental stewardship by government

The OECD RDI 2022 report (OECD, 2022^[26]) recognised the role of public employment practices in supporting the green transition. In fact, public administrations are increasingly gearing up for the green transition and its anticipated impacts across all facets of operations and workforce. From a broader public employment perspective, the challenge regarding the workforce lies not so much in the creation of new "green jobs" but rather in integrating green principles throughout public employment and management systems and the HR function.

Considering the transversal nature of climate considerations, countries are increasingly seeking to develop so-called "green" competencies, skills and leadership practices, enabling governments to assess and adapt policies and services to meet sustainability objectives. These efforts aim to foster shared understanding of the environmental ramifications of government policies and actions, and to be aware of potential adverse effects. This emphasis may lead to the emergence of specific sets of "green" competencies and skills in specific public service professions. For instance, public procurement specialists are increasingly expected to master and develop green skills focusing on the environmental impact of tenders, which can support the Green Public Procurement practices highlighted above. Similarly, all staff managing EU investment funds in national administrations need to implement the "Do No Significant Harm" principle, requiring them to be able to assess a range of sustainability impacts of funded projects.

Besides the leadership level, discussed as part of the global competences above, building green competencies at the operational level within the administration calls for the recruitment of specialists and the development of public servants with these skill sets. However, across OECD member countries, virtually all public administrations face challenges attracting the right candidate for particular job categories. This is even more the case for profiles with specific skills in high demand in the private sector. This requires

public administrations to better understand what candidates expect from a public service role or career, and how is the public service positioned to deliver on that. The OECD has developed a framework to tie these threads together that looks at the quality of the job, the prospects for career development, and the quality of life the professional opportunity offers, as perceived by candidates (OECD, 2023^[60]). Offering stimulating job opportunities to specialists focused on the green transition can help build capacity to address climate change-related challenges.

Over the long term, similar initiatives aimed at providing learning and development opportunities for all public servants can facilitate developing an approach taking into account climate change and the green transition. However, across OECD member countries, this topic is not yet a primary focus of public service learning and development strategies. Only 3% and 8% of OECD member countries have respectively identified SDGs and global competencies as a priority area for training non-manager public servants. The development of those training offers remains limited, but some countries have already started structuring trainings. For instance, France seeks to extend its green national training plan to all public servants by 2027.

Schools of government have an increasingly important role to play to achieve this goal. Climate policy is identified as one of the main areas in which schools of government aim to develop new programmes (OECD, 2022^[61]). However, less than half of schools of government surveyed indicated already having programmes on SDGs or global competencies (OECD, 2022^[61]). Despite this, several schools have indicated great interest in developing programmes having to do with skills for sustainability or the green transition, though indicate that they are in the beginning stages of developing curricula. Examples include Spain and the United States, in which ministries responsible for environmental matters have discussed forming curriculums or courses focusing on specific “green” skills, potentially in conjunction with centralised training institutes. Further, many schools of government incorporate climate or environmental policies into course work focused on evaluating policies and policy proposals, even if not directly related to specific green skills.

Finally, these changes actively impact the human resources (HR) function, which are called on to develop training opportunities, ensure that green skills and competencies are valued throughout one’s career, or identify the skills and profiles needed for new and emerging green jobs. Other HR functions are also relevant to “leading by examples”, and will be discussed below.

Ultimately, public administrations can effectively address the green transition by fostering a shared understanding of environmental impacts and integrating green practices. Despite some progress and initiatives in a few countries, there remains scope for greater emphasis on green training initiatives and integration of environmental considerations into learning and development strategies. Concerted efforts are required to ensure that green skills are in place to help governments deliver on the green transition.

4.3.7. Use innovative governance approaches, including mission-oriented innovation and anticipatory governance mechanisms, to inform climate and environmental decision making and policies

The 2022 OECD RDI report recognised the potential for public sector innovation and innovative governance approaches to support climate and environmental decision making and policies. Policymakers, facing complex challenges, increasingly find that traditional, often isolated, and reactive approaches based on single instruments are insufficient. Missions and mission-oriented policies, which extend beyond the remit of a particular governmental office, provide a useful tool. In policymaking, a mission refers to a well-defined, bold, and ambitious overarching policy objective to tackle a societal challenge within a defined timeframe. They involve diverse stakeholders, demand innovation and co-ordination, and embody long-term transformative visions.

The OECD actively supports countries in adopting mission approaches through the multidisciplinary Mission Action Lab (MAL), established in 2021. The MAL has partnered with countries to develop a mission

practitioner need assessment survey, online toolkits and databases, country case-studies, bootcamp training seminars, practical guides and a mission diagnostic methodology.

In 2023, the MAL facilitated the development of a mission assessment analytical framework in Austria, testing it during the implementation of the five EU missions, including the *Climate-neutral and smart cities* and the *Adaptation to climate change* missions. Austria provides one of the most elaborated efforts not only to mobilise and co-ordinate relevant communities of actors around the five EU missions, but also to adopt them as national missions in their own right. This monitoring tool aims to provide a self-assessment of their progress in the mission design and implementation ‘journey’ as well as a compass to reach consensus on the way(s) forward based on the identified gaps in each mission and at the level of the overall mission initiative. The conclusions of this self-assessment exercise were synthesised in a final report that included overarching and mission-specific recommendations.⁹

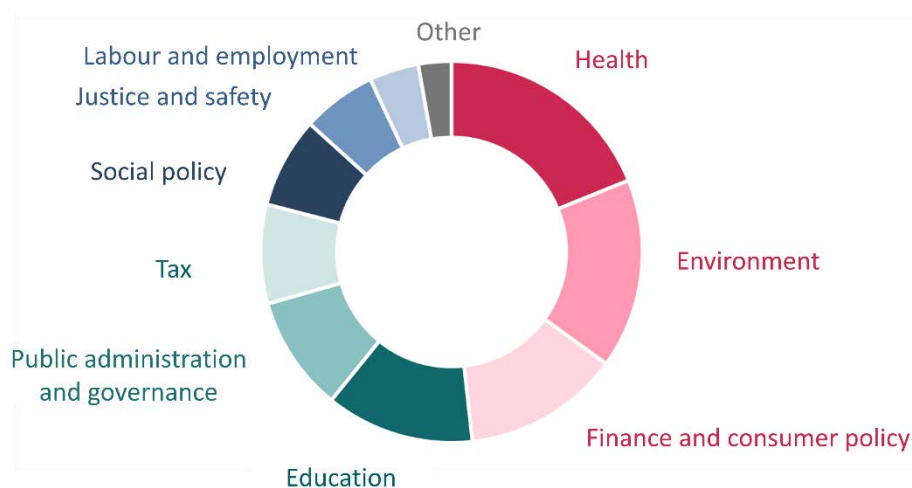
Moving forward and building on the Mission Action Lab collaboration on mission-oriented approaches with policymakers and partners from across the globe, the Mission Action Lab has launched a reoccurring Community of Practice around mission-oriented approaches in Spring 2024. The Community of Practice serves to connect and promote knowledge exchange among policymakers, mission practitioners, researchers and experts actively involved in the mission field. Over a third of the 250+ community members are involved in missions related to climate or environmental policy, and a community session will be dedicated to their specific challenges during 2024.

In late 2024, the OECD will also publish a report examining how the mission approach can be leveraged to secure governance frameworks that are better able to deliver on national climate mitigation targets. This work builds on previous OECD research on the effectiveness of mission-oriented innovation policies for reaching net zero targets, as well as MAL research into the topic of effective mission governance.

4.3.8. Use behavioural insight approaches to ensure the effective design and implementation of green policies considering behavioural barriers and biases in all the stages of policymaking, including assessment

The OECD 2022 RDI report (OECD, 2022_[26]) identified the role of behavioural insights (BI) in designing, implementing, and promoting green policies acknowledging the need for individuals, business and governments to shift behaviours towards a sustainable, low carbon economy. Behavioural insights tools can support governments by helping to identify behavioural drivers and barriers, thereby promoting interventions that encourage more sustainable decisions.

Behavioural science is increasingly used for policymaking across OECD countries (Varazzani and Hubble, 2023_[62]), offering direct opportunities to support the green agenda. Specifically, behavioural science units are focusing on promoting the green transition, recognising the need to rely on evidence-based insights to understand drivers of and barriers to green behaviours. The OECD Behavioural Insights Knowledge Hub - which aggregates findings from behavioural science studies uploaded by practitioners worldwide - the environmental sector is one of the top three policy domains where behavioural science interventions are most frequently applied (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8. Policy topics benefitting from behavioural science

Note: n=143 (as of October 2023).

Source: OECD (n.d.^[63]), OECD behavioural science Knowledge Hub.

The PARCA survey, launched in 2022 and highlighted in the 2022 RDI report, now offers more than 35 000 observations (respondents) across 18 studies (both online surveys and qualitative studies). It provides insights on the views of Canadian citizens regarding systemic concerns (such as misinformation and trust in government), organisational concerns (such as increasing the recognition of ecologically-sensitive lands), and individual concerns (such as the adoption of electric heat pumps and zero-emission vehicles). PARCA found that 75% of respondents were open to making lifestyle changes to limit climate change, and that recycling (92%) and reducing food waste (77%) were two of the most common pro-environmental actions (Impact Canada Initiative, 2024^[64]).

Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) collaborated with Yale University's Programme on Climate Communications (YPCCC) on two reports: *Climate Change in the Irish Mind* and *Climate Change's Four Irelands* (Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.^[65]; Leiserowitz, A., Goldberg, M., Carman, J. et al., 2022^[66]). Through their work, the Ireland EPA and the YPCCC found that the majority of people in Ireland (78%) have moderate knowledge about climate change, and that nearly all of the population (95%) think climate change is happening and that it is caused by human activities to some extent (Leiserowitz, A., Goldberg, M., Carman, J. et al., 2022^[66]; Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.^[65]). Both reports were extremely well received across the country.

BI continues to be used to identify barriers to and drivers of green behaviour. The Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) is developing a survey series on the drivers of household behaviours that limit greenhouse gas emissions. BETA previously worked on *Energy Labels That Make Cents*, an RCT in which they tested the effect of appliance energy rating labels (Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government, 2018^[67]). The study found that the presence of energy labels had a positive effect on consumer behaviour when compared to the scenario with no energy labels. Similarly, in Canada, PARCA also aims to understand barriers and drivers of green behaviour through in-field studies that aim to understand whether solutions that positively influence intentions lead to real behaviour changes (Impact Canada Initiative, 2024^[64]).

The Danish Competition and Consumer Authority recently conducted an online experiment to test different climate labels in a supermarket setting. The first label was a "best-in-class" label (BIC), awarded to products in different categories with emissions below a specific threshold. The second label was a scale label, assigning every product a label with a letter (A to E) and a colour (green to red) based on a uniform

scale. The experiment demonstrated that neither label had immediate effect on consumers' choices, likely due to a failure of the labels to accurately represent magnitudes of difference. However, the scale label did help consumers identify the most climate-friendly option, unlike the BIC label. This highlights that even when labels are noticed and understood, they may still fail to influence consumer decisions. Therefore, when designing labels, agencies must seek to effectively capture attention and communicate clearly, while also considering how simplification may influence consumers' evaluation.

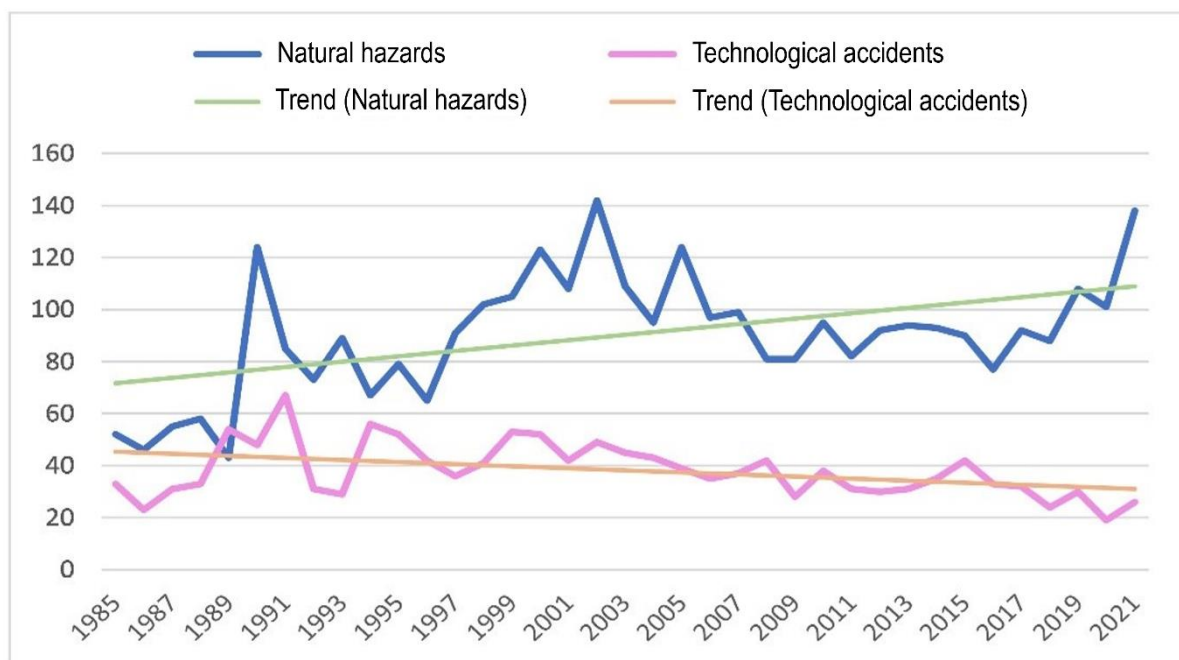
Moving forward, the green transition requires individuals, businesses, and governments to change their behaviours. Indeed, it is estimated that demand-side measures, including behavioural changes, can reduce emissions by 40 to 70% across sectors (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022^[68]). As governments increasingly integrate behavioural science in green policies, this presents with many opportunities in terms of:

- **Mainstreaming behavioural science for policymaking.** A key prerequisite for governments to be able to effectively apply behavioural science to green policies, is for them to be able to rely on robust behavioural science expertise and governance. The OECD 2024 LOGIC report on *mainstreaming behavioural public policy* (OECD, 2024^[69]) identifies opportunities for action in terms of Leadership, Objectives, Governance, Integration, and Capability.
- **Behavioural science for societal transformation to Net-Zero.** A forthcoming study will present best practices for policymakers to stimulate behaviour change in favour of the green transition. This will draw on case studies from the BI Network and its Government Working Group on Citizen Climate Attitudes, and will aim to provide a matrix for policymakers to prioritise behavioural interventions based on impact and context.

4.3.9. Build capacities to anticipate and prioritise climate-related risks and co-ordinate whole-of-society preparedness, including by incorporating climate change into national risk assessments

The OECD 2022 RDI report had identified the role of risk governance to anticipate and prioritise climate related risks and the role of co-ordinated whole of society preparedness. Attribution studies report that climate change is a key contributing factor to the severity and extent of recent large-scale wildfire incidents (OECD, 2021^[70]). In recent years, countries in many of the worst hit areas by wildfire across the globe have recorded a combination of record high summer temperatures and drought conditions in the lead up to these extreme events (OECD, 2023^[71]). Across the OECD, this was the case in countries as diverse as Spain, Portugal, Greece, Chile, the United States, Canada and Australia. Over the past twenty years, government risk management efforts across OECD countries have succeeded in reducing industrial accidents at an average year on year rate of 1.12%. By comparison, disasters linked to natural hazards have been growing at more than twice this rate). In other words, while human knowledge and skills to reduce disasters are improving, the rise in intensity and frequency of natural hazards exacerbated by impacts of climate change more than obscure this progress.

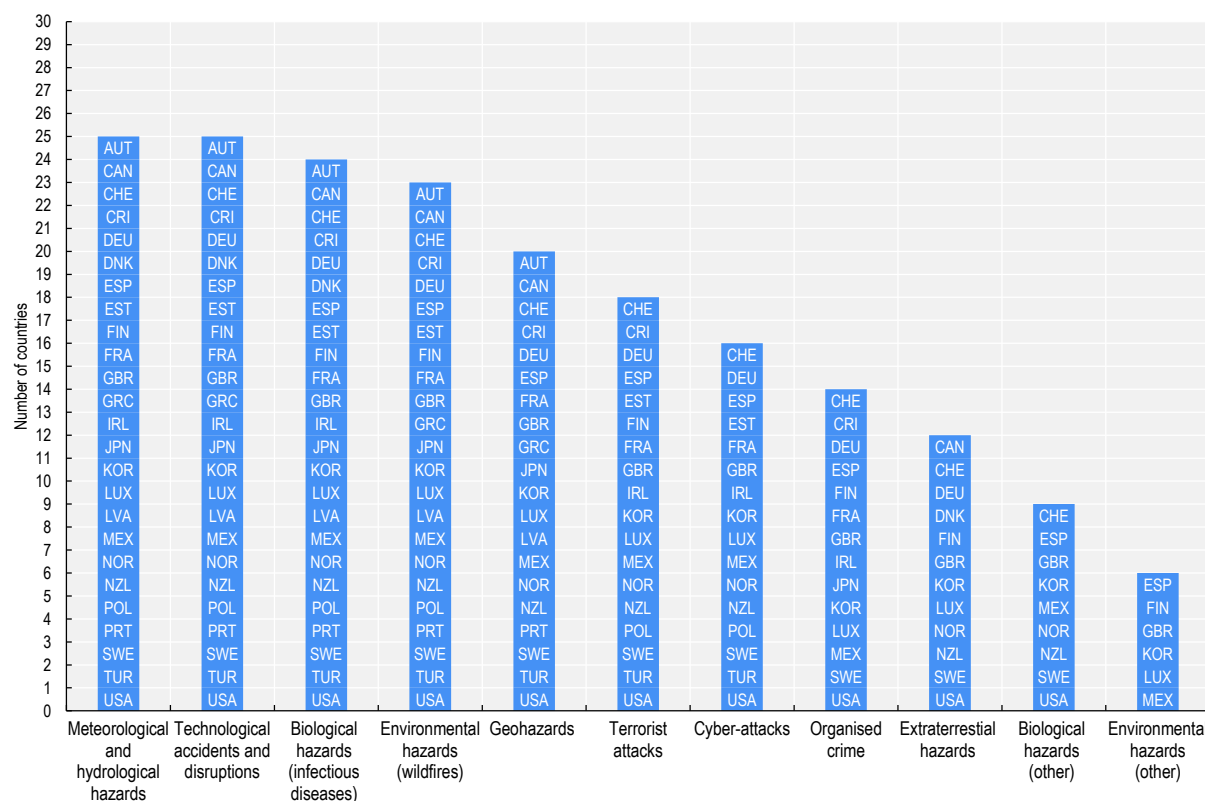
Figure 4.9. Number of climate-related and technological disasters per year (1985-2021)



Source: OECD calculation using data from EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database (2023) www.emdat.be.

Given this challenging context, governments have an opportunity to leverage national risk assessments to further enhance action on addressing risk drivers, exposures and vulnerabilities across all levels of government and involving the whole of society. The opportunities are highlighted by the Report on the Implementation of the OECD Recommendation on the Governance of critical risks [C(2023)163] Building preparedness for extreme events and crises through evidence-backed risk assessments is an essential component of improving countries' abilities to anticipate the complex and wide-ranging impacts of climate change. The report shows that governments have been increasingly taking steps to enhance risk governance functions. They have designated lead institutions to co-ordinate joined up efforts between ministries and agencies, aligning priorities and fostering co-operation between governmental and non-governmental organisations [C(2023)163]. Recent results show that as of 2022, most OECD countries had implemented processes to assess significant disaster risks, with an increasing number integrating the potential implications of extreme natural hazards into these assessments (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. Types of hazards and/or threats identified as potential critical risks



Source: 2022 OECD Questionnaire on Governance of Critical Risks.

A large proportion of the national strategies on governance of critical risks include references to priority topics, such as climate change adaptation, tackling mis/ disinformation, and security of supply of essential goods. In terms of good practice examples, the United Kingdom includes explicit in efforts their National Security Risk Assessment to consider the chronic vulnerabilities and challenges that arise from global challenges such as climate change (Government of the United Kingdom, 2023^[72]). Canada accompanies their strategy with an action plan that outlines implementation outcomes for priorities areas that include enhancing whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience and improving the understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society (Government of Canada, 2024^[73]).

As countries have now fully emerged from the COVID pandemic, they need to continue aligning their forward-looking risk assessments to confront the broader structural challenges presented by climate change and climate induced extreme events, and also to nurture a greater focus on ex ante prevention. This needs to be supported by leadership at the highest level, as is for example the case in Canada, with the appointment of Minister of Emergency Preparedness. There is also a need for specific attention to issues such as extreme wildfires and rising costs of floods which calls for a co-ordinated and proactive approach to facilitate prevention. For example, in Portugal, the Government has created a specific structure attached to the Prime Minister to co-ordinate the prevention of wildfires, AGIF, in 20217, and in the context of TSI EC project, the OECD is currently reviewing the effectiveness and the lessons that can be drawn from this important experience. There are also wider opportunities to leverage open science and data-driven decision making to better inform on potential climate risks. A good practice example is offered by France's DRIAS portal, to communicate climate risks and prompt mitigation and adaptation actions.

4.4. Key Area 3 - Leading by example – a greener and more resilient public sector

4.4.1. Collect data and improve reporting on the environmental footprint of government real property and operations, including GHG emissions

While acknowledging the role of greening by example, the OECD 2022 RDI report also acknowledged that governments were only starting to collect data about the environmental implications of their ecological footprint. Individual public agencies have targets for the use of energy, water, paper, etc., but the ability to track overall carbon emissions or other environmental hazards is not widely established. This is why the Action Plan called for collecting data in this area. This can include key indicators, such as carbon emissions, to compare regional authorities, municipalities and government agencies (both with each other and over time) and which will help focus the attention of decision makers and the wider public.

The OECD engaged with procurement experts on these issues in 2023 to discuss the different methodological approaches developed by countries to measure the carbon footprint of public procurement. To date, there are only a few countries that have developed measurement systems to keep track of the carbon footprint of public purchases. Initiatives shared by countries revealed promising efforts but also displayed systemic limitations of current methodologies. For example, as part of its commitment to reach an emission free vehicle fleet, the New Zealand Government Procurement had set up a dashboard that uses vehicle registration data from the New Zealand Transport Agency to track vehicle purchased and disposed by government agencies. With this method it is possible to monitor the emissions saved from the procurement of e-vehicles vs. non-electric vehicles. However, it does not consider the actual usage of the vehicles, making the results only indicative. The government of Canada estimates the embodied carbon footprint of the goods and services purchased by its central procurement organisations. The model uses average emissions based on the amount spent in each category, making this method not adequate to measure the effect of specific green public procurement choices.

These discussions evidenced limitations in terms of available procurement data which is not granular enough to provide information on specific characteristics of products and services purchased by public organisations. Data in e-Procurement systems often do not cover the entire procurement cycle, notably actual consumption under contracts. Procurement data alone cannot depict the carbon footprint of public procurement strategies as these need to be linked with credible and verified emissions data. There is also potential to connect those discussions with current efforts to obtain granular product level carbon intensity metrics that are currently developed for some of the emissions intensive trade-exposed sectors and are currently being expanded as part of the OECD Inclusive Forum for Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA). (OECD, 2024^[74])

4.4.2. Develop whole-of-public-sector strategies to promote green operations and the achievement of climate and environmental goals, targeting government assets and real property, services, and procurement of goods and services, and aligning internal operation policies with these goals, while enhancing public sector operations for adaptation

The OECD 2022 RDI report highlighted the importance of public sector operations to achieve the green transition. To fully realise the environmental benefits of government purchasing power, a comprehensive whole-of-government approach is crucial due to the decentralised nature of procurement spending in OECD countries, with sub-national governments accounting for an average of 63%. Establishing strategies or regulatory frameworks aligning procurement practices with environmental goals is critical for policy coherence. While OECD countries generally have frameworks to promote environmental objectives in procurement, efforts remain to be done. Indeed, public tenders should consider lifecycle costs and

environmental impacts to incentivise green competition from the private sector. Early market engagement, co-ordinated governance mechanisms, and accountability are also key to addressing climate change.

Countries have been active in this area as highlighted by the results of the OECD 2022 Green Public Procurement survey covering 38 countries, including 4 non-members, which became available in 2023 (OECD, 2023^[38]). Besides Green Public Procurement (GPP) discussed earlier, the survey also helps to understand the coherence of public procurement framework with climate related strategies. In fact, 27 out of the 34 countries that have a GPP, have a -specific policy or strategic framework that refers to GPP or public procurement in their national environmental commitments. For example, Japan includes its national GPP policy in its Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures and National Action Plan. Similarly, Canada recognises GPP as an important means to achieve its net-zero emissions target by 2050.

To ensure alignment with their commitments on climate action, most of the surveyed countries revise GPP policies on a regular basis. More than half (22 out of 38, or 53%) of them have updated their GPP framework in the past three years to target high-impact sectors and accelerate the transition towards more sustainable productions patterns Furthermore, and considering the expertise needed to define ambitious and coherent objectives in GPP policies, public procurement authorities in all OECD countries rely on other government bodies including on ministries of environment or similar agencies to formally co-ordinate GPP and broader environmental policies, thereby reinforcing the role of GPP in implementing their environmental objectives. Countries sometimes also rely on inter-ministerial or ad hoc working groups convening different stakeholders. In the United States, the alignment between GPP and environmental policies is assigned to the Executive Office of the President. In France, the General Commission for Sustainable Development, an inter-ministerial delegation for sustainable development, is responsible for steering the National Sustainable Procurement Plan (PNAD) 2022-2025.

These recent trends show that countries have been moving away from the traditional transaction-centric view of public procurement to integrate broader climate objectives. Procurement is now recognised as a strategic instrument to advance environmental policy goals. As a result, strengthening collaboration among key stakeholders is imperative to ensure that procurement and a greener public sector can effectively contribute to government's climate commitments. Many surveyed countries have already initiated such collaboration, and its importance is expected to increase further in the future.

4.4.3. Implement climate-friendly work arrangements and systems for the public sector workforce

The OECD 2022 RDI report identified the need to promote a “Green Ethos” in the public service. The public sector, as the largest employer in most OECD member countries, wields significant influence in implementing climate-friendly work arrangements and systems. OECD member countries increasingly prioritise leveraging flexible working arrangements, office space configurations, and leadership practices to lead by example. The human resources (HR) function is also called upon to rethink policies related to remote work or travel. In addition, HR function are also often responsible issues related to corporate social responsibility, such as the organisation of selective sorting, providing sustainable food options at the workplace, or encouraging green mobility alternatives.

Looking back at countries' experience in recent years, climate friendly work arrangements were rather prompted by the need to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, which then people realised also had the potential for reducing emissions in public administrations. Remote work, previously used occasional in most countries, is now available to a majority of public servants in 61% of OECD member countries and is allowed to some extent in all OECD member countries (OECD, 2023^[75]). This "new normal" presents an opportunity for public administrations to reconsider their carbon footprint. Indeed, the widespread adoption of remote flexible working arrangements has led to a decrease in office usage. Recent OECD survey data shows that 39% of OECD countries have plans to make greater use of flexible office designs, and 31%

create interdepartmental shared spaces. Additionally, 28% of member countries are developing strategies to reduce the office space of public administrations, with which helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The next step is to ensure that the remaining office space undergo transformation to promote energy efficiency. Central government buildings produce an important share of the greenhouse gases emitted produced by public administrations. Throughout the European Union, Directive EU/2023/1791 mandates member States to renovate at least 3% of the total floor areas of heated and/or cooled buildings owned and occupied by public bodies, to transform them into nearly zero-energy buildings or zero-emission buildings. On top of having a positive impact on their carbon footprint, such work has the potential to significantly diminish public administrations' energy bills and improve workplace experiences.

Public administrations' carbon footprint is also related to corporate travel and other services. For instance, the shift to online meetings and conferences across OECD member countries has curbed the need for commuting and travel. For example, Austria has undertaken various other initiatives to promote sustainable mobility and alter civil service attitudes, implementing measures such as a climate ticket reimbursed by public service employers for all public transportation use within the country while discontinuing subsidies for car commuting. Additionally, Austria aims to reduce short-distance flights by encouraging train travel whenever feasible.

Finally, attitudes taken by leadership can contribute to identifying governing green as a strategic priority. For instance, leaders can signal the importance of green initiatives by launching and conducting management and audit schemes related to the green transition. Such schemes can help improve the environmental performance of administrations themselves. The Eco-Management and Audit Schemes (EMAS), developed by the European Commission, helps organisations improve their environmental performance, by looking amongst others at energy and material efficiency, waste, and emissions. Engagement in such schemes contributes to improved performance, transparency, and credibility of organisations. As of November 2023, over 300 public administrations out of 4 000 organisations from across the European Union are registered participants in the EMAS database (EMAS, 2023^[76]).

The last set of actions concerns the capital stock, which will require more longer term action, as ultimately, the carbon footprint of public administrations also arises from building infrastructure. While climate-friendly work arrangements are evolving and are being implemented across OECD member countries, ambitious renovation programmes and policies promoting eco-friendly transportation options will also help public administrations adapt to ongoing climate challenges affecting all segments of society.

4.4.4. Strengthen the resilience of the public sector workforce, ensuring continuity of operations and business during disruptions

Public sector organisations' resilience is essential to maintain public services and adapt to fast changing circumstances that may challenge business and operations. Earlier OECD work on the future of the public service suggests some elements which contribute to resilient public servants include wellness, motivation and commitment to mission, anticipation and foresight, creative problem solving, learning agility, and systems thinking and collaboration (OECD, 2021^[77]).

A wealth of experiences is offered by a recent OECD EC supported project, using a Common Action Framework at European level, and engaging with ten EU Member States. The results show that organisational resilience depended on many things, but central to them all is the workforce. (OECD, 2023^[78]). The case studies conducted for the project showed how managers in resilient organisations ensured that individual workers were themselves resilient. In many cases, public employees had to drastically change their work, working habits and environments, all the while keeping healthy and motivated. Personal resilience is a complex construct that will be different for each person, but is intrinsically related to health and wellbeing, as well as motivation and engagement. Investing in these skills and capabilities requires HR systems that are aligned and forward looking.

Resilience also requires organisations to develop learning cultures that promote the development of resilient employees and encourage employees to learn and grow throughout their career. However, recent results show that only 25% of OECD countries intentionally target resilience in their learning strategies (and only 10% at the senior levels) (OECD, 2023^[75]). The COVID pandemic helped create an impetus to move learning online. Indeed almost all OECD countries have online learning platforms for their civil servants, although the use of many of the more advanced technologies, like AI remain exploratory. One example is Korea's new e-learning platform which uses the latest technology to provide a platform for learning and sharing across the public service, where public servants can be learning and teachers.

Health and wellbeing is an important element of resilience. This starts with prevention to ensure the work environment is healthy, and continues by ensuring appropriate access to medical help, including mental health. It also means that employees should have access to the right kind of leave and support, to minimise disruptions and return to work healthy as quickly as possible, for which the COVID related experience remains fundamental. Belgium's National Employment Office, for example, established a single point of contact for their wellbeing@work initiative in each division which co-ordinated information and measures during the COVID crisis. In Spain, Madrid Salud had to implement a wide range of measures to protect the health of frontline workers who could not stay home during the pandemic. This included revisiting the role of essential emergency workers and the contributions they were best placed to make, providing the right kinds of health protections, and managing simultaneously for higher levels of sick leave and burnout (OECD, 2023^[78]).

Leadership and management cultures are also fundamental to workforce resilience. Some good practices that were put into place during the pandemic in many organisations included pulse surveys to get a feel for employees' relative levels of stress and engagement, and more regular and deliberate check in sessions to give employees opportunities to support each other in their stress. These are likely important elements to continue when building a resilient workforce in the future.

Furthermore, resilient workforces depend on the resilience of the HR management systems, which require agility to respond to crises. For example, resilient HR systems ensured that people continued working even if they could no longer be present in the office or work in the same configurations as before. For many this meant flexibility in work location and in working time. The study showed that organisations that were equipped to provide both of these forms of flexibility were more resilient and prepared. Most public sector organisations found ways to implement these kinds of flexibilities although some more quickly than others. Anecdotal evidence suggests that countries which already had significant experience with flexible working methods found the adaptation to be less challenging. A recent OECD survey also shows how 65% of OECD countries provide additional guidance on the use of flexible working methods, including charters that clearly identify the expectations of employees and their managers so as clarify some of the grey areas around this kind of working (OECD, 2023^[75]).

Resilient HR systems also need to be able to match employee skills with demand while that demand is changing significantly. This requires many elements to be in place – first a good understanding of the skills available in the organisations' workforce, and second the conditions and systems in place to facilitate job mobility. Case studies of the Sofia Regional Health Inspectorate and Thessaloniki Municipality conducted for the project show how this happened more naturally in smaller organisations. However, many national public services were slower to identify the need and put the right mobility mechanisms in place. Recent work on this also shows how mobility systems are under-used by most OECD countries. For example, only 40% of OECD countries recommend or require employees to systematically change jobs throughout their career, while only 31% of countries explicitly promote mobility as a priority of public service management (OECD, 2023^[75]). The Report contains many tips and insights, including a Strategic Mobility Framework, to help guide countries in finding the right balance of mobility supported by the right policy instruments.

As a result, a resilience focus suggests opportunities to put in place HR policies that focus on 2 areas - boosting the resilience of individual public servants and ensuring the HR system itself is resilient to unforeseen shocks and crises. HR functions can support the resilience of the public service by reinforcing “resilience skills” such as creative problem solving, foresight, systems thinking, and learning agility. They can also update health and wellbeing policies and service to ensure that public servants are available to work. Learning cultures and reskilling strategies are also essential in the public service, to ensure that all public servants can develop new skills quickly to respond to fast changing circumstance. To ensure resilient HR systems, governments can embed new forms of flexible working to enable public servants to work from anywhere, any time; and they can invest in new mobility tools to quickly align skills demand with supply. This fundamentally requires deep consideration of the role and structure of the HR function in crisis management, likely investment in new HR skills, and the transformation of organisational HR models in the public service.

4.4.5. Invest in sustainable and green digital infrastructure for the public sector to reduce CO2 emissions and public sector’s demand for natural resources (i.e. scarce minerals) and enhance adaptation to climate change, and take action to address the potential environmental impact of public sector digital and data infrastructure

The OECD 2022 RDI report clearly identified the need for designing greener public services in the digital age. Countries are faced with the triple challenge of making public sector digital infrastructure more resilient, reducing infrastructure-related emissions, and meeting an increasing demand for digital infrastructure to support government operations and services. These challenges call for renewed policies and actions to secure sustainable and green digital infrastructure for the public sector. However, uncertainties arising from rapidly evolving technologies and climate change create a challenge for planning infrastructure assets with specific hurdles for digital infrastructure. These include higher temperatures that necessitate equipment cooling, leading to increased electricity consumption, extreme weather events that expose digital infrastructure to damage and power outages, and new dependencies on natural resources, such as scarce minerals. There is also a resilience angle to this discussion, given the critical role of digital infrastructure in ensuring digital government service continuity in the face of major weather-related events.

OECD countries have been active in this area in recent years. For example, the United Kingdom established a policy paper titled “Greening government: ICT and digital services strategy 2020-2025” (Government of the United Kingdom, 2020^[79]). The Danish Agency for Governmental IT Services “Strategy 2023-2026,” includes a strategic pillar on “Climate-friendly and sustainable IT”, covering the establishment of a high-tech and energy-efficient data centre for government IT operations and green procurement (Danish Agency for Governmental IT Services, 2023^[80]). In Australia, the Government has strengthened the requirements of its panel arrangement for data centres, ensuring that any new data centre contracts include sustainability measures and mandatory reporting on energy efficiency (DTA, 2023^[81]).

OECD governments have also developed specific tools to support green digital procurement, including standardised sustainability criteria and requirements which can be incorporated by public buyers into public procurement tenders. For example, the European Commission has developed green criteria and requirements for two ICT categories (personal devices and data centres and cloud services) (European Commission, n.d.^[82]) and Ireland has published criteria for ICT products and services in an online tool that allows users to find, select and download criteria relevant to their specific procurement (Government of Ireland, n.d.^[83]). Similarly, Germany’s Guide on Green Public Procurement of Software which presents criteria for sustainable software and proposes methods for their implementation in public tenders (German Environmental Agency, 2020^[84]). Many OECD countries have also developed relevant goals and targets in their broader infrastructure plans to promote environmentally sustainable infrastructure (OECD, 2023^[85]).

With demand for digital government services increasing, energy and resource efficient digital infrastructure in the public sector is vital. As is the case for infrastructure in general, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) offer innovative, cost-effective opportunities for improving the environmental performance of digital infrastructure assets and services. For example, renewable energy solutions can help design and build energy efficient and sustainable data centres. Other strategies to lower emissions from ICT infrastructure include e-waste recycling. In 2020, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada initiated a challenge for a solution to enable government departments to recycle e-waste plastics and metals¹⁰. Ignoring the value of natural resources such as scarce minerals may lead to overexploitation of natural assets and ecosystems or unbalanced policy and investment decisions. Methodologies for financial valuation of natural assets are increasingly being used across OECD countries as 14 out of 28 countries either already have in place such methodologies or are in the process of developing them (OECD, 2022_[49]).

Public procurement also has a role to play to take a more strategic approach to digital investment, including to evaluate environmental risks and impact and choose more sustainable digital solutions, as discussed in general above as part of Green Public Procurement. However, only 27% of OECD countries are evaluating the environmental impact of digital government. A greater focus on environmental impacts as part of the strategic management of digital government investments could help, as 33% of OECD countries assess environmental impact when developing the value proposition for a digital project and only 12% are considering environmental risks in the risk management of their digital projects (OECD, 2024_[86]). Countries could also do more to measure the results of digital procurement with respect to green objectives. For digital projects, only 18% of OECD countries apply a common methodology for evaluating the environmental impact of digital projects on government, citizens, and businesses (OECD, 2024_[86]).

Systematic evaluation of general infrastructure projects' environmental and climate impact brings to light key considerations, risks, and mitigation strategies, which facilitate better decision making in both current and future digital infrastructure projects. Such monitoring and mitigation measures could inform planning and design of infrastructure with lower environmental and climate impact. This is equally relevant for digital infrastructure considering its resource consumption and carbon footprint. Over half of OECD countries (15 out of 26 or 57%) use mechanisms to monitor and mitigate environmental and climate impact throughout operation, maintenance, and possible decommissioning of infrastructure assets (OECD, 2022_[49]). For example, France has launched a methodological guide to assess the impacts of infrastructure projects on GHG emissions. The guide proposes an avoid-reduce-compensate (ERC) sequence throughout construction, operation and decommissioning of infrastructure assets, which is required for infrastructure projects for which GHG emissions are quantified and significant impacts are identified. It illustrates examples of ERC measures at different stages of life cycle and recommends monitoring their progress as well as effectiveness (OECD, 2023_[87]).

Looking ahead to the future, technologies will continue to change and demand for digital government services increase exponentially. Planning for digital infrastructure in the public sector has to remain flexible and adaptive to reduce the costs of irreversibility. The OECD is currently surveying countries on the use of InfraTech solutions such as Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins and robotics and unmanned aerial vehicles to monitor performance of infrastructure assets over the life cycle.

4.5. Working collectively through the OECD and priorities going forward

4.5.1. Working collectively through the OECD

- Actively supporting countries in terms of governing green, contributing from a public governance perspective to [the Net Zero+ horizontal project](#).
- Engaged to support countries in [steering and building consensus and trust for delivering green](#): collect of information on engaging with citizen, including young people, and facilitative deliberative democracy mechanisms to support the green transitions. **forthcoming working paper on “Applying Open Government Approaches to Engage Citizens in the Green Transition”**.
- Engaged with the private sector on these issues, building on corporate social responsibility initiative, as part of the [Getting Influence Right Initiative](#).
- Engaged with centres of government through the report on Steering responses to climate change from the centre of government (Kaur et al., 2023^[25]).
- Engaged through PGC, SBO and RPC communities on how to use the right tools for climate and environmental action: *Green budgeting: a way forward* (Blazey and Lelong, 2022^[88]), *Better regulation for the green transition Toolkit* (OECD, 2023^[46]). *Understanding and applying the precautionary principle in the green transition* (OECD, 2023^[89]). The [OECD Paris Collaborative on Green Budgeting](#) has offered a multidimensional platform for public officials from finance, environmental ministries and independent fiscal institutions to develop innovative tools and common methodologies.
- Currently developing [Infrastructure Governance Indicators \(IGI\)](#) to monitor how countries ensure asset performance throughout its life.
- Leveraging the OECD [multidisciplinary Mission Action Lab](#) to explore how mission governance frameworks – i.e., the design and implementation of organisational structures and processes to enable broad government efforts towards specific and timebound objectives – can help governments reach climate transition outcomes.
- Created a Working Group on **Citizen Climate Attitudes and Behaviours**, as part of its network of [Behavioural Insights Experts in Government](#).
- Green focus in country reviews: the 2023 Public Governance Monitor of Sweden (OECD, 2023^[90]) focus on “Enhancing government Capabilities to address climate change”. The 2023 Public Governance Review of the Czech Republic (OECD, 2023^[91]) focus on “Whole of Government efforts to address climate change”. The [2023 policy paper on “Co-ordination of green policies at the centre of government in Romania”](#) (OECD, 2024^[92]).
- Drafting new **principles for responsible lobbying and corporate political engagement** as part of [“getting influence right”](#), with guidelines on transparency and integrity in climate.

4.5.2. Conclusions and priorities for the future

Countries have been using a variety of policy tools to ensure that government actions align with green objectives, including green budgeting, green public procurement, regulatory impact assessment and others. Governments are also monitoring and reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions and environmental footprint. Some countries are investing in participatory mechanisms and engaging with civil society in order to build consensus on green policies and strengthen trust in governments’ ability to manage the green transition. Countries are also reinforcing cross-sectoral co-ordination and monitoring mechanisms.

However, countries continue to be presented with great challenges in terms of designing effective policy measures that balance intersectoral trade-offs and intergenerational equity, and more remains to be done

for governments to accelerate the transition to a green economy. In a democratic context, governments need to empower public understanding and support for policies that have a direct impact on citizens in their daily life. They will need to continue investing in their tools and taking them to the next strategic level, including permitting for green infrastructure, mobilising procurement more strategically, and mobilising the right evidence to inform policy choices and trade-offs.

The Reinforcing Democracy Initiative will support governments in managing a citizen-centred green transition, as well as fostering public support and active citizen engagement. It will also advance analysis and guidance on encouraging citizen participation, shaping social norms for behavioural change, reducing public administrations emissions, and consolidating governance structures that align with climate goals. Furthermore, it will support countries in ensuring that governments are equipped with strong evidence and are able to mobilise it at the right time and in the right format to enable evidence informed policymaking in this complex area.

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Notes

¹ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the marginalised groups in line with its own national legislation.

² The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and tackle climate change (United Nations, n.d.^[93]).

³ Global competence is a multidimensional capacity. Globally competent public servants understand the interactions between local and global policy issues, understand and appreciate different (intercultural) perspectives and world views, interact successfully with others (including in international forums), and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being. To this end, global competencies can relate closely to a subcategory of green skills.

⁴ Data are derived from the 2022 OECD Green Budgeting Survey, encompassing responses from 36 OECD countries and referring only to central/federal government practices as of end-June 2022. Respondents were predominantly budget officials within central budget authorities. Responses represent the country's own assessment of current practices and procedures.

⁵ The 2022 OECD Green Budgeting Index is based on the four building blocks of the OECD Green Budgeting Framework, each with an equal weight (0.25). The index ranges from 0 (not implementing) to 1 (high level of green budgeting practices). Country green budgeting practice scores were determined by adding together the weighted scores of each building block, varying from 0 to 1. The variables comprising the index were selected by OECD experts based on the relevance to the concept and these have been reviewed by county delegates to the OECD Paris Collaborative on Green Budgeting.

⁶ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the marginalised groups in line with its own national legislation.

⁷ See bullet above in this chapter on engagement and giving a voice to under-represented and indigenous groups (where applicable).

⁸ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the marginalised groups in line with its own national legislation.

⁹ The full report, "Leveraging EU missions in Austria: Assessing Progress Using a Novel OECD Mission Monitoring Tool" can be found here: (OECD, 2023^[94]).

¹⁰ Plastics challenge: E-waste (Government of Canada, 2020^[95]).

5 Transforming Public Governance for Digital Democracy

Governments are leveraging digital tools, including civic tech to enhance both in-person and online participation in policymaking. They are also addressing regulatory gaps in election integrity, political advertising, and online campaign finance. Digital identification systems are also being implemented, and a greater emphasis is being placed on open data. However, the public sector frequently lags behind in adopting the technologies required to fulfil the expectations of a digital democracy. The rapid proliferation of mis- and disinformation underscores the need for more decisive government action. Public institutions can improve their capacity to harness digital tools, including artificial intelligence to improve service delivery and operational efficiency.

Democratic institutions are facing new challenges as well as opportunities, in the digital era, particularly in terms of how the use of digital technologies may influence or advance the conditions, institutions and practices of political engagement and democratic governance. These issues are commonly identified as part of “digital democracy” and their risks and opportunities were outlined in the OECD 2022 RDI report. While governments have become aware of these risks and opportunities and have acted in several areas, rapid technological advancements and increased reliance on social media and digital channels by citizens have often made it a challenge for governments to keep pace, and thus have contributed to a rapidly changing political landscape.

The key question is therefore whether countries are in a position to keep pace with such a rapid diffusion of digital channels, and are able to exploit the opportunities in terms of meaningful citizen participation and democratic engagement. The year 2024 does offer a number of opportunities to mobilise digital channels to support stronger open democracies, and a greater readiness to address these challenges in a more adverse globalised world. The [Action Plan on Transforming Public Governance for Digital Democracy](#) (henceforth “the Action Plan”), approved by the PGC has identified three key areas and the steps needed to tackle them:

- **Key area 1** – Strengthen democratic representation and participation in the context of digitalisation
- **Key area 2** – Upgrade democratic institutions to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracies
- **Key area 3** – Leverage key policy tools to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy

The work in some of these areas is also closely related to the two other action plans, including the Action Plan on Combating Mis- and Dis-information, and the Action Plan on Enhancing representation, participation and Openness in Public Life. In addition, the recent “Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity” (OECD, 2024^[1]) has offered opportunities to upgrade governance measures and public institutions in a digital context.

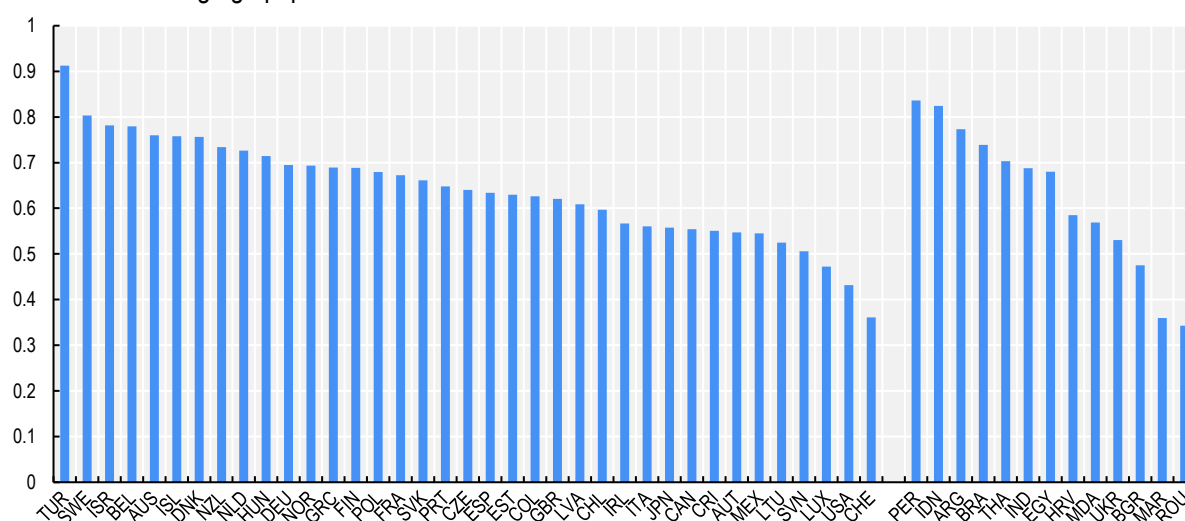
Given the timing of adoption of the Action Plan and the fragmented nature of the information available in this area, this chapter attempts to provide an overview of recent and relevant initiatives where they have been identified. For some issues such as those related to protecting electoral systems and elections, which have not necessarily been addressed as such by the OECD work on public governance, the report has mobilised recent evidence from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), a long standing partner of the OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative. In some novel cases, such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in elections, the chapter provides preliminary insights.

5.1. Key Area 1: Strengthen democratic representation and participation in the context of digitalisation

Data shows that electoral participation varies greatly across OECD countries and in most countries it is below 70%. Digitalisation has the potential to unlock greater participation by reducing barriers to entry, thus fostering greater perception of political inclusion, as well as increasing the practicality of voting and other forms of civic engagement. However, technology has its own risks, including security risks, with cyberattack concerns, social risks, with dangers of greater socioeconomic disparities due to digital divides, and data privacy concerns (International IDEA, 2019^[2]). A more nuanced narrative will emerge from discussing country practices in greater detail in light of the action plan.

Figure 5.1. Electoral Participation in OECD and OECD Partner countries, 2023

Turnout of the voting age population in national elections



Note: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Peru, Türkiye and Brazil practice compulsory voting.

Source: International IDEA (2023^[3]), "Global State of Democracy Indices", <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsoi-indices/>.

5.1.1. Encourage greater participation and engagement in elections and wider democratic processes through digital means

Using dedicated digital channels to better inform, listen to and increase the engagement of citizens before, during and after electoral processes and offering targeted support to effectively and safely leverage digital channels to enhance participation in democratic processes

The OECD 2022 RDI report had identified the need to foster citizen participation in the digital age, but it fell short of addressing the role of digital channels in the context of elections. While governments have made significant efforts to foster citizen participation in the digital age (see subsequent section), the attention on use of digital tools to enhance participation during and around electoral processes election is more recent. As highlighted in *Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy*, digitalisation has opened up a range of opportunities to increase citizens' voices in policymaking, allowing larger audiences to engage on particular issues, and enabling participation from groups that may otherwise struggle to have their voices heard. One such group is often young people, whose greater propensity towards use of digital services, presents a unique opportunity to engage them, as highlighted by International IDEA.

Grannicus, an organisation engaging with state and federal government in the United States, has identified [10 strategies to boost voter Turnout and engagement in local elections](#):

1. community surveys
2. reminder Emails
3. I voted incentives
4. Enhanced accessibility
5. Civic education campaigns
6. Early voting opportunities
7. Mobile polling stations
8. Transparent Communication
9. Celebrate civic pride
10. Continue to engage post-election

Many of these tools can be used through digital channels. However, information as to which country would have specifically invested in which tools was not available for the preparation of the report. The scope for further progress is vast. Given the significant engagement that takes place on social media ahead of elections, increasing citizen maturity and scope for participation in digital channels is an area where governments, at national and local levels, can hope to see significant returns on investment in the future.

Supporting the development of digital channels for meaningful participation, deliberation and consultation beyond elections, at the national and sub national levels, leveraging civic technologies

The OECD 2022 report underlined the need to foster active participation of citizens in democratic processes beyond the ballot box as well as democratic deliberation through digital means, stating that engaging citizens through digital channels can contribute to a healthy democracy by demonstrating that citizens' suggestions and contributions can have a tangible impact.

Digital technologies are contributing to an increase in citizen participation by supporting existing in-person mechanisms and enabling new forms and channels of interaction between citizens and public institutions. Digital tools are regularly used by public authorities at all levels of government to collect and process citizen inputs, to inform them about participation opportunities, in-person events, to provide learning materials, to perform online voting and to follow-up on the implementation of the results of participatory and deliberative processes, with a wealth of recent European examples gathered through IDEA (García and Al., 2023^[4]). Estonia has also mobilised digital channels through a school-based initiative, based on the model of inclusive budgeting, under which, students can submit proposals and vote for them on an online platform. The initiative can increase students' awareness of democratic decision-making processes and highlight how their civic contributions can have real-life impacts, thus setting important groundwork for their adult lives (Democratisation Workbook, n.d.^[5]) Other efforts to involve citizens in democratic decision making through digital tools tend to take place at the local level. Antwerp, in Belgium, is currently updating and renovating its digital participation tool 'OOR', which allows people to participate in plans for city projects. This digital format allows those who do not have the time to participate in public forums to nevertheless have a say in how their city is governed (City of Antwerpen, n.d.^[6]) Leipzig, in Germany, is planning on running civil councils of randomly selected people, including in digital format, in the hope to "reach more young people and working people that have limited time but want to participate" (International IDEA, 2023^[7]).

The OECD has also gathered country experiences with 'civic tech', meaning "the use of digital technologies to reinforce democracy by enabling the public to be informed, participate in decision and policymaking, and increase governments' responsiveness and accountability" (OECD, forthcoming^[8]). Among the benefits, civic tech can help reach out to a larger number of individuals, allow asynchronous participation, innovate in how citizens express their opinion, and process large amounts of citizen inputs (OECD, 2022^[9]). Recent examples gathered at the [OECD 2023 Civic Tech](#) event also show an important role for civil society and initiatives by other actors such as foundations. (e.g. [Make.Org foundation](#) as well as your priorities). The [Civic Tech field guide](#) offers a catalogue of tools and resources covering the full breadth of "tech for the common good".

In recent years, governments have used digital platforms to involve large numbers of participants for diverse policy issues to an increasing extent. According to the most recent data on Open Government from the OECD, almost all OECD countries have deployed a digital portal dedicated to informing about participation opportunities or to carrying out online consultation and participatory processes (OECD, 2023^[10]). For example, in 2023 the government of Brazil launched the platform [Brazil Participativo](#) to involve citizens in the definition of the priorities for the 2024-2027 Multiannual Plan. This initiative encompassed three dimensions of citizen participation: (1) 27 plenaries across all Brazilian federations, engaging 32 000 participants; and (2) digital engagement via the Brasil Participativo platform, with 4 million registered accesses and 1.4 million individuals actively participating in the process. The European Union

recently deployed the first EU-wide online portal in late 2022, FuturEU to gather citizens' ideas and inputs, based on the open-source participatory platform Decidim which gathered more than 18 000 ideas and 22 000 comments. The built-in AI-powered automatic translation tool eTranslations allowed citizens from across the European Union to submit their ideas and comments in their native language, helping to overcome the language divide. The government of Italy setup a public consultation platform, [ParteciPA](#), which has since its launch grown to over 34 000 users. The platform had hosted 46 participatory processes as of May 2024, with citizens providing over 4 000 inputs.

While traditional face-to-face deliberation remains the preferred mode, digital media have become a key element of deliberative processes. According to recent OECD data (OECD, 2023^[11]), online deliberation had become the most used medium for conducting a deliberative process in 2020-21, give the sanitary restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. While this figure did drop significantly as pandemic-related restrictions were lifted, in 2022 and 2023 on third of processes continued to opt for digital or hybrid settings. (OECD, 2023^[11]).

Digital tools can support deliberative processes in different ways:

- **Bridging the gap between participants and the broader population:** This can be done by embedding forms of participation within deliberative processes that target a wider public. 55% of the cases that used a complementary form of participation in this manner opted for a digital solution. In late 2022, the **Austrian** National Council embedded deliberation tool Pol.is in the Austrian Citizens' Climate Council (Paice, 2022^[12]). In **Latin America**, a [participatory digital platform](#) was launched in 2024 alongside climate assemblies in four cities across the region: Mar del Plata (**Argentina**), Bujarú (**Brazil**), Buenaventura (**Colombia**), and Monterrey (**Mexico**). to become a digital space of participation for both assembly members and the broader public.
- **Increasing transparency and ensuring continuous communication.** In 40% of cases, communication was done through online or digital channels including social media and dedicated websites. For instance, the City of **Barcelona**, following its Citizens' Assembly for Climate, is using the platform *decidim.barcelona* to follow-up on the implementation of the members' recommendations (Decidim Barcelona, 2024^[13]).

OECD countries have also been innovating in the use of civic technologies to promote more meaningful and inclusive citizen participation. Artificial intelligence has played a notable role here – while governments usually face the challenge of analysing large amounts of qualitative inputs received in online or in-person processes, AI systems, and in particular natural language processing (NLPs) models, can make sense of large amounts of textual inputs to support participatory and deliberative processes by efficiently analysing and summarising citizen inputs. Sense-making tools can help public officials and civil servants to understand and visualise citizens' priorities and opinions on the issues at stake and support them in translating large amounts of inputs into actionable recommendations. For example, in 2023, **France** organised a representative deliberative process (Convention Citoyenne) to inform the upcoming law on the End of Life. Together with the final report, the civic tech provider Make.org deployed Panoramic, an AI-powered responsive interface to help citizens navigate the discussions and the results of the deliberative process in a lighter and more interactive manner (Make.org, 2024^[14]).

Countries have also made use of virtual assistants such as ChatBots to support citizens in navigating participatory and deliberative processes by responding to their queries in human language and sending them personalised notifications and reminders based on their interests (Cortés-Cediel, 2023^[15]). This is the case of Chatico in Bogota (Colombia) (see Box 5.1). A current limitation of deliberative processes is their difficulty to scale up due to lack of resources and the complexity to facilitate large deliberations. AI can help overcome some of these challenges. Scaling deliberation can take the form of multiplying the number of small, representative groups deliberating on a same subject with the help of AI moderators. (Landemore, 2022^[16]). All in all, AI could significantly reduce the costs associated with the design and implementation of representative deliberative process.

Box 5.1. The role of Chatbots and open to promote participatory processes, examples from Spain and Colombia

In 2022, the City of Bogotá (Colombia) deployed Chatico, a conversational chatbot that informs citizens in a clear, simple, and user-friendly way to encourage active citizen participation in local governance issues, in particular the design of Bogotá's development plan for the next 4 years. The chatbot is anchored in Colombia's most used instant messaging application (WhatsApp) to promote broader usage, and gives citizens three ways to engage: 1) "short route", which offers the option to participate by selecting one of the five priority objectives; 2) "intermediate route", where citizens can choose both an objective and a solution; and 3) "long route", which allows citizens to leave specific comments addressed to the mayor. On average, it takes citizens 5 minutes to participate, and so far, Chatico has attracted more than 10 000 interactions and gathered 22 000 proposals.

In 2021, the city of Madrid (Spain) embedded Clara, an AI-based virtual assistant, on its existing participatory platform Decide_Madrid based on the open-source software Consul. Clara responds to users' questions on the functioning of the platform and of the participatory processes of the city.

Source: (Decide_Madrid, 2021^[17]; OECD, 2022^[18]).

Fostering information integrity to support fact-based public debate, promoting safe digital civic spaces and combatting manipulation and deceptive content generated through or as a product of artificial intelligence systems

This point of the Action Plan is aligned with challenges and solutions outlined in the chapter on Pillar one, on Mis and Disinformation, building on the [OECD Report Facts not Fakes](#) (OECD, 2024^[11]):

Effective digital democracy requires governments to protect online civic spaces, foster resilience to misinformation and disinformation, mitigate online hate speech, promote access to information and data on digital channels and protect free, independent and pluralistic media.

Civic freedoms and pluralistic public opinion cannot be fully realised if individuals feel they must refrain from discussing certain topics or withdraw from public debate due to fear of vilification or harmful racial, gender-based, and other forms of discrimination. Therefore, fostering a civic space that mitigates hate speech, an especially pressing challenge in the digital sphere, is essential for the full realisation of civic freedoms. Recognising this, in March 2024 Costa Rica launched the National Strategy to Prevent and Address Hate Speech and Discrimination, the first of its kind in Latin America (Government of Costa Rica, 2024^[19]).

Fostering resilience to mis- and disinformation also requires reviewing the risks involved in online public consultation processes. While such processes increase government transparency and promote greater interest in democratic processes, they can also be vulnerable to AI-driven submissions or hate speech. To mitigate this risk, a working group in Ireland tasked with forming a counter disinformation strategy launched a public consultation process, open to everyone. In response to the responses received, which expressed concern over how such a strategy would affect free speech, the working group highlighted the importance of taking into account any risks to freedom of speech when formulating the strategy (Government of Ireland, 2023^[20]). The risks of bots are also recognised by citizens' themselves. The 2022 Public Policy Forum report in Canada recommended to severely limit the use of bots on social media platforms as part of its Citizens' Assembly on Democratic expression (Public Policy Forum, 2022^[21]).

5.1.2. Ensure participation and engagement in elections and wider democratic processes is open to all

Fostering political agency and political inclusion, including by providing easily accessible options for participation in electoral processes, in particular for young people, while preserving privacy and security and providing a smooth and cohesive experience, while ensuring that human support remains

The OECD 2022 RDI report addressed e-voting issues, digital participation and the need to enlarge electoral participation, and these issues were further recognised by the Action Plan, in particular with reference to young people. E-voting is a rapidly evolving technology, and its benefits can be numerous, among them fostering of political agency and greater accessibility for marginalised groups¹. However, it's essential to acknowledge potential risks associated with these systems, such as privacy concerns stemming from increased data collection and the potential for misuse or manipulation of information.

A close look at actual possibilities in terms of E voting practices provides additional useful insights. Use of technology to encourage and streamline voting varies significantly across the OECD, as indicated in Table 5.1. It is hard to point to a general trend, as a number of countries seem to have explored E voting before ceasing to use it, such as Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal. Data of implementation also varies significantly – while voting machines were introduced in 1999 in Belgium, and digital voting in 2005 in Estonia, in countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica and Türkiye pilots for e-voting were run in 2024. In federal countries, such as the United States or Switzerland use of such tools has been left to the discretion of the subnational level. In the United States, more than 6 million voters registered through the online voter registration platform “*Rock the Vote*” since 1991. Similar platforms exist in Australia, Canada, France and the United Kingdom where citizens can check their registration, update their address and register to vote (European Commission, 2017^[22]).

In some countries, first-time voters face challenges to register for voting, which might be one reason for lower turnouts among youth compared to other age groups but information on specific youth related initiatives were not available.

Table 5.1. Technology used in OECD member elections

Country	online voting machines (nat/subnat)	E-Voter Registration	E-Voter verification in polling stations
Austria ⁽¹⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Australia ⁽²⁾	Yes	Yes, online enrollment	Yes
Belgium ⁽³⁾	Yes	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Canada ⁽⁴⁾	Yes	Yes, online enrollment	No
Chile	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Colombia ⁽⁵⁾	No	Yes, digital voter registration kits	Yes
Costa Rica ⁽⁶⁾	No	Yes, digital voter registration kits	No
Czechia	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Denmark ⁽⁷⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Estonia ⁽⁸⁾	Yes	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Finland ⁽⁹⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
France ⁽¹⁰⁾	Yes	Yes, registration is either in person or online	No
Germany ⁽¹¹⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Greece	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Hungary	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Iceland ⁽¹²⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Ireland ⁽¹³⁾	No	Yes, online enrollment	No

Country	online voting machines (nat/subnat)	E-Voter Registration	E-Voter verification in polling stations
Israel	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Italy ⁽¹⁴⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Japan ⁽¹⁵⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Korea ⁽¹⁶⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Latvia	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Lithuania ⁽¹⁷⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Luxembourg	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Mexico ⁽¹⁸⁾	Yes	Yes, digital voter registration kits.	No
Netherlands ⁽¹⁹⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
New Zealand ⁽²⁰⁾	Yes	Yes, online enrollment	Yes
Norway ⁽²¹⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	online connected to central voting register
Poland	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Portugal ⁽²²⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	Yes
Slovak Republic	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Slovenia	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Spain ⁽²³⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Sweden ⁽²⁴⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Switzerland ⁽²⁵⁾	Yes	No, extracted from civil registry	No
Türkiye ⁽²⁶⁾	No	No, extracted from civil registry	No
United Kingdom ⁽²⁷⁾	No	Yes, online enrollment	No data
United States ⁽²⁸⁾	Yes	Various registration technologies	Yes

Notes: (1) E-voting recommendations have been reviewed by the Ministry of Interior but have not been implemented due to it being unconstitutional. (2) Online voting used in sub-national referenda. (3) Voting machines were introduced in 1999. (4) Voting machines have been introduced for sub-national elections in certain provinces in 2010, online voting in some municipalities. (5) E-voting pilots are being carried out. (6) Voting machines were used in a number of polling stations across the country. Pilot test was run in the 2024 national election. (7) Digital voting been used in a sub-national election in 2020. (8) Online voting introduced in 2005. (9) E-voting was used from 2006 but has been abandoned in 2010 after a memorandum was run. (10) Mobile voting available in sub-national elections for French citizens abroad. Re-introduced in 2022. Voting machines in some municipalities. (11) E-voting used from 1993 until 2005; Efforts largely abandoned/discontinued; the Federal Electoral Act (2021) allows for e-voting, however a 2009 Constitutional Court ruling does not allow for it. (12) E-voting pilot tests had been carried out but have been abandoned. (13) Test run in 2002 during sub-national elections but were abandoned in 2009 due to cost and public dissatisfaction. (14) In-person tablet voting used in the Lombardy election 2017. E-voting guidelines approved in 2021. (15) Only for local elections starting 2002. As of 2018, no municipality is using e-voting after Rokunohe municipality also stopped. (16) Online “K-voting” used for elections directly managed by the NEC and provided to institutions and organisations that have received approval. Not yet for public office. (17) Feasibility tests conducted on a smaller scale, especially during COVID-19. Online voting feasibility has been considered, especially during Covid-19. (18) Available for voters living abroad to vote online. Electronic vote recorders used at some facilities. 2 constituencies within Mexico have online voting. (19) After the initial ban of e-voting systems in 2006, there have been some discussions about a return to some electronic tools, but no explicit governmental intention. (20) Available for overseas voters, pilot for local council elections was attempted in 2019. (21) After pilots, an online voting project was abandoned in 2019. (22) Some e-voting experiments carried in 2004-5, no extensive effort since. (23) Feasibility being studied: In 2016, the election commission said that a shift towards online voting could be appropriate. (24) Some effort by KTH University but no explicit government intention. (25) Every canton decides for itself whether to conduct online voting trials. Mostly for abroad voter. (26) Turkish government is collaborating with Ankara University to create an e-voting system for 2028 elections. (27) There have been 17 pilots in local/European elections. Some states allow online voting for those covered by the UOCAVA (mostly military personnel). (28) Most states use more than one type of voting machine.

These are sensitive issues, as providing voters with alternative, digital or postal means for participation, can become an issue that can be amplified for political purposes. Significant controversies arose in Australia, during the so called ticks-and-cross issue when the government proposed machinery provisions to avoid a physical pamphlet during the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum, as well as in Brazil, where there were issues around the undermining of voting machines, or controversies around postal votes in the United States. In the Netherlands, the risks of hackers has also forced the government to limit digital voting options ahead the elections. However, multiple channels, and particularly digital channels, are crucial to maintain the capacity of the democratic system, particularly during major events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, or during natural disasters.

[Lessons learned during the pandemic](#), and other emergencies such as [cybersecurity attacks](#) and [natural disasters](#) have emerged from IDEA work in this area. These lessons point to the importance of inter-agency co-operation for effectively delivering elections in increasingly unstable contexts. OECD Countries with high levels of institutional and political co-operation were able to shift quickly and responsively by expanding voting arrangements. The following countries have significant institutionalised co-operation among ICT driven working groups:

- Australia: Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce
- Bulgaria: Interservice group under the prime Minister
- Canada: Election Integrity Office
- Denmark: Inter-ministerial Task Force
- Estonia: Weekly ICT working group+ public relations group, + working groups for registries voting cards and voting from abroad task force
- Latvia: Cyber security in elections working group
- Sweden: working group co-ordinated by the civil contingency agency
- United States: Elections government sector co-ordinating council.

Preventing digital disenfranchisement of vulnerable and under-represented groups – such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and minorities, guaranteeing equitable access to digital tools and closing divides in participation in elections and democratic processes between urban and rural communities, with special considerations to vulnerable and under-represented groups to promote inclusion

The OECD 2022 RDI Monitoring report discussed the need to foster political inclusion, including through digital technologies, while recognising the potential risks of the growing use of digital fora for women and other underrepresented groups. However, the digital divide can also exacerbate disparities between urban and rural communities, with the latter often feeling left behind and disenfranchised. The Action Plan clearly highlights the need to tackle this issue, particularly in a context of polarisation of the democratic debate.

Closing the participation gap between urban and rural communities in democratic processes is crucial for ensuring equitable representation and fostering healthy democracies. Urban areas often enjoy better access to resources, infrastructure (Paula Caldas, Veneri and Marshalian, 2023^[23]), and opportunities (Eurofound, 2023^[24]), which can lead to higher political engagement compared to rural communities. Indeed, recent Eurofound research shows that, across EU Member States, rural residents are more likely to perceive disrespect or disregard towards themselves and their communities, significantly impacting their political participation (Eurofound, 2023^[24]) and representation in decision making.

Studies show that political attitudes and behaviours differ across rural and urban-based populations, and the geographical divide is likely to have a major impact on several of the elections to be held in 2024. For instance, citizens living in rural areas tend to display lower political responsiveness and are more likely to support anti-establishment political parties than citizens living in urban areas (Rubén García del Horno, 2023^[25]).

Training programmes can play a key role in equipping vulnerable individuals or people living in rural areas with the knowledge and skills necessary for navigating the digital space and increasing their civic engagement. In 2023, New Zealand took action to this effect, expanding essential digital skills courses for up to 5 000 older people, including Māori, Pacific and East Asian people, to help them develop the skills needed to get online safely as a key element for participation in modern life (Government of New Zealand, 2023^[26]).

Access to infrastructure, particularly digital public infrastructure, is becoming increasingly vital in closing the participation gap between urban and rural areas, given the role of online platforms and technology in political communication, campaigning, and voter registration (OECD, 2022^[27]). To address this issue, OECD countries have launched initiatives to expand broadband infrastructure, including Canada's Universal Broadband Fund, launched in 2024 to support high-speed Internet projects in rural and remote communities, and their Connecting Families Initiative, launched to help low-income Canadians access the Internet (OECD, 2024^[28]). Likewise, in 2022, the United States' Federal Communications Commission launched a cross-agency effort to "combat digital discrimination", i.e. to promote equal access to broadband across the country regardless of where people live, their income level, ethnicity, race, religion, or national origin (OECD, 2023^[29]).

These actions also concern persons with disabilities or mobility restrictions. The 2023 Elections Act of Norway aims to provide voters with disabilities with greater options for receiving aid in voting, by ensuring that they can receive aid by an election official or other designated person (International IDEA, 2023^[30]). With similar intentions of enhancing accessibility, Latvia also approved electoral amendments in order to enable voters to cast their ballots at any polling station for the European Parliament elections, rather than exclusively at the polling station where the voter is registered, thus making it easier for those with work dedications or mobility restrictions to vote in the easiest way possible (International IDEA, 2023^[31]).

Preventing abuse and online harassment of women candidates and candidates from vulnerable and under-represented groups during electoral campaigns and in public debates

While the OECD 2022 RDI report does address digital and political inclusion as a component of strengthening representation, it did not tackle abuse and online harassment specifically as part of digital democracy. These issues are, however, recognised in the Action Plan on Gender Equality, which calls for taking measures to tackle all forms of violence and harassment both online and offline in order to eliminate barriers to women and girls' full, equal and meaningful representation.

Digital technology presents a significant opportunity for the inclusion of women and under-represented groups in politics by providing platforms for amplifying their voices, connecting with constituents, and mobilising support. Social media, for instance, allows them to bypass traditional gatekeepers and communicate directly with voters. Digital tools can also facilitate access to information and resources, empowering women and other under-represented groups to participate in decision-making processes and advocate for their interests. An approach grounded in human rights is necessary to help shape digital policies that put people at the centre (OECD, 2024^[32]). However, new risks are emerging, including hate speech, online harassment, cyberbullying, and gender-based dis-information which disproportionately target women in politics, deterring many from engaging in public discourse or running for office (National Democratic Institute, n.d.^[33]). Several studies including both men and women have demonstrated that women are more likely to experience more severe forms of technology-facilitated violence such as harassment and stalking, and that they are often targeted due to their sex (UN Women, 2023^[34]). This can even be internal – a study by the African Parliamentary Union across 50 African countries found that a third of online harassment cases against female Parliamentarians had come from male parliamentary colleagues (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021^[35]). These emerging phenomena not only limit freedom of expression (European Union, 2024^[36]) and cause severe psychological harm, but also pose threats to democratic governance (UN Women, 2021^[37]), by undermining diverse representation in elected institutions.

Several OECD countries have recognised the urgency of addressing online harassment and abuse in the political realm and have recently implemented legislative measures. In 2022, Costa Rica passed Law 10235 aiming to prevent, address, punish, and eradicate violence against women in politics. The law protects women's rights to a life free of gender-based violence (GBV) in politics, including online. Other countries have produced studies and manuals. For example, in 2022, Spain's Ministry of Equality published

an exploratory study with a qualitative approach to gender-based political violence, including in its digital forms, recognising that there are few or no normative references to the problem of gender-based political violence in the Spanish legal system (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2022^[38]). In the same year, the Government of Victoria in Australia, as part of its commitment to preventing violence against women, girls and members of the LGBTQI+ community, commissioned a study to develop recommendations for online safety for women working in politics (Gender Equity Victoria, 2022^[39]), as well as a study on women's experiences of technology-facilitated domestic violence in regional, rural and remote areas (Harris and Woodlock, 2022^[40]). Several Australian projects have sought to understand the challenges faced by women living in regional, rural and remote areas (eSafety's Women in the Spotlight (WITS), programme which provides training and resources about gendered online abuse, and the Australian Institute of Criminology Study on Spaceless violence, examining the impact of technology-facilitated violence in regional rural or remote areas in Australia). In 2024, Mexico's National Electoral Institute released a "Manual on political violence against women in the digital and media sphere" to explain and sensitise the general public to the concepts of online violence and the ways it interacts with gender-based political violence, as well as to provide tools to prevent (Instituto Nacional Electoral, 2024^[41]).

There is also an increasing recognition across OECD countries that engaging with online platforms is essential in forming joint responses to technology-facilitated GBV (TF-GBV). For instance, in 2023, Mexico's National Electoral Institute collaborated with Meta to develop a guide on "Tackling political violence against women" including tools and tips for women interested in politics to participate safely with the members of the communities on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp (Instituto Nacional Electoral, 2023^[42]). Similar guides were launched in other Latin American countries, including Chile and Costa Rica over 2022 and 2023 (Comunidad Mujer, 2023^[43]; Naciones Unidas Costa Rica, 2022^[44]). In Australia, the eSafety Commissioner engages with national and regional stakeholders in the Pacific to identify and respond to technology facilitated gender based violence, through capacity development and strengthening national and regional policy responses.

Moreover, steps have been taken to address potential harms to democratic governance and human rights on online platforms while promoting transparency and accountability. The 2022 European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) aims at standardising approaches to keeping online spaces safer, including swift actions on removing content containing TF-GBV. Non-EU OECD countries have also introduced national legislation: the United Kingdom 2023 Online Safety Act increases online platforms' responsibilities in addressing unlawful and harmful content, with a particular focus on "duties to protect content of democratic importance and journalistic content" (Government of the United Kingdom, 2023^[45]). Australia's national independent regulator and educator for online safety, the eSafety Commissioner, works with national and regional stakeholders in the Pacific to identify and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, through capacity development and strengthening national and regional policy responses to this issue. These examples underscore the importance of proactive measures at both legislative and societal levels to safeguard the integrity of electoral processes and ensure equal participation.

Preventing disengagement from civic life and democratic processes by strengthening media and digital literacy of citizens in relation to civic education, in particular young people

The OECD 2022 RDI report did not address this issue in the context of digital democracy. However, the issue of media literacy was addressed as part of Pillar one on Public Governance for Combatting Mis- and Disinformation. The Action Plan on Digital Democracy highlights the need to focus broadly on civic education, including media literacy, particularly in relation to young people to reduce disengagement from civic life. Civic education can prepare young people to participate in elections at the relevant age and increase their interest and effectiveness in civic engagement. Increasing media literacy amongst citizens carries a variety of benefits, not least increasing capacity for citizens to participate in civic processes in an informed manner, and reducing the impact caused by dissemination of disinformation. Students enrolled

in selective-admission media literacy programmes gain significantly higher levels of media knowledge, news analysis, and advertising analysis skills compared to their peers.

It is therefore important that government media literacy programmes keep up with the digital age. The European Union has recently put forward a recommendation highlighting that use of new technologies can support enhanced interaction between citizens and government, but should ‘respect the checks and balances of a democratic society’. It also encourages media literacy and digital skills to be further developed to allow people to participate in online public policymaking processes (European Commission, 2023^[46]). Similarly, UNESCO guidelines state the importance of promoting media and information literacy in digital spaces as a complementary approach to regulation, in order to empower users (UNESCO, 2023^[47]).

At country level the 2022 Irish Electoral Act states that the Electoral Commission should promote public awareness and participation through educational and informational events (Government of Ireland, 2022^[48]). Several other practices related to civic education and media literacy on line can be seen in Box 5.2.

Box 5.2. Practices on civic education and media literacy

MediaSmarts, Canada

MediaSmarts provides information and resources for media professionals, organisations and teachers. The focus is on topical media issues such as body image, gender representations and diversity, as well as digital issues such as online hate, cyber-bullying and online ethics. The “diversity” information section focusses on specific examples of media representations which are relevant in the Canadian context, for example representations of Aboriginal people, portrayals of visible minorities, people with disabilities and LGBT. Teachers can access these materials and leverage them online and off line.

Speak Up! Media for Inclusion

Speak Up! Media for Inclusion is a cross-European project adopted by France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and the Netherlands, aiming to provide media literacy training to migrant and refugee children, emphasising radio and film-making to help them create a sense of belonging. Activities include media training workshops to help young migrants tell their stories. Following its success, Team Up!, an Erasmus+ project in France, Greece, Italy, and Portugal, aims to enhance adults' digital and media literacy through toolkits, workshops, and events, focusing on themes like gender in media, hate speech, and migration. The Non Profit NGO ERIM collaborates with Team Up! to offer training, promoting human rights and empowering citizens to critically analyse information.

Promoting voter education to raise awareness about the potential risks and benefits of artificial intelligence in electoral processes, engaging citizens in understanding how these technologies are being used in elections and how they can contribute to safeguarding the integrity of the democratic process

The use of AI in electoral processes is rapidly becoming a highly relevant policy issue for governments, in particular in the context of recent elections. Many electoral authorities are devising strategies to address and, in some instances, harness AI to ensure elections remain free, fair, and secure.² AI represents a swiftly advancing field of technology that operates with minimal regulation, and there has been limited research on its potential implications for electoral processes (International IDEA, 2024^[49]).

While countries have taken steps to regulate AI from a general perspective, and Brazil adopted court regulations covering use of AI for political campaigning, in general information was not available about voter education programmes about the risks and benefits of AI, and on citizen engagement on how these technologies can be used in elections.

5.1.3. Protect the integrity of electoral systems, elections and wider democratic processes

Ensuring the integrity, fairness, accuracy, and accountability of electoral administration, when using digital tools, including artificial intelligence, to strengthen trust in the electoral process

As highlighted in the OECD 2022 RDI Report, digitalisation of the electoral administration and the electoral process itself is becoming increasingly commonplace. If done effectively and with the necessary safeguards in place, this can bring with it several benefits, including greater public trust in the process, further-reaching capacity to vote, and more effective administration. However, designing mechanisms to this end is not always straightforward. The relative lack of understanding and consequent apprehension around digital tools, in particular artificial intelligence (AI), means that these challenges are all the more relevant when considering how to use AI to improve democratic processes. The 2022 report identified a number of institutions close to centres of government which provide advice in support of democracy and the use of AI and data, such as Germany's Data Ethics Commission, the Data Ethics Advisory Group in New Zealand, the UK's Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation and the Singapore's Advisory Council on the Ethical Use of AI and Data.

For example, the 2022 Irish Electoral Reform Act has taken similar steps to improve election integrity, including ensuring that members of its Electoral Commission (which was formed as part of the Act) have skills regarding advertising and publicity around digital political messaging, in order to reduce the impacts of negative online influence. This is an area of work that merits further learning from other member country experiences.

Engaging policymakers, experts and civil society in improving collective understanding of the promises, risks, and potential uses of artificial intelligence for democratic processes

Development of government AI tools alongside civil society can have multiple benefits, including highlighting the value of civil participation and demonstrating the benefits that such tools can have. For example, in 2023, the French Economic, Social and Environmental Committee (CESE) partnered with NOG Make.org to create an AI-powered interface to help citizens navigate the discussions occurring during representative deliberative processes, helping demonstrate the value of AI to the citizens taking part in the process (Make.org, 2024^[14]). Similarly, in 2023 the City of Helsinki, Finland, made use of AI tool Urbanist in a discussion with a representative group of citizens and local business owners to visualise alternative scenarios for the pedestrianisation of three streets (OECD, 2023^[50]; UrbanistAI, 2023^[51]). In some cases, effective and transparent responses to public stakeholder fears over AI are needed to assuage them. A strong example of this has been evident in the Netherlands, where in 2022 the Dutch government launched an Algorithm Register to provide information about the algorithms they used, in order to address the lack of transparency often associated with AI (Government of the Netherlands, 2022^[52]).

Combating mis- and dis-information during electoral campaigns, putting in place safeguards against undue domestic and foreign influence through digital platforms and other parts of the digital information eco-system and strengthening the digital capacities of electoral administrations to ensure electoral integrity and protect electoral data against undue domestic and foreign influence

The OECD 2022 RDI report had addressed issues of regulatory oversight, the need for ethical oversight, and for international co-operation, but had not fully developed the analysis of mis- and disinformation and foreign influence in relation to digital platforms and the digital capacities of electoral administrations. The issues addressed in these various bullets of the Digital Democracy Action plan are also closely related to the issues of Mis and Dis Information addressed in Chapter 1. The Action Plan on digital democracy is very topical on these issues as recent years have seen a notable uptick in the spread of misinformation and disinformation during elections, including from foreign sources. This, combined with online co-ordinated efforts to push fringe narratives and foster social polarisation, as well as the rise of AI-generated content, can greatly distort public opinion and potentially impact election results (International IDEA, 2024^[53]).

Several countries have taken steps to increasingly recognise and fight back against foreign disinformation, both through more targeted legislation and via greater efforts to inform and educate the electorate. For example, the UK Online Safety Act states that foreign interference is a ‘priority threat’, defined as a serious and prevalent online threat that companies must take proactive steps to tackle. The Act introduced an amendment to the 2022 Elections Act, highlighting that any dissemination of false information or threatening messages as covered in section 179 and section 183 of the Online Safety Act is also an offence under the Elections Act (Government of the United Kingdom, 2023^[54]). The Australian Government also recently released the exposure draft Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill, aimed at combatting misinformation and disinformation. The draft Bill gives the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) powers to increase transparency of platform measures to address misinformation, and request that the industry make a new code with stronger protections for the Australian community. The ACMA would be able to use these new powers in relation to election or referendum matters, provided the issue is specifically related to disinformation (Government of Australia, 2023^[55]). In Ireland, the 2022 Electoral Reform Act bans political advertising by foreign buyers, while introducing transparency requirements at the domestic level (Library and Research Service, 2022^[56]). California has taken a similar transparency approach, with a recent legislative package aiming to require large platforms to seek identity verification from users with large followings or using AI-generated content, as well to keep deepfakes out of campaign ads for elections (Padilla, 2024^[57]).

At the European level, the Council of the European Union adopted a new regulation on transparency and targeted political advertising in March 2024. This new regulation will require that political advertisements provide key information including their sponsor, the election or referendum to which they are linked, the amounts paid, and any use of targeting techniques. Online targeting will only be permitted under strict conditions, and third country sponsors will not be able to advertise three months before an election or referendum (Council of the EU, 2024^[58]). The 2022 EU’s Digital Services Act also referred to above states that any actual or foreseeable negative effects on civic discourse, electoral processes and public security must have risk assessments written about them by very large online platforms and very large online search engines (Article 34(1)(c)), (EUR-Lex, 2022^[59]).

Several other countries are attempting to better inform the electorate, through campaigns and greater access to information online. Elections Canada, an independent federal agency, recently launched a website named ‘ElectoFacts’, which Canadian electors can use to verify whether information they come across regarding Canada’s federal electoral process is accurate (Elections Canada, 2024^[60]). Sweden took a similar awareness-raising approach in anticipation of the 2022 election, launching its “don’t be fooled” education campaign in order to raise awareness of the threats posed by foreign influence, and to

encourage voters to share information on social media with care (Swedish Psychological Defense Agency, n.d.^[61]). In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Estonia has increased its efforts to better inform the Russian-speaking segment of its population on election issues and beyond, supporting four private media companies for the production of Russian-language journalism (ERR, 2023^[62]).

Closing regulatory gaps in online election-related processes, such as online campaign financing, online political advertising, and data-driven political micro-targeting, and support appropriate enforcement and redress mechanisms

The 2022 OECD report pointed to both the benefits and challenges of digital campaigning (which includes digital media used for campaigning and use of political campaigning software and data tools for political micro-targeting³). On the one hand, digital campaigning has helped improve the access and engagement of the electorate in election campaigns. Through online campaigning, political parties and candidates can engage a broader audience, at lower cost, with political messages. This has helped facilitate access by smaller parties with fewer resources to a broader spectrum of voters. On the other hand, digital campaigning presents risks, with increased vulnerability to cyber-attacks and misinformation and disinformation campaigns, in particular foreign information manipulation and interference. Specific tools of digital campaigning, such as using political campaigning software and data tools for targeted political advertising, raise key questions concerning data protection, privacy and individual free will.

To maximise the benefits and mitigate the risks of digital campaigning, the Action Plan highlighted the need to close regulatory gaps in online election-related processes, such as online campaign financing, online political advertising, and data-driven political micro-targeting, and support appropriate enforcement and redress mechanisms in case of breaches by electoral justice authorities.

Regulating spending on digital campaigning to ensure transparency and fairness in election-related processes requires an effective regulatory framework for political finance in general, which should cover disclosure requirements, spending limits, and control and enforcement. In principle, general disclosure requirements and spending limits could be applied to digital campaigning activities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the majority of OECD countries (32 out of 38) require political parties and/or candidates to report on itemised spending, meaning the majority of countries could, in principle, provide transparency around digital campaign spending. However, when it comes to spending limits, only 15 OECD countries have spending limits of any kind, and only seven OECD countries limit spending by parties and/or candidates on online media advertising. Of these seven countries, four adopted tailored regulation in the past two years: Greece now limits online media advertising spending for political candidates; Latvia has limits in place for political parties, and Lithuania and Ireland have limits for both political parties and candidates (International IDEA, 2024^[63]). In other words, while there is in principle transparency on *what* is spent, the regulatory framework across OECD countries remains insufficient to shed light on *how much* is spent and mitigate the challenges posed by online campaigning (OECD, 2021^[64]; OECD, 2022^[27]).

In addition, only a few OECD countries currently regulate third-party campaigning and have established limits on spending by third parties on online campaigning. Third party campaigning refers to activities by people or organisations who do not seek to be elected themselves but try to influence voters' choices. In the United Kingdom, spending limits apply to a range of campaigning activities, including online political advertising. There isn't a separate spending limit for online political ads – but, if campaigners choose to spend more on online political ads, then they have less to spend on printed campaign materials.

Understanding how much is spent is only one side of the coin; it is also essential that voters have information on who is behind the messages they are receiving. In recent years, this has become more complex, given the challenges posed by political advertising and electoral micro-targeting in the digital sphere (OECD, 2022^[27]). Since November 2023, campaigners in the United Kingdom are required to include imprints on their digital campaign material. This means that many types of digital material such as social media adverts, tweets

and posts, will require an imprint, i.e. details that need to appear on political or election-related material to show who has produced and paid for the material (UK Electoral Commission, 2021^[65]).

In Europe, the Digital Services Act requires that platforms provide “information necessary for users to understand when and on whose behalf the advertisement is presented”. In March 2024, the European Union adopted a new regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (European Union, 2024^[66]), which aims to counter the risks posed by digital political advertising by introducing full harmonisation across all EU member state on rules concerning transparency and related due diligence obligations for providing political advertising services, as well as on the use of targeting and ad-delivery techniques (see Box 5.3). The entry-into-force of the EU regulation will lead to the adoption of tailored measures across many OECD countries by default.

Box 5.3. Strengthening the transparency of targeted political advertising in the European Union

In March 2024, the European Union introduced new rules on transparency and targeting of political advertising. According to the European Union, the regulation aims to make it easier for citizens to recognise political advertisements, understand who is behind them and know whether they have received a targeted advertisement, so that they are better placed to make informed choices. The regulation seeks to ensure that political advertising activities respect the rights to privacy, freedom of opinion and speech.

The new rules cover the transparency and targeting of political advertising in relation to an election, referendum, or a legislative process at EU level or in a member state. The rules are not concerned with the content, including content under editorial responsibility or views expressed in a personal capacity, or conduct of political campaigns. A key feature of the rules require transparency labels and an easily retrievable transparency notice to be placed on all political advertisements. The label and notice must clearly identify political advertisements as such and provide some key information about them, including their sponsor, the election or referendum to which they are linked, the amounts paid, and any use of targeting techniques.

The rules also now provide clear parameters around targeting political advertising online. In particular, the data has to be collected from the data subject, and use for political advertising is only allowed after the data subject have given explicit and separate consent. Special categories of personal data, such as data revealing racial or ethnic origin or political opinions, cannot be used for profiling. Finally, to prevent foreign interference, the rules provide for a ban on the provision of advertising services to third country sponsors three months before an election or referendum.

Source: adapted from European Council (2024^[67]), “EU introduces new rules on transparency and targeting of political advertising”, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/03/11/eu-introduces-new-rules-on-transparency-and-targeting-of-political-advertising/#:~:text=Targeting%20political%20advertising%20online%20will,its%20use%20for%20political%20advertising.>

Several electoral management bodies have made recommendations to improve monitoring and enforcement mechanisms related to digital campaigning. For example, in 2022, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada proposed amendments to the Canada Elections Act, including improving the digital advertising registry by requiring political entities to disclose comprehensive information about their paid digital electoral communications in a timely manner and by requiring that registries be searchable and allow data to be exported (Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, 2022^[68]).

Supporting increased open data on political parties and campaign finance to facilitate civic monitoring and improve trust in electoral campaigns

The OECD 2022 report highlighted the potential for open data, and this is reflected in the Action Plan. However, the evidence suggests that since 2022, limited reforms have been adopted to enhance transparency and open data related to political parties and campaign finance. One notable reform can be found in Estonia, where the e-business register, which includes information on political parties and donations, was made accessible free of charge. Reforms to enhance open data have also been enacted at the EU level: In 2024, the European Union introduced The Regulation on the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising obliges parties and other political actors to make it clear to citizens when they are exposed to sponsored political content. This should include the identity of the sponsor; the amounts spent and the source of funds, and criteria used for that targeting, among other factors (Wolfs, 2024^[69]).

5.2. Key Area 2: Upgrade democratic institutions to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy

The section looks at both what democratic institutions themselves need to do to both leverage the benefits of digitalisation for democracy and manage the potential risks, including from a regulatory perspective.

5.2.1. Enhance parliamentary engagement and oversight by:

Leveraging digital technologies and innovations to enhance the representative, legislative and oversight role of parliaments, including to strengthen relations with constituencies, open deliberative processes, and facilitate digital hearings and strengthening the digital capabilities of institutions responsible for oversight, accountability and integrity of democratic institutions (such as parliamentary committees, audit institutions, anti-corruption bodies, ombudspersons) leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies

While the 2022 report had explored the issues of ensuring accountability, leveraging emerging technologies and refitting public institutions for digital democracy, it had not specifically discussed the role of Parliamentary engagement and oversight. Strengthening digital capabilities in parliamentary settings has the benefit of increasing efficiencies (e.g., automating processes that help to decrease costs) and improving user experience, thereby creating greater trust in parliamentary processes. Digital capability enables faster decision making, enhances data management and allows for greater data sharing. It also means that Parliaments can offer diverse opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to better understand and be part of decisions. For example, information about the legislative activities, the agendas of elected members, and information about the administration of Parliament (expenses, salaries, lobby register, etc.) can help increase trust towards the institution. These issues have been explored at the level of interparliamentary unions and individual parliaments. The Inter-Parliamentary union released an [Issues brief](#) in April 2024 about the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in parliamentary settings also referring to the [2023 guide to digital transformation in Parliaments](#).

One area that is relevant for digital democracy is citizen engagement and consultation. Parliaments in OECD countries offer different opportunities to involve citizens and stakeholders in legislative decisions. The three main instruments to facilitate participation are petitions, consultations, and hearings. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2022^[70]), petitions are the most widespread tool for citizen and stakeholder participation in Parliament, with 79% of the Global Parliamentary Report Survey respondents stating that they have a petition process. 72% of parliaments used committee meetings for stakeholders

to provide inputs, followed by 30% that involved the public in budget decisions. In this context digital tools can improve the consultation process by enabling new ways for citizens and stakeholders to provide inputs and by increasing transparency of the process. For example, in April 2023 the Colombian Senate announced its app “Mi Senado”, through which users can connect with senators via email and provide their opinions on topics being discussed that their, which are displayed to senators for consideration when voting (Government of Colombia, 2023^[71]).

Another area where recent OECD work has identified potential for digital technologies is in relation to involving the public in budget decisions and empowering public understanding on public finance. This work aims to improve understanding of public finances and generate the political will for action on global fiscal challenges. Some interesting examples emerge that are relevant for digital democracy. For fiscal literacy among elected officials, the use of digital tools in Scotland in the United Kingdom such as short video explainers and online interactives have proven helpful. These offer convenient and accessible ways to enhance fiscal literacy, leveraging modern technologies and adaptable formats to accommodate busy schedules. In terms of broader communications, countries like the Netherlands and Canada use creative communications on digital media formats to improve people’s understanding of the public finances. These include creative infographics and visualisations to communicate complex economic data, such as the national debt, in an engaging and accessible way. Ireland’s fiscal council has used readability software to enhance its communications.

5.2.2. Strengthen digital capabilities and capacities across the public sector to support citizens’ engagement in democratic institutions and protect citizens’ rights

Ensuring that civil servants have the digital capacity and competencies necessary to support digital inclusion, as well as awareness of considerations for the trustworthy and ethical use of data and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, while promoting tools and policies to attract and retain diverse digital talents in the civil service

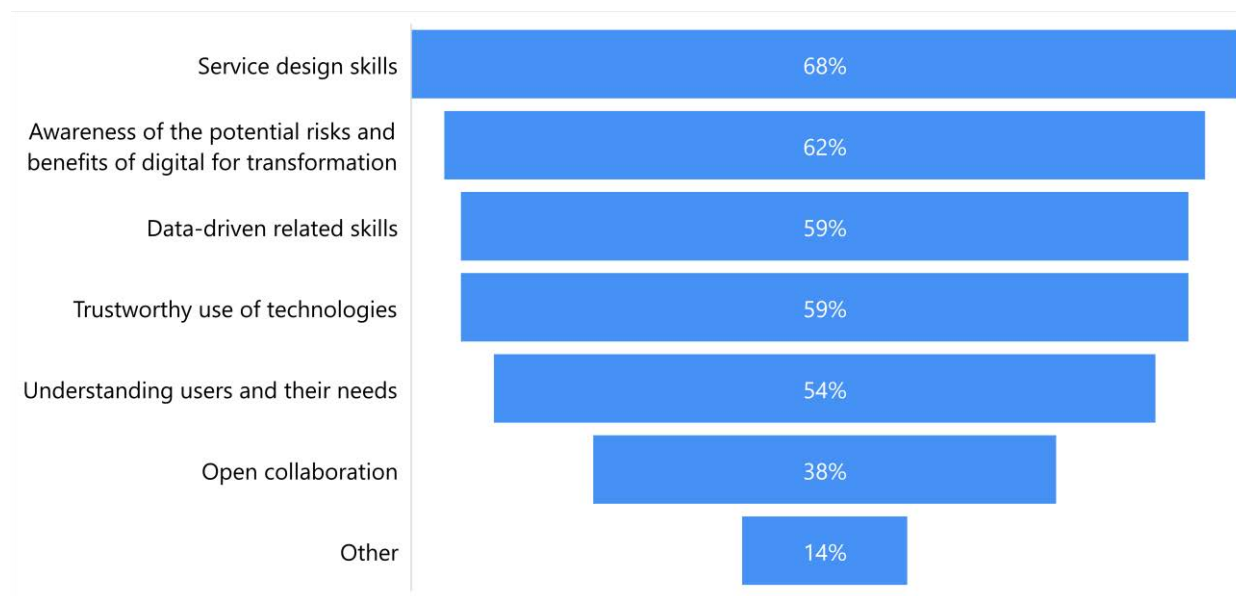
While the 2022 RDI report had addressed the broader issues of refitting public institutions, it had not addressed the need for governments to create capacity to make this happen. Supporting digital government maturity extends beyond digital literacy, as it requires an understanding of how digital technologies and data can transform government operations and better serve the public. Digital government user skills need to become a core competency for all civil servants. Governments are working hard to upskill civil servants in the competencies required to effectively design and implement better digital tools and enact a broader digital transformation in government. Governments need to address two related challenges. The first is how to access and integrate digital expertise into the public service, to provide the technical skills needed to develop digital and AI applications aligned to specific business needs. The second is to upskills the broader public service workforce, to ensure that civil servants understand the opportunities, risks, and ethical considerations of technologies applied to their areas of work. A particularly important group here are the senior managers who must be the champions of digital transformation in their organisations, identifying opportunities to implement new technologies within their business lines, putting in place appropriate governance and change management systems, and work effectively with the right stakeholders including service providers and users.

Several countries have made significant progress in this area in terms of human resource management over the recent period since 2022. For example, in April 2024, the United States’ Office of Personnel Management released “Skills-Based Hiring Guidance and Competency Model to Artificial Intelligence Work.”, with the goal of developing a common system to support federal agencies in better identifying and targeting the digital skills they need, as well as classifying AI roles within existing job classification structures and supporting recruiters in their definition and assessment of necessary skills. The Competency Model presents 43 general competencies and 14 technical competencies. General

competencies include transversal competencies such as accountability, digital collaboration, information management, problem solving, and strategic thinking. Technical competencies include application development, AI and machine learning, data analysis, modelling and simulation, and values-driven design. In Korea, the National Human Resources Development Institute (NHI) has recently provided training to the civil service on AI with the objective to raise their general awareness and capabilities in 2024. The NHI is also providing more technical training on specific AI applications to policy areas, such as “digital twinning” whereby AI is used to test the impacts of different policy options using complex simulation models and its 2023 conference focused on AI.

Other countries are also working to improve the digital skills levels within civil services, including via training programmes. The OECD Survey on Digital Government 2.0 found that almost all respondent countries⁴ have training programmes in place to develop core digital skills. These programmes predominantly focus on service design skills and raising awareness about the benefits and risks associated with digital transformation (Figure 5.2). Other skills developed by these programmes include data-related skills, trustworthy use of technologies and understanding user needs. However, only 38% of respondents reported having programmes dedicated to open collaboration, an essential element for fostering agile and iterative processes in digital service delivery.

Figure 5.2. Core skills covered by training programmes



Source: Results of the OECD Survey on Digital Government 2.0 (2022).

Many countries have been investing in this area. In Europe, Slovenia’s Administration Academy of the Ministry of Public Administration offers courses for public servants, covering digital skills, the use of technology in creative and safe ways, and the use of data and emerging technologies to improve decision making. In Denmark, Government Digital Academy uses the Digital Competences Model as a framework to develop the tailored digital skills needed in public institutions (Danish Agency for Digital Government, 2022^[72]). Italy’s Syllabus framework maps the digital skills needs for all public sector employees working in a digital environment, at the individual and organisational level based on the EU’s DigComp Framework. It has at this point enrolled over 815 000 public sector employees. Italy’s National AI Strategy 2024-2026 also includes a plan for the upskilling of civil servants, with a plan to set up a [specific department](#) dedicated to AI within the national school of government.

The Australian Public Service Commission supported the development of the APS Career Pathfinder tool which explores digital and other career options in government. This tool is part of their strategy to attract and develop digital talent for the Australian Public Service where users are able to self-identify skills and career pathways. Career Pathfinder provides an evidence base to identify capability gaps and relevant training opportunities efficiently based on what skills a person has already and where they want to be. The framework will use a variety of data sources to measure proportion of suitable applicants for digital job roles, attendance rates of training programmes, extent to which employees apply what they learn in trainings, and several other factors, thus allowing the Commission to alter its hiring and training practices based on evidence (Burtscher, Piano and Welby, 2024^[73]). Similarly, the UK's Central Digital Data and Data Office launched its Civil Service Digital Skills Survey in late 2022, which found that over three quarters of civil servants would like to receive more digital skills training. In this light, the Office has committed to upskill at least 90% of senior civil servants on digital and data essentials and partnered with the government recruitment service to reducing hiring times (Central Digital and Data Office, 2022^[74]).

Ensuring that public service providers have the necessary capabilities to design and deliver high-quality services in the digital age, including developing a deep understanding of users, their needs, and the relevant technologies best suited to address them

As mentioned above, while the 2022 OECD RDI report had framed the main challenges and issues to make digital democracy happen, it had remained more limited in terms of the practical options to make this happen, including in terms of capacity to design and deliver high quality services in the digital age. Indeed, in order to foster greater citizen participation, improve transparency and safeguard election integrity in the digital era, governments must be capable of developing effective digital tools and services in a timely manner. This relates to the draft Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services, currently under consultation, which also relates to capability issues.⁵

A first important point in designing such services is to share strategy and vision and facilitate collaboration to ensure that ideas and strategies are diffused across all agencies. Recognising this, Luxembourg launched the High-Committee for Digital Transformation in September 2022, with the aim of bringing together different ministers and societal actors to discuss government actions regarding digitising government. Alongside this, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Digitalisation allows ministries to coordinate in the development of digital government initiatives (OECD, 2022^[75]). Similarly, Portugal's Common Model for the Design and Development of Digital Public Services (MOSAICO), was launched in October 2022 in recognition of the fact that there was no systematic approach for the design and development of digital public services. MOSAICO not only allows different components of government to better communicate, but it also makes the citizen experience more straightforward, integrating different online sources to allow for easier navigating.

Effective development of digital capacities also requires a clear framework for project planning and prioritisation. To this end, the Department of the Taoiseach in Ireland released its Digital Framework for the Country in early 2022. The framework includes a peer review process by experts on digital government to approve any new digital projects, in order to ensure that projects have value and fit into the Government's wider goals (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022^[76]). Netherlands' Directorate General for Digitalisation and Public Organisation is currently improving the government's ICT structure, which will include developing ministerial plans into "fully fledged digitalisation plans", and from them creating a quality framework (Government of the Netherlands, 2022^[77]).

These results are still preliminary. Following the adoption of the forthcoming OECD Recommendation on Human Centred Services, further work will be done to monitor country progress in this area.

Strengthening the digital capabilities of regulatory and enforcement authorities to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies, including bolstering their expertise in fields such as data science, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence and ensuring citizen engagement in the development, deployment and regulation of artificial intelligence in the public sector

The OECD 2022 RDI Report highlighted the importance of digital tools for fostering transparency and accountability. This also applies to regulatory decision making, which it stated should be proportionate, and outcome focused. Digitisation of government processes has multiple benefits including improved trust, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. The use of digital tools can present opportunities to regulators designing and enforcing regulations as well as to those wanting to communicate effectively with citizens. As digitalisation has also enabled the development of new products, services and business models in sectors that deliver essential services such as energy, e-communications, transport and water, regulators in this sector that are at the forefront of these developments must also keep pace with such digital developments.

A first area is to ensure that mandates and powers are updated such that they remain fit-for-purpose in the new digital reality. Changes brought about by digitalisation have sometimes blurred traditional sector lines or given rise to new categories of market actors such as “prosumers” (simultaneously producers and consumers of services). Such phenomena can be difficult to accommodate under existing regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, regulators’ detailed knowledge of the sectors they oversee rests on the data and information that they collect. The regulation of these increasingly complex markets therefore requires appropriate data collection, inspection and enforcement powers, which can be a daunting tasks given the amount of data that are generated.

Regulators can also themselves take advantage of digital technologies to perform their duties more effectively, including by empowering consumers with accurate and up-to-date knowledge on sectors, supporting citizens in engaging in the regulatory process and increasing their capacity to uphold consumer rights. For example:

- “Sunshine regulation” aims to improve sector performance by making information publicly available. For example, Portugal’s communications regulator ANACOM launched the GEO.ANACOM geospatial platform that aggregates information from fixed, mobile and satellite operators. Its mapping functionality allows users to know which operators have network services in a specific location. In addition ANACOM is starting, as of 2024, to use AI based on vast amounts of complaints data to generate automated responses to better guide consumers.
- France’s e-communications regulator, Arcep, has similarly developed interactive maps of mobile and fixed internet coverage. **Arcep** has also developed a tool to involve users in regulatory and enforcement processes. “J’alerte Arcep” (I alert Arcep) enables users to notify the regulator about malfunctions in the network. This crowd-sourced data enables Arcep to detect weak signals and systemic issues that feed into an accelerated and efficient regulatory decision-making process.
- In **Canada**, regulators recognised that digital technology and analytics can be leveraged to increase accessibility to regulatory information and modernise key regulatory functions. Putting the regulator at the heart of the digital platform’s design, regulators from key regulatory agencies were mobilised to inform the development of functionalities that met the needs of Canadian regulators and develop strategies and methodologies for a horizontal approach to regulatory analysis and performance measurement.

While these examples are welcomed, digital capabilities of economic regulators can be further improved. A poll at the April 2024 meeting of the OECD Network of Economic Regulators (NER) revealed that most delegates (60%) characterised their regulator’s use of technology as “digitally transformed” (use of automated dashboards, descriptive/diagnostic analytics tools etc.), while a quarter still use only minimal tech (e.g. manual data analysis, static report generation) and just 13% use advanced tech such as dynamic

and interactive visualisations or predictive analytics. 55% of regulators are currently developing a data strategy and 29% already have one in operation. Far fewer (8%) have an AI policy or strategy, although 41% are currently developing one. Ireland's e-communications regulator, ComReg is developing a data strategy to improve the acquisition, integration, analysis and delivery of data, to maintain a deep understanding of its markets and support robust evidence-based decision making.

Ensuring that the institutions that protect citizens' political rights and civil liberties, notably justice systems, are equipped with the necessary digital capacities and tools, guaranteeing the respect of individual and collective political rights and civil liberties, required for democracy to thrive both offline and online by embedding them in policy commitments and ensuring the responsible and trustworthy use of data and emerging technologies, in line with democratic values, including mitigating risks - e.g. of unauthorised access, data leaks and algorithmic bias - and establishing safeguards, guardrails and means of redress, especially in sensitive policy areas such as fraud prevention, law enforcement, and justice administration

As a core component of a functioning democracy, it is vital that public institutions, including justice institutions, are able to uphold citizens political rights and civil liberties in the context of digitalisation.

First, digital technologies and data hold significant potential to strengthen access, resilience, efficiency, and effectiveness of justice systems. Global challenges in the past few years (e.g. wars, natural disasters resulting from climate change, pandemic) showcased the important role that digital technologies and data can have in helping justice systems quickly react and respond to people's needs and ensuring justice systems remained accessible. In Ukraine, for example, despite the challenging context of the Russian war of aggression, the Government was able to ensure a continued provision of justice services with regular publication of useful information, including justice-related datasets, on its Open Data Web Portal (Government of Ukraine, 2024^[78]). Securing online access to public information constituted an important step for reinforcing access to justice in the country. With the aim of fostering transparency in the administration of justice, in early 2024, the Courts Service of Ireland launched a pilot of its Open Data Portal (Courts Service of Ireland, 2022^[79]). The Portal features a user-centric design, utilising the courts data to enhance accountability for access to justice in a transparent, participative and continuous manner.

In 2023 Spain adopted its National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence and the Digital Spain 2026 Agenda, and established the Spanish Agency for the Supervision of Artificial Intelligence, the first of its kind in Europe. The ultimate objective of this undertaking is to minimise risks that the use of AI may entail and promote adequate development and enhancement of AI systems. The Spanish government is responsible for the supervision, and when appropriate, the sanctioning of AI systems, with the aim of eliminating or reducing risks to integrity, privacy, and non-discrimination, particularly gender-based bias, and threats to other fundamental rights that may be affected by the misuse of AI systems (Government of Spain, 2024^[80]).

The use of AI in law enforcement and justice administration, in particular, gives rise to questions of bias, discrimination and transparency. In this context, in March 2024, the European Parliament approved the AI Act, which sets out a general prohibition of using biometric identification systems (RBI) by law enforcement. In order to balance fundamental rights protection with maximising innovation, the use of "real-time" RBI may be permitted only in exceptional circumstances, when it seeks to protect a substantial public interest and if strict safeguards are met, namely its use is limited in time and geographic scope and subject to specific prior judicial or administrative authorisation (European Parliament, 2024^[81]).

Digital technologies and data can also help governments better understand user needs through data-driven approaches, increase efficiency by reducing the length and complexity of processes. In particular, the use of digital technologies in dispute resolution mechanisms (before and in court) can significantly increase access to and responsiveness of justice systems to legal needs, accompanied by appropriate safeguards

not to create additional barriers. Numerous jurisdictions have started introducing online dispute resolution (ODR) for money claims and consumer-trader disputes. For example, in Spain, the Virtual Desktop for Digital Mediation, introduced in 2023, allows amicable divorces to be formalised from home. Elderly people and those with intellectual disabilities may also appear in court from their nursing homes or medical centres, thus avoiding the burden of travel while guaranteeing the legal certainty of the hearing (OECD, 2024^[82]).

The Latvian Court Administration has worked in the past years to develop the e-case portal (“E-lieta.lv”). The portal provides access to online justice services to citizens and case information for parties, allowing them to consult their files, calculate legal fees, receive decisions and notifications. The United Kingdom (GOV.UK) and French government (Justice.fr) have developed one-stop-shop platforms to help people and businesses find information and government services (OECD, 2024^[82]). In Italy’s Linea Amica Digitale initiative aims to increase the availability of accessible, reusable, and constantly updated data to enhance public service design and delivery, and to co-design spaces for services, thereby improving their accountability and quality.

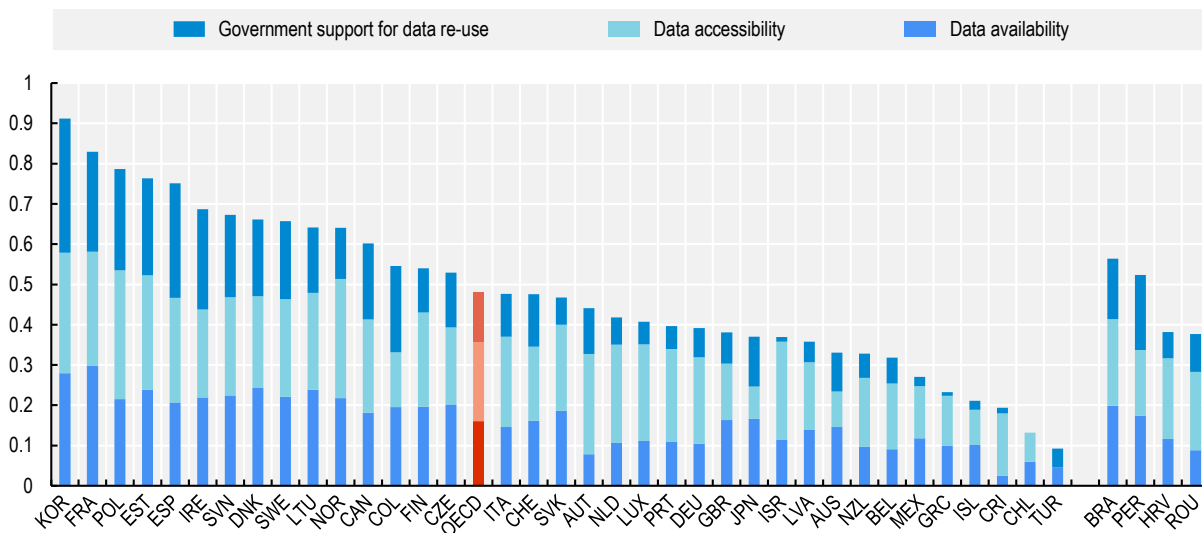
Improving transparency and accountability in the use of emerging technologies in the public sector through open registries and public access to the data and algorithms used to support decision making and public policies

The importance of opening up government data is an area that has received significant focus within the OECD, and the OECD 2022 RDI report fully addressed the issue. While leveraging data and AI to enhance public services offers numerous advantages, it is essential to ensure transparency, trustworthiness, and proactive risk mitigation. Algorithms can be influenced by the values of their designers, the quality of training data, and the intended objectives. As governments increasingly adopt algorithmic decision making for service delivery, algorithm usage becomes a critical aspect of fairness, accountability, and liability. It is therefore important to explore the recent steps adopted by countries in this area.

Setting up transparency, monitoring and oversight mechanisms on AI in the public sector remains a challenge in most countries (OECD, 2024^[83]). While algorithmic registries offer citizens a means to evaluate or question government AI applications, such initiatives are relatively scarce at the central or federal level. Among the few examples are Canada’s requirement for publication of completed Algorithmic Impact Assessments (Government of Canada, 2024^[84]) and the Netherlands’ use of an Algorithm Register (Overheid.nl, n.d.^[85]) with detailed information about algorithms that government organisations use in their work. Italy’s AI strategy includes recommendations for the creation of datasets that are ethical by design to ensure that AI systems are fair, transparent, accountable, private, secure, inclusive, and responsibly used. This approach ensures that ethical values and standards are embedded throughout the entire development and implementation process of the AI system rather than being added as an afterthought.

In terms of opening up government data, the OECD benchmarks efforts made by governments to design and implement national open government data policies through the Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index , as aligned with the standards and good practices of the OECD Recommendations on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014^[86]) and on Enhancing Access to and Sharing of Data (OECD, 2021^[87]). The results show that OECD countries perform significantly better in the pillars on data accessibility and availability compared to the pillar on government support for data re-use. This indicates that more could be done by governments to partner and engage with external stakeholders and potential data users to deliver better policies and services (OECD, 2023^[88]).

Figure 5.3. 2023 OURdata Index, results by country



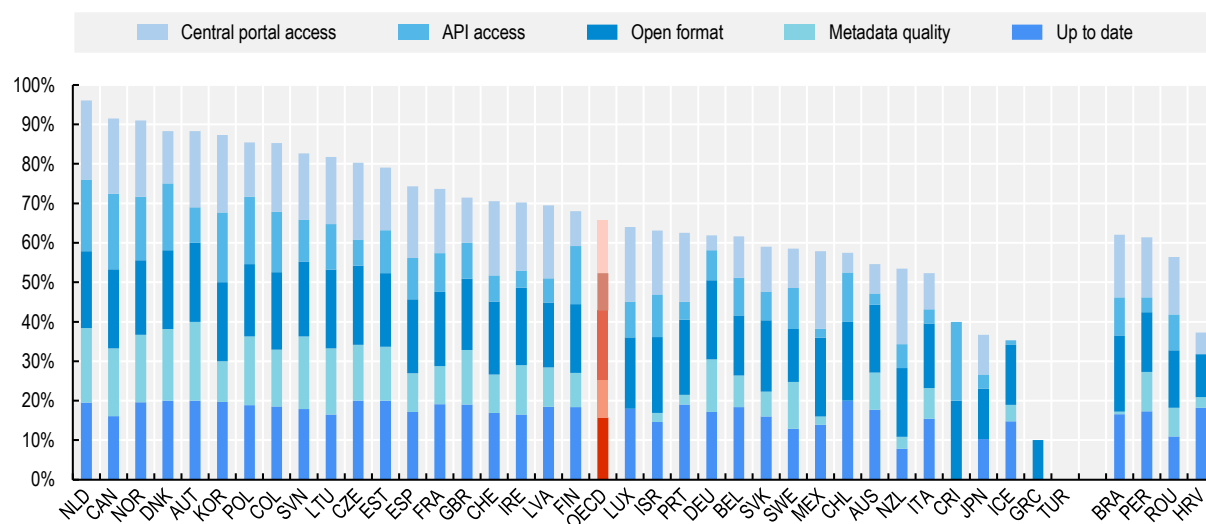
Note: Data is not available for Hungary and the United States.

Source: OECD (2023^[88]), "2023 OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index: Results and key findings", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 43, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a37f51c3-en>.

Another positive factor is that OECD countries have improved the quality of open government data, an important capability considering recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Relevant factors here include ensuring data are provided in open, non-proprietary file formats and that they are up to date, which is the case for 80-89% of high-value datasets published as open data by OECD countries. Areas to improve include metadata quality and API access, which are currently only implemented for around 50% of datasets. On average, OECD countries are well-advanced in publishing HVD in open formats, ensuring data is up to date and making them accessible through a central open data portal. Areas that deserve further improvement include metadata quality (47%) and API access (47%), which are important factors for making open data feed into advanced, data-intensive applications, such as AI. For example, Italy's AI strategy includes recommendations for the creation of datasets that are ethical by design and to ensure ethical values and standards are embedded throughout the entire development and implementation process. In terms of integrated datasets for open data and open AI models, Italy's new Interoperability Model aims to enhance collaboration between Public Administrations and third parties through advanced technological solution, with standards for API security to ensure authentication, data protection, integrity, and confidentiality.

Figure 5.4. Accessibility of high value datasets, results by country

Accessibility of high value datasets, results by country (2022)



Note: Data is not available for Hungary and the United States.

Source: OECD (2023^[88]), "2023 OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index: Results and key findings", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 43, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a37f51c3-en>.

Reducing discretion and improving fairness in access to public services by leveraging digital technologies to involve users in the design and delivery of public services that are human-centric proactive and digital by design

While the OECD 2022 RDI report had addressed the broader challenges of digital transformation, it did not delve into the challenges faced by countries to foster more proactive, and human-centric public services, although they are addressed within the upcoming Recommendation on Human Centred Public Administrative Services. Digital technologies can enable such human-centric public services by facilitating feedback collection and processing users' insights when designing and delivering services and can also help in advancing towards an omnichannel approach for service delivery.

Recent data shows that 85% of OECD countries have developed a service standard for interacting with the public, and 76% of OECD countries also set requirements for understanding user needs and expectations (OECD, 2024^[89]). Beyond this, alignment and adherence to shared ethical values and principles for the management of algorithms are essential when using AI in the public sector. Building on the OECD AI Principles, a 2022 survey found that a great majority of countries (85%) has put in place instruments to ensure the ethical management and use of algorithms by public sector institutions at the central/federal level of government (Digital Government 2.0 survey, results for 2022).

Governments are working to establish an enabling environment for trustworthy and human-centred AI deployment and use to make the most of AI and address its related challenges. Among these actions, OECD countries have been increasingly updating their regulatory frameworks and developing dedicated policy mechanisms such as standards, guidelines, and transparency tools to support safe and trustworthy AI use in the public sector. For example, Australia developed policy tools, such as the "Artificial Intelligence Ethics Framework" and the "Automated decision-making Better Practice Guide", aimed at providing direction to government officials for the ethical use and management of algorithms. In Colombia, the Ethical Framework for Artificial Intelligence (Government of Colombia, 2021^[90]) offers a series of principles, along with a methodology for their implementation, that should be considered in the design, development, and

implementation of AI systems. Canada's Guide on the use of generative AI (Government of Canada, 2024^[91]) advises public sector organisations to be aware of amplification of biases that might be dominant in the training of data and requires to mitigate them from the planning and design stage. Other tools include France's guide for public algorithms' transparency (Etalab, n.d.^[92]), the Netherlands' guide on governance for a responsible application of AI (Government of the Netherlands, 2022^[93]), and the United Kingdom's Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard (OPSI, 2021^[94]).

Some countries have also been very active in updating their regulatory frameworks to support a safe, secure and trustworthy AI use in the public sector in recent years. For example, Canada's federal government issued the Treasury Board Directive on Automated Decision-Making (Government of Canada, 2023^[95]), a mandatory policy instrument to ensure that automation in administrative decision making is compatible with administrative legal principles such as transparency, accountability, legality, and procedural fairness. Similarly, in the United States the 2024 Executive Order on Advancing Governance, Innovation, and Risk Management for Agency Use of Artificial Intelligence (OMB, 2024^[96]) sets guidelines for the responsible use of AI across the federal government. In Chile, the transparency Council is developing a General Instruction on Algorithmic Transparency at the time of writing that will mandate more than a thousand public agencies to disclose the algorithms they employ in providing services to the population, allowing citizens to understand whether the services they receive are driven by algorithmic models and understand the underlying decision-making logic (OPSI, 2023^[97]). Finally, in Europe, the adopted AI Act (European Commission, 2024^[98]) establishes a novel regulatory framework on a wider level (see Box 5.4).

Box 5.4. The EU AI Act

The EU AI Act was agreed in negotiations with member states in December 2023 and approved by the European Parliament in March 2024. The regulation establishes obligations for AI based on its potential risks and level of impact. The Act fosters a reformed institutional architecture both within individual countries and at the European level. The Act identifies different levels of risks which are relevant for governments' use of AI and offers a governance framework.

The AI Act defines four risk levels:

- **Unacceptable risk:** AI uses under this category are prohibited by the AI Act. Examples include predictive policing, 'real-time' remote biometric identification (including facial recognition) in publicly accessible spaces for law enforcement, social scoring, or assessing the risk of an individual committing criminal offenses. Law enforcement and justice are among the public sector policy areas most concerned by this category, although some exceptions apply, such as use cases concerned with national security and those remaining subject to judicial oversight.
- **High-risk** - AI uses under this category are allowed but regulated due to their significant potential harm to health, safety, fundamental rights, environment, democracy, and the rule of law. Due to its potential impact on these aspects, most public sector uses of AI might fall under this category. Examples include systems used to influence the outcome of elections and voter behaviour, automated processing of personal data to assess various aspects of a person's life, assessing eligibility to benefits and services, and safety components used in the management and operation of critical infrastructure. Obligations include establishing a risk management system, conducting data governance, having in place technical documentation to demonstrate compliance, mandatory fundamental rights impact assessment, among others.
- **Limited risk** – These systems might include chatbots, deepfakes, emotion recognition systems, among others, and have transparency obligations where developers and deployers must ensure that end-users are aware that they are interacting with AI.

- **Minimal risk** – These systems are unregulated, but a code of conduct is suggested. Examples include video games and spam filters.

The Act also introduces a restructured governance framework at both national and European levels. Each member state must designate one or more **National Competent Authorities** to supervise the Act's enforcement. At the European level, the **European Artificial Intelligence Board** will gather official points of contact of each Member country to ensure uniform application across member states. It will be complemented by an **advisory forum**, representing a balanced selection of stakeholders, and a new European **AI Office**, to be established within the Commission, which will be supported by a **Scientific Panel of Independent Experts**.

Source: (Future of Life Institute, 2024_[99]); (European Commission, 2024_[100]); (European Parliament, 2024_[81]); (Edwards, 2022_[101])

Ensuring citizen engagement in the development, deployment and regulation of artificial intelligence in the public sector

Given rapid advancements in recent years following the 2022 RDI report, the development and deployment of AI systems entails numerous challenges and risks with ethical concerns, which the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence (OECD, 2024_[102]) adopted in 2019 as the first intergovernmental standard on AI, seeks to address. Some of these challenges have direct implications on citizens, particularly when AI tools are used in the context of citizen participation. While technological advancement is likely to address and overcome at least some of these challenges, citizens should be aware of their implications when deciding on the use of AI tools for participatory and deliberative processes.

Involving stakeholders – whether they are scientists and engineers, affected communities, investors, companies, institutions, or citizens – can enrich the understanding of issues related to technology, help policymakers anticipate problems of public acceptance, and promote good communication about science (OECD, 2024_[103]). From a long-term perspective, participation can help align science and technology with societal goals and needs. Citizens and stakeholders can be involved at different moments of the technology cycle (OECD, 2024_[103]), as illustrated by the following examples:

- **Agenda-setting:** In 2024, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union launched a Citizen Panel gathered a representative group of 60 Belgians to collect citizens' views on artificial intelligence with the European Union (see Box 5.4).
- **Technology design:** In 2020, the French Government launched [PIAF](#), a collaborative initiative with citizens, academia and civil society to build databases in French language to train AI models.
- **Technology assessment:** in the United States, the Expert & Citizen Assessment of Science & Technology ([ECAST](#)) [Participatory Technology Assessment](#) is bringing public perspectives to bear on critical government science and technology decisions.
- **Regulation:** In 2023, the United Kingdom engaged in a series of public consultations with more than 300 stakeholders to build an adapted regulatory framework for AI (Government of the United Kingdom, 2024_[104])

In addition, AI systems can be built and trained by civil society organisations in a collaborative manner with both public authorities and private sector organisations, in order to leverage local knowledge and data and actively involving the communities they aim at empowering. However, the fact that existing AI has received the lion's share of its training in English presents more significant challenges for smaller and non-English speaking countries, as opportunities for further training are more narrow.

5.3. Key Area 3: Leverage key policy tools to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for democracy

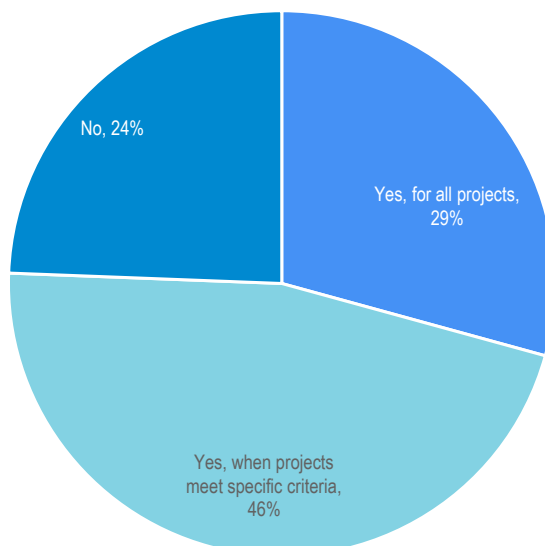
5.3.1. Providing the necessary budgetary resources for the development, maintenance and use of technology-neutral and resilient digital tools for democratic purposes

Beyond the issues considered in the OECD 2022 RDI report, the Action Plan invites us to consider the conditions that are needed to make such improvements to democratic governance happen. Governments need to invest in digital capabilities to keep pace with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and address the growing needs and expectations from users, including digital natives.

The OECD comparative insights on digital government show that OECD countries are increasingly adopting strategic and co-ordinated approaches to digital government investment to mitigate risks, secure return on investments and promote human-centric digital services. These strategic and co-ordinated approaches can be reflected in the use of value proposition mechanisms, such as business cases, to sustain the funding and inform investments decision making when investing in digital. The OECD Survey on Digital Government 2.0 shows that over three quarter of countries use standardised models/methods to develop business cases for digital government investments, either for all projects or when projects meet specific criteria (Figure 5.5). At a strategic level, countries such as Australia, Ireland and New Zealand have developed whole-of-government approaches when investing in digital government to secure coherence and alignment between strategic policy goals:

- **Australia** has set a whole-of-government Digital and ICT Oversight Framework, providing the Digital Transformation Agency with the administrative tools to manage digital investments from early planning to project delivery and realisation of planned benefits (Government of Australia, n.d.^[105]).
- **Ireland** makes use of a Digital Oversight approach, in which the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, through the Digital Government Oversight Unit (DGOU), supervises new digital/ICT projects proposed by Civil and Public Service bodies to ensure alignment with Government policy (OGCIO, 2024^[106]).
- **New Zealand's** Treasury (Ministry of Finance), together with the Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) and the Government Chief Data Steward (GCDS), have developed digital guiding principles to support line ministries and public sector organisations in planning and developing digital investments (New Zealand Government, 2021^[107]).

Figure 5.5. Availability of standardised models/methods to develop business cases



Note: Preliminary results of 38 member and accession countries that completed the survey.

Source: OECD (2023^[108]), *Digital Government Review of Romania: Towards a Digitally Mature Government*, OECD Digital Government Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/68361e0d-en>.

Taking a risk-based, technology-neutral and future-proof approach to the regulation of digital activities that impact democracy and designing solutions with international partners to ensure a global level playing field and reduce opportunities for regulatory arbitrage

The OECD 2022 RDI report did address the issues of institutions and legal frameworks, as well as the necessary regulatory frameworks, although these have since been picked up in the work of the OECD Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC). Maintaining a well-functioning democracy while digital innovations continue to grow requires careful consideration of the potential implications for regulation, as illustrated through the OECD Recommendation on Agile Regulatory Governance of the RPC. This includes identifying, assessing, and managing risks, and revising existing risk governance frameworks with data-driven approaches. Risk-based approaches to the regulation of digital technologies can ensure that regulations are proportionate to the potential harms, thereby protecting public safety and democratic integrity while promoting innovation.

Several countries have made significant progress in this direction since 2022. For example, the United Kingdom, through the NHS AI Lab, are trying to emulate the Canada's open source Algorithmic Impact Assessment (AIA) developed in 2022, to support the Treasury Board's Directive on Automated Decision-Making. The European Union's AI Act approved in 2024 (see Box 5.4), also offers a risk based framework to ensure that higher-risk AI applications, such as those used in healthcare or law enforcement, face stringent regulations, including mandatory transparency and data governance measures.

Another important avenue is for countries to promote technology-neutral approaches that focus on regulating on the desired outcomes, rather than prescribing specific technologies to ensure that regulation does not 'lock-in' technologies by being too prescriptive or specific. Again, Canada's 2023 Digitalization and Technology-Neutral Regulations Roadmap promoted by ISED Canada invites federal departments and agencies working to modernise regulations to focus on outcomes rather than prescribing specific technologies.

Securing universal access to digital identification, with safeguards for privacy and security, allowing citizens to prove their identity online, claim their civic rights, and exercise their democratic duties

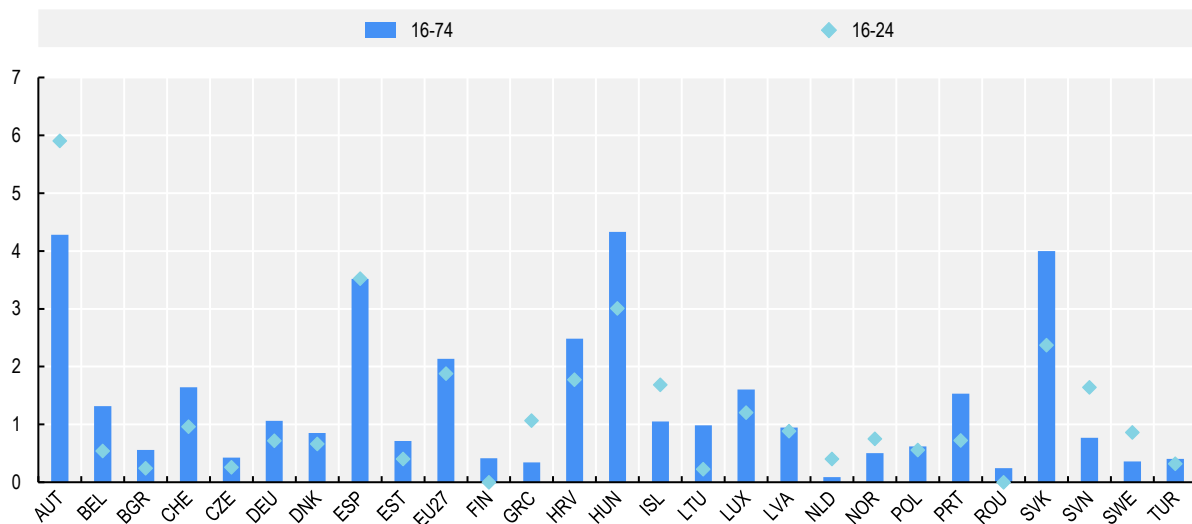
The OECD 2022 RDI report recognised digital identity as an important enabler for carrying out civic duties, as it is important to allow citizens to be able prove their identity online in order to claim their rights, exercise their duties for democracy and create a safe digital public space.

In OECD countries, the effectiveness and usability of digital identity systems, including different solutions for accessing public services, varies. Data from 2023 shows that there are cases where citizens avoid online public services due to issues with eID: in Austria more than 4% of adult citizens and close to 6% of young adults (16-24 year olds) avoided engaging with online public services due to eID issues. Some of these issues are also found for limited shares of the citizenry in Hungary, Slovak Republic, and Spain.⁶

Countries have been working to simplify access to digital identity and promote more user friendly solutions in line with [the OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Digital Identity](#) adopted in 2023. For example, Norway's ID-porten is a single-sign on solution that enables citizens to log in to public services using existing well-known electronic IDs, such as MinID, BankID, Buypass and Commfides (OECD, 2024^[109]; Norwegian Digitalisation Agency, 2024^[110]). New Zealand also adopted its [Digital Identity Services Trust Framework Act in 2023](#), while Australia's [Digital ID Bill 2024](#) is entering into force in December 2024.

Figure 5.6. Individuals avoiding public services due to issues with eID

% of population, 16-74 and 16-24 y/o, 2023 or latest data available



Note: Individuals did not submit forms to public authorities: electronic signature/ID/certificate issues - last 12 m, 2023 or latest data available.
Source: OECD Data Kitchen. Data accessed on June 3, 2024. The OECD ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals database includes indicators based on the 2nd revision of the OECD Model Survey on ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals. For more information about the underlying sources, please see: <https://oe.cd/dx/ict-access-usage>.

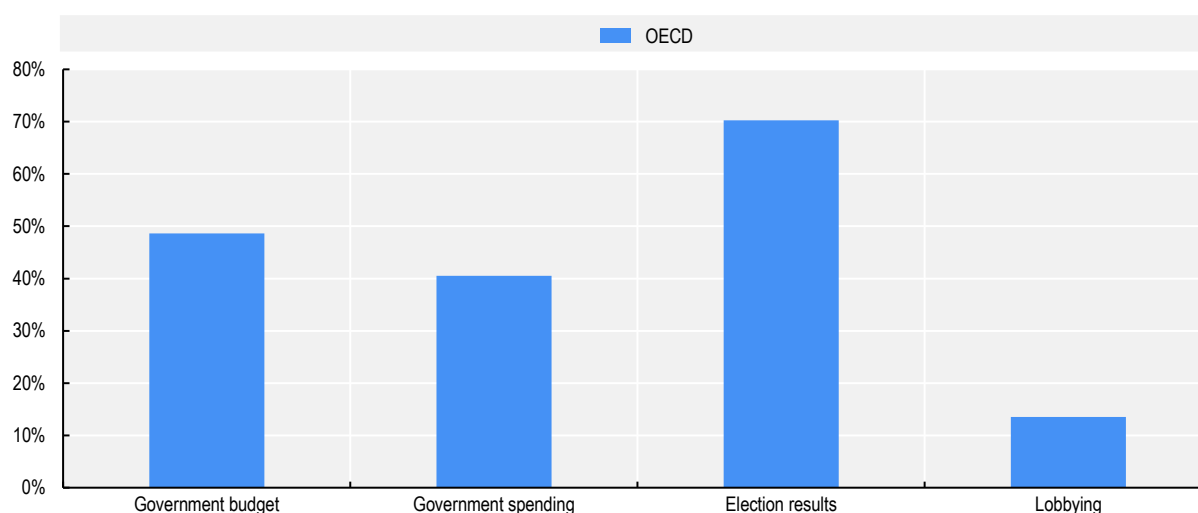
Enhancing civic engagement through increased availability, accessibility, and re-use of relevant data (e.g. on elections, lobbying, budgeting, and procurement) by civil society, independent media, political parties and parliaments

The OECD 2022 RDI report addressed the issues of opening up government data, relying on long standing OECD work in the area. Facilitating the availability, accessibility, and re-use of data is central for civil society organisations, independent media, parliamentary bodies and other stakeholders to make more informed decisions, hold institutions accountable, and actively participate in democratic processes. Open data initiatives not only foster transparency but also encourage collaboration and innovation within society, ultimately strengthening democratic governance and fostering a more engaged citizenry. Providing timely, reliable, and relevant public sector data and information to citizens and stakeholders has become crucial in promoting governments' accountability and combatting corruption. The Action plan therefore invites us to consider how countries can leverage various aspects of open data to enhance civic engagement. Whereas the 2022 RDI report relied upon 2019 data, more recent data from 2022 are now available to support the analysis of the current report.

Data on election results is most frequently available as open data, with over 70% of OECD countries providing this data to the public. Budgeting is an intermediate situation as overall 40% of countries provide data on government spending. According to this 2022 data ten OECD countries provide data on both government budget and spending,⁷ while twelve countries provide neither budget nor spending as open data.⁸ In fact, in Italy the OpenBudget App allows every citizen to access and consult the State Budget and the Ministry of Finance publishes regularly all figures related to public expenditure also as open data.

In contrast, aggregated data on lobbying of public policy decisions is only provided by 5 OECD countries, namely Canada, Chile, France, Ireland and Slovenia. The objective is for data on lobbying to avoid monolithic statements or lists of lobbyists that do not give any relevant information for citizens to understand the state of play of lobbying activities and their concrete impact on decision-making processes. They should also include relevant filters enabling searches by lobbying entities, public policy areas, targeted public officials or specific public decisions. However, evidence on such practices remains limited at this stage.

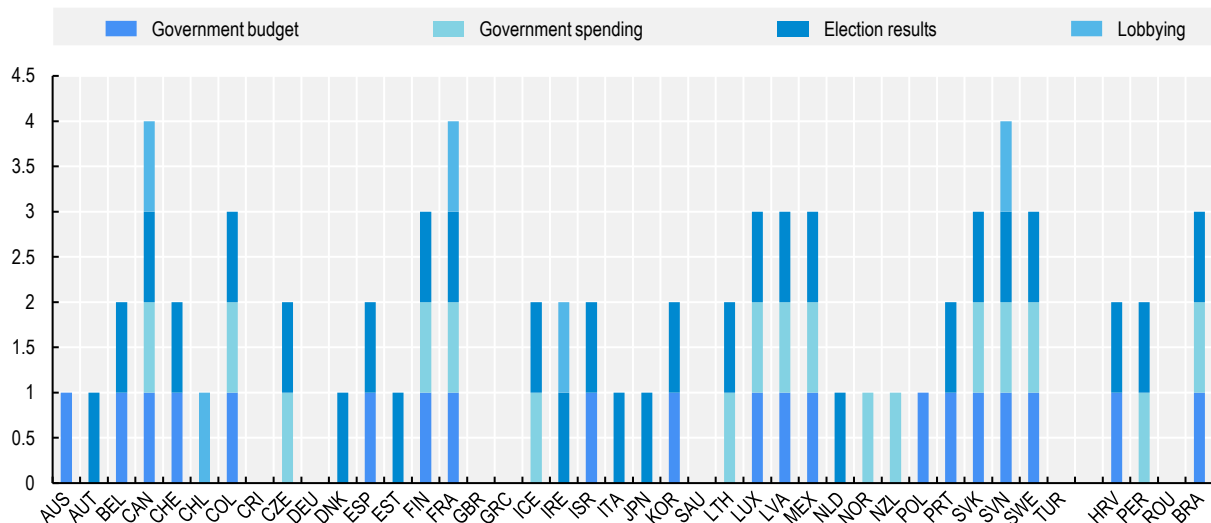
Figure 5.7. Open data on government budget, spending, election results, and lobbying, OECD average, 2022



Note: Data is considered available as open data if it is free of charge, machine-readable, and provided under an open licence.

Source: OECD (2022^[18]), Survey on Open Government Data 5.0.

Figure 5.8. Open data on government budget, spending, election results, and lobbying by OECD countries, 2022

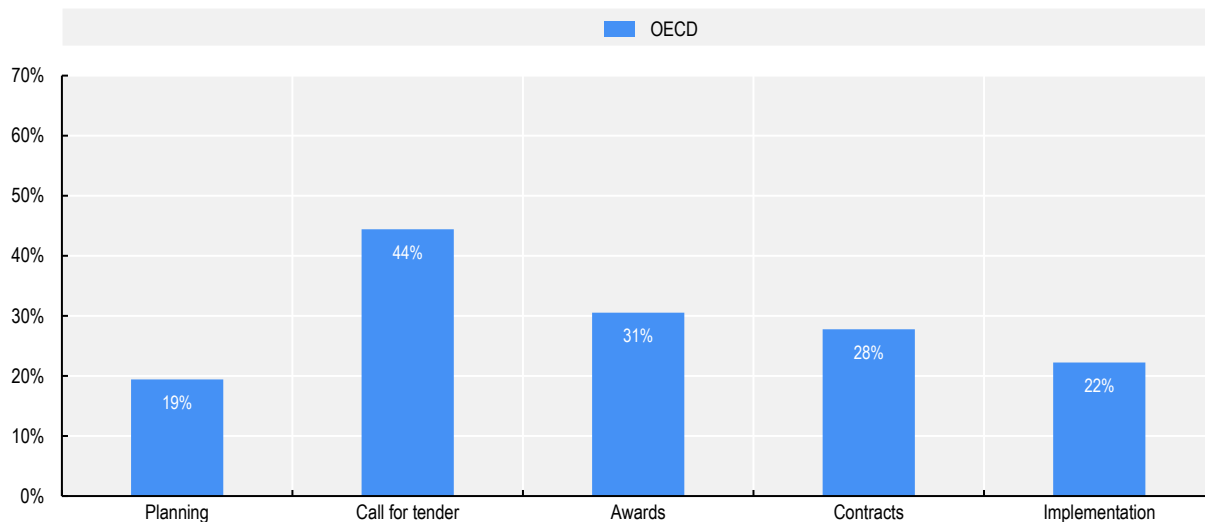


Note: Data is not available for the United States or Hungary. Data is considered available as open data if it is free of charge, machine-readable, and provided under an open licence.

Source: OECD (2022^[18]), Survey on Open Government Data 5.0.

Assessing countries' capacity to ensure open data for public procurement relies on the standards established by the Open Contracting Partnership's Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS), which specifies five elements of public contracts to provide as open data. The data need to be published in open data formats – meaning data is free, machine-readable, structured, and provided with an open license, with no limitations for re-use (Open Contracting Partnership, 2024^[111]). In this area, only two OECD countries (Colombia and Korea) provide open data for the whole public contracting cycle: planning, call for tender, awards, contracts, and implementation, whereas twenty-one OECD countries provide open data for at least one of the elements (55%). Most OECD countries who publish contracting data publish calls for tenders (44%) or awards (31%). Few OECD countries provide open data on the planning (19%) and implementation (22%) of public procurement projects. Therefore, data containing all relevant public procurement information is still largely unavailable, especially in standardised formats that facilitate data reuse.

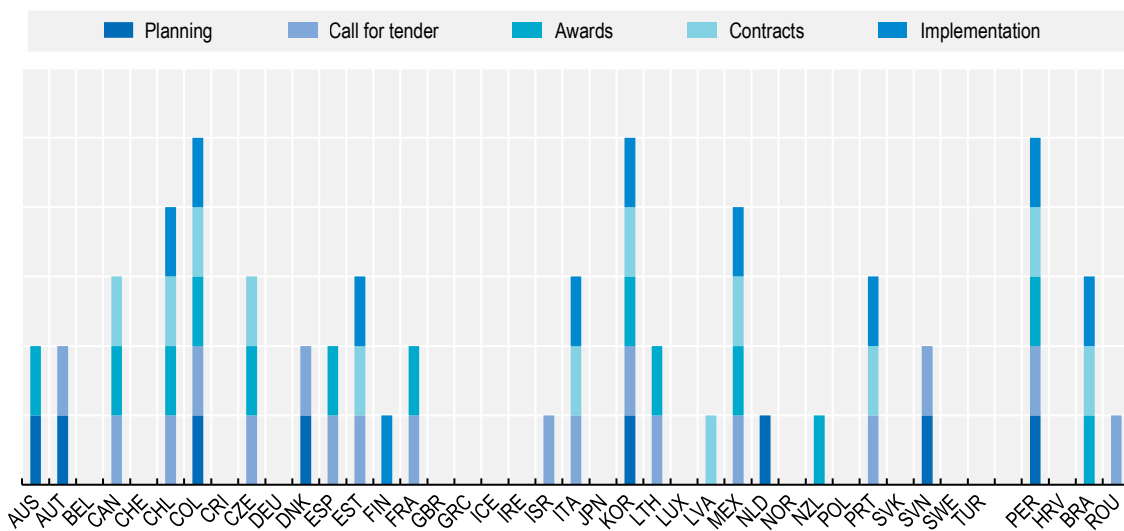
Figure 5.9. Open data on public procurement, OECD average, 2022



Note: Data is considered available as open data if it is free of charge, machine-readable, and provided under an open licence. The five dataset categories are based on the [Open Contracting Data Standard](#) (OCDS) by the Open Contracting Partnership.

Source: OECD (2022^[18]), Survey on Open Government Data 5.0.

Figure 5.10. Open data on public procurement across OECD countries, 2022



Note: Data is not available for the United States or Hungary. Data is considered available as open data if it is free of charge, machine-readable, and provided under an open licence. The five dataset categories are based on the [Open Contracting Data Standard](#) (OCDS) by the Open Contracting Partnership.

Source: OECD (2022^[18]), Survey on Open Government Data 5.0.

Against this backdrop, central government bodies are increasingly developing integrity analytics tools leveraging open procurement data. Finance ministries, tax authorities, and central procurement agencies are developing and deploying data analytics and artificial intelligence platforms to better monitor public spending. The priorities are to advance the availability, accessibility, and re-use of open government data, and ensure the ethical and responsible use of data and artificial intelligence solutions in the public sector. Expanding the reuse of data and applying new technologies along the whole policy cycle and in particular to improve value-for-money can strengthen public accountability. Recent initiatives in this area include:

- The European Union’s Public Procurement Data Space (PPDS), which aims to create an EU-level platform with European and national procurement databases to improve data quality, availability and completeness for public buyers, policymakers, the private sector, researchers and citizens. (European Commission, 2023^[112]). The EU legislative open standard for public procurement data, eForms became mandatory in October 2023. It aims to improve the quality and analysis of procurement data as eForms are to be used by public buyers to publish notices on Tenders Electronic Daily, the European Union’s e-procurement portal. Well-implemented eForms will also increase the ability of businesses and other organisations to find procurement notices, as well as increase transparency and the ability of governments to make data-driven decisions about public spending.
- An initiative to leverage the data produced through the e-procurement systems in the Netherlands by sharing more real-time information and establishing various output channels for data and analysis sharing. This includes publishing analysis of procurement trends and figures in specific sectors and giving contracting authorities and the private sector more opportunities to access and use data (TenderNed, 2023^[113]).

Public procurement authorities, oversight bodies and public buyers are increasingly applying AI and data analytics to improve value-for-money and strengthen accountability. Italy’s National Anti-Corruption Authority has developed indicators to measure corruption risks in public procurement and can flag potential anomalies in public tendering. The indicators include matters such as the number and value of “non-open” procedures and the proportion of excluded bids (OECD, 2024^[114]). The Danish Business Authority has put into operation a platform that automates the process of assessing the probability that a specific company is more prone to commit fraud in comparison to others, and in 2021 implemented their third generation Intelligent Control Platform working with real-time graph machine learning for fraud detection (Hartmann, 2021^[115]). In Portugal, since 2024, the Court of Audit is implementing a data-driven approach to assess risks in public procurement, through a risk-based approach (OECD, 2024^[114]).

Finally, countries are also mobilising open data to support greater civic engagement, harnessing data to strengthen information ecosystems. For instance, Colombia’s 2023 Corruption Radar & Economic, Cultural and Social Rights: Right to Education assesses the impact of corruption on the right to education using open data, generating an indicator of likelihood of corruption and reduced effectiveness of education rights for each municipality in the country (OECD, 2024^[116]).

5.4. Working Collectively through the OECD and priorities going forward

5.4.1. Working collectively through the OECD

- The OECD has engaged actively through the [Information Integrity Hub](#) to identify common challenges and exchange best practices to fight disinformation and promote information integrity, in line with the Action plan on Public Governance for Combating Mis- and Dis-information (see Chapter 1). The OECD is analysing the links between information integrity and AI tools, exploring what this means for the information space, with an **upcoming report** to explore how emerging technologies are used to magnify challenges faced in the information space to offer policy responses.
- The OECD is thus engaging with countries to ensure that the [Good Practice Principles for Public Communication](#) Responses to Mis- and Disinformation are used to their full potential, and integrated, when relevant, into overall country strategies for tackling mis- and disinformation.
- To tackle on line harassment, the OECD is focusing on how to increase **evidence on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF-GBV)** with a framework which proposes key areas of action against TF-GBV, as well as indicators on TF-GBV in G7 countries. The intersections between digital technologies and the promotion of women's participation in public life were also explored as one of the key themes of the inaugural [2024 OECD Forum on Gender Equality](#).
- The OECD is building on the existing work on **digital skills, education, and on digital citizen participation**, to focus on digital literacy.
- Following the 2023 event on "[Getting civic tech right for democracy](#)", the OECD is developing global dialogue, to foster policy analysis, and to share evidence on impact. The [OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation \(OPSI\) scans](#) highlight the potential for participatory and collaborative approaches to involve citizens throughout the policymaking cycle. The OECD is preparing a **global report on the use of Civic Tech for Participation and representation**, as well as a **best practice report on how to improve citizen participation with emerging technologies**.
- The OECD is exploring how governments and regulators can best keep pace with technological change, through the [Better Regulation In the Digital age](#) (BRIDGE) initiative. This seeks to support countries, based on a risk-informed and technology neutral approach, to ensure effective regulatory governance for digital activities.
- The OECD is developing an [OECD Recommendation on Human-Centric Public Administrative Services](#), called for by Ministers in the Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy [OECD/LEGAL/0484]. The Recommendation recognises the importance of adequate core infrastructure, including the use of digital technologies and innovative design, to improve user experience and increase satisfaction with public services, recognising the importance ensuring inclusion and equity in access and use via both online and in-person channels. The OPSI has collected almost 800 cases of innovations in public services, covering a total of 83 countries.
- The OECD is also engaging with countries on the **digital transformation of justice through its justice roundtables**, the ethical use of emerging technologies in law enforcement and judicial administration, and the role of judicial authorities in enforcing rights in the digital era.
- The OECD is addressing the **digital skills and knowledge of public servants** to support digital democracy through its work on **digital government** and on **public employment**. The OECD developed a [Framework for Digital Talent and Skills in the Public Sector](#). The May 2024 Public Service Leaders' Roundtable helped to share approaches to addressing the complex leadership challenges facing senior management of OECD civil services in a digital context. The Network of Schools of Government discussed the opportunities of training institutions in this area.

- The OECD has advanced work on human rights in the digital age under the OECD Digital Policy Committee, including in the context of the [Digital Economy Policy Ministerial Meeting](#) hosted by Spain in December 2022. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the [Declaration on a Trusted, Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future](#) that reiterated the need to respect the rule of law, human rights and democratic values, with the announcement of the [Global Forum on Technology](#) to inform the development and use of technology in line with democratic values, and with the adoption of the [Declaration on Government Access to Personal Data](#) held by private sector entities which highlighted common principles for government access to such data founded in shared democratic values.
- The OECD is advancing policy analysis, dialogue, and guidance on the **trustworthy and responsible use of artificial intelligence in the public sector**, including on data ethics and algorithmic transparency, including in terms of [governing with AI](#). The OECD has been supporting the 2024 G7 Italian Presidency as a Knowledge Partner with the development of a [Toolkit for Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector](#), together with UNESCO. At the G7 Digital and Technology Ministers' Meeting in Verona and Trento, Ministers agreed on advancing international discussions on policies, tools and mechanisms in the areas of AI in the public sector and of taking stock of the opportunities and challenges brought by generative AI (G7 Italian Presidency, 2024^[117]).
- The OECD 2022 report on Civic Space also offered a review of common elements in national strategies on AI related to the protection of civic space. The [Global Trends in Government Innovation report 2023](#) shows how governments are exploring new forms of accountability and highlights the need to ensure that the algorithms and underlying data avoid bias and discrimination, and that public servants understand data ethics (OECD, 2023^[50]).
- The [Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024](#) explores how AI can be instrumental for mitigating fraud, corruption and foreign bribery risks and warns about its weaknesses and how it can also be used to enable corrupt activities (OECD, 2024^[118]).

The OECD could consider exploring the development of standards and principles for the use of civic technologies for democratic processes, and promote the inclusion and engagement of citizens and stakeholders in the design and regulation of these technologies. The OECD could promote a digital civic space perspective, meaning the actions taken by governments to ensure an online space that is healthy, where citizens and stakeholders can participate equally and freely.

5.4.2. Conclusions and priorities for the future

Across the OECD and beyond, governments are using digital tools, including civic tech to enhance both in-person and online participation in policymaking. The pace of change is such that public institutions are struggling to keep up – yet they must. The goal being to preserve citizens' fundamental liberties and civic rights in an increasingly "digital" democracy. In particular countries have taken steps to

- **Strengthen democratic representation and participation** by using digital tools to support in-person participation in representative, participatory and deliberative processes – while opening up new channels for online citizen participation in policymaking. Some digital tools aim to lower barriers to participation. Others aim to strengthen citizens' capacity for effective participation, for example with the use of AI-powered virtual assistants. Many countries recognise the need to counter polarisation and disengagement from civic life by strengthening citizens' media and digital literacy, while preventing online abuse and harassment. They also recognise the need to close regulatory gaps in online election-related processes, such as online campaign financing, online political advertising, and data-driven political micro-targeting, while supporting appropriate enforcement and redress mechanisms in case of breaches.
- **Upgrading democratic institutions to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation** by leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to

enhance the capacity to engage with citizens in policymaking and to strengthen parliamentary oversight. Countries have mobilised open registries and public access to the data and algorithms used to support decision making and public policies to build public trust. However, successful deployment of digital technologies requires attracting, building and retaining digital talents in the civil service with expertise in data science, digital communications, cybersecurity and AI.

- **Leveraging key policy tools to respond to the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation** for democracy by taking a risk-based, technology-neutral and future-proof approach to the regulation of digital activities. Securing universal access to digital identification will allow citizens to exercise their civic rights and democratic duties but requires safeguards for privacy and security. Open government data fosters civic society innovation and accountability for the ethical and responsible use of data and artificial intelligence solutions in the public sector.

However, the public sector still often lags in adopting the necessary technologies needed to meet the expectations of a digital democracy. The rapid spread of mis- and disinformation demonstrates the urgent need for more decisive action. The forthcoming recommendation on Human Centred Public Services will offer opportunities for mobilising digital technologies. Protecting civic space in the future, by moving new frontiers in this area, will also entail protecting digital civic spaces for democratic dialogue. Moving forward, the Reinforcing Democracy Initiative will also support governments in the responsible safe and trustworthy use of AI in the public sector, building on a comprehensive framework presented in the flagship report *Governing with AI*. This will also offer further opportunities for engagement in international for a focused on AI in the future. The new Recommendation on Information Integrity, with a focus on strengthening societal resilience, will also offer an opportunity to continue advancing digital democracy

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Notes

- ¹ The Republic of Türkiye interprets the marginalised groups in line with its own national legislation.
- ² Given that the OECD conducts relatively limited analysis of electoral processes as such, this section relies on some information from IDEA to ensure a narrative.
- ³ See for example (Tham et al., 2022_[119]).
- ⁴ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom.
- ⁵ The consultation period was opened from 14 June until 5 July under [Draft Recommendation for Consultation Human-centred Public Administrative Services](#).
- ⁶ These figures can also be influenced by the overall lack of eID tools or lack of online public services or need to submit forms to public authorities.
- ⁷ Canada, Colombia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Latvia, Mexico, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden.
- ⁸ Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands and Türkiye.

Annex A. Methodology for the IDEA indicators

Table A A.1. Social Group Equality

Indicator	Description/Question	Data set
Social group equality in respect for civil liberties (v2clsocgrp)	ES: Do all social groups, as distinguished by language, ethnicity, religion, race, region or caste, enjoy the same level of civil liberties, or are some groups generally in a more favourable position?	V-Dem
Power distributed by social group (v2pepwsoc)	ES: Is political power distributed according to social groups?	V-Dem
Power distributed by sexual orientation (v2pepwrort)	ES: Is political power distributed according to sexual orientation?	V-Dem
Exclusion by political group index (v2xpe_exlpol)	ES: Index of political exclusion by political group	V-Dem
Exclusion by social group index (v2xpe_exlsocgr)	ES: Index of political exclusion by social group	V-Dem
Political Pluralism and Participation (B4)	In House Coding (IC): Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	Freedom in the World
Rule of Law (F4)	IC: Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	Freedom in the World
Equal opportunity (equal)	IC: Ten-point scale corresponding to answer choices that range from 'Equality of opportunity is not achieved. Women and/or members of ethnic, religious and other groups have only very limited access to education, public office and employment. There are no legal provisions against discrimination' to 'Equality of opportunity is achieved. Women and members of ethnic, religious and other groups have equal access to education, public office and employment. There is a comprehensive and effective legal and institutional framework for the protection against discrimination'	BTI

Source: International IDEA (2024^[1]), "The Global State of Democracy Indices and Methodology", <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/g sod-indices-methodology-v8-2024.pdf>.

Table A A.2. Gender Equality

Indicator	Description/Question	Data set
Power distributed by gender (v2pepwrgen)	Expert Surveys (ES): Is political power distributed according to gender?	V-Dem
CSO women's participation (v2csgender)	ES: Are women prevented from participating in civil society organisations?	V-Dem
Female vs. male mean years of schooling	Observational Data	GHDx
Lower chamber female legislators (v2lgfemleg)	Observational Data	V-Dem
Exclusion by gender index (v2xpe_exlgender)	ES: Index of political exclusion by gender	V-Dem
Women's political rights (wopol)	In House Coding (IC): How extensive are laws pertaining to women's political rights (right to vote, to run for political office, to hold elected and appointed government positions, to join political parties, to petition government officials); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
Women's economic rights (wecon)	IC: How extensive are laws pertaining to women's economic rights equal pay for equal work, free choice of profession, right to gainful employment, non-discrimination etc.); how effectively does the government enforce the laws?	CIRIGHTS
Political empowerment	CM: The Global Gender Gap Index examines the gap between men and women across four fundamental categories (subindexes): Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.	Global Gender Gap Report
Labour force participation rate (women-men) (EAP_DWARP_SEX_AGE_RT)	Observational Data	ILO

Indicator	Description/Question	Data set
Share of managerial positions held by women (SDG_T552_NOC_RT)	Observational Data	ILO
Control of bank accounts (women-men) (FX.OEN.TOTL.FE.ZS, FX.OWN.TOTL.MA.ZS)	Observational Data	World Bank

Source: International IDEA (2024^[1]), “The Global State of Democracy Indices and Methodology”, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/gsoi-indices-methodology-v8-2024.pdf>.

OECD Public Governance Reviews

The OECD Reinforcing Democracy Initiative

MONITORING REPORT – ASSESSING PROGRESS AND CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

As governments grapple with environmental and digital transitions and an erosion of trust in public institutions, bold action is needed to build people’s trust and strengthen democracy. To this end, the OECD launched its Reinforcing Democracy Initiative in 2022. This report offers an overview of collective progress made in OECD countries across the five pillars of the Initiative and their respective action plans: combatting mis- and disinformation; enhancing participation, representation, and openness in public life, including a focus on gender equality; stronger open democracies in a globalised world; governing green; and digital democracy. In each of these areas, the report provides recent cross-country indicators of progress (when available) and highlights best practices from countries. The report draws on OECD and other data to assess progress, including the 2024 results of the OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions. It also identifies gaps in action and points to a set of common priorities for moving forward together.



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